

Atelier 17 at 100 (online, 9–13 Sep 24)

Online, Sep 9–13, 2024

Deadline: Apr 30, 2024

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Online workshop organized by Christina Weyl, PhD, Independent Scholar and James Chadwick, PhD Candidate, University of Amsterdam.

2027 will mark the centennial of Atelier 17, the avant-garde printmaking workshop which had locations in Paris and New York City between 1927 and 1988. Atelier 17 was a revolutionary institution that shaped the direction of modernism and the graphic arts across its 61-year history. The workshop was a vital center of intellectual and artistic exchange for Surrealist artists in interwar Paris and for the exploration of abstraction and other modernist modes after World War II. Thousands of artists from a diverse international community were drawn to working at Atelier 17 because its founder, Stanley William Hayter (1901-1988), and studio members conceived of printmaking in revolutionary ways. For them, printmaking was an experiment: not simply a tool for reproducing other artworks—such as paintings or drawings—or making multiple copies of an image. Intersecting with the careers of so many artists, the studio not only shaped the trajectory of twentieth-century printmaking, it also impacted the development of modernism.

Towards the goal of organizing a monograph for Atelier 17's centennial, this closed online workshop seeks to think expansively about Atelier 17, its diverse legacies, and international membership. We seek fresh perspectives about Atelier 17 which will spotlight artists outside of those who have been central to histories of the studio (historically, a handful of white male artists associated with surrealism and abstract expressionism). A newly created roster of affiliated artists, which significantly expands on the list created for the studio's 50th anniversary retrospective (1977), provides clues about the intellectual and creative exchange that transpired as nearly one thousand artists worked at Atelier 17: <https://www.a17project.org/history-roster>

The workshop will take place online via Zoom the week of September 9, 2024. Potential areas of inquiry for 15-minute presentations could include, but certainly are not limited to, the following:

Artist-focused studies

- Stanley William Hayter, founder of Atelier 17. Projects could focus on his artwork (prints and/or paintings), his relationship to modernism as it unfolded through his networks in Paris, London, and New York, or his extensive writings about the theory of line and the history of printmaking
- Investigations of the lasting social and professional networks that formed among members of Atelier 17. Some were based on shared ideologies and stylistic choices, while others were guided by an interest in technical inquiry.
- Projects about any of the artists who were members of Atelier 17

Technical experimentation and research at Atelier 17

- The revival of engraving as a creative medium
- The generative connections between printmaking and sculpture, including cut plates, gaufrage (deeply engraved markings made with a scorper), and frottage (rubbing from found objects)
- The workshop's investigation of "plaster prints" and/or how this practice relates to the history of gypsum prints or artists currently using the practice today
- Technical innovations, including the development of simultaneous color printmaking and experimentation with soft ground etching and sugar lift
- The exploration of photogram techniques among artists and photographers who visited Atelier 17

Stylistic concerns

- Atelier 17 as a hub of Surrealism in interwar Paris and midcentury New York
- The studio's importance to the development of postwar abstraction and expressionism in New York and Paris
- Atelier 17's relationship to other modernist and avant-garde movements, such as the School of Paris (École de Paris) and return to order (rappel à l'ordre), postwar tachisme and lyrical abstraction, Gutai, pop art, op art, and conceptualism

Intermediality and cross-disciplinary activity

- Collaborations between poets and writers in Atelier 17 portfolios such as Fraternity, Solidarité, or 21 Etchings and Poems plus many others published by individual artist members
- Hayter's work with faculty at the New School for Social Research (Max Wertheimer and Rudolf Arnheim) related to the field of visual perception
- The visualization of sound, music, dance, and rhythm in prints by Atelier 17 artists.

Politics

- The engagement of Atelier 17 members with political causes, such as the Spanish Civil War or the student protests of 1968

Global considerations

- International cultural exchange including, but not limited to, artists who came to Atelier 17 from Japan, China, South Korea, India, Australia, and countries in Latin America. What experiences did artists bring to Atelier 17? What did they take away?
- The spread of the studio's pedagogy across the United States and internationally, perhaps mapping hubs—such as Gabor Peterdi at Yale, Mauricio Lasansky at the University of Iowa, or Fred Becker at Washington University in St. Louis—or visualizing a "family tree" with digital humanities tools
- In an era rife with dislocations, the implications of gender, race, nationality, and religion as artists worked at Atelier 17

Market and museum histories

- The importance of international printmaking annuals (and biennials) to members of Atelier 17
- The network of museum curators who championed the experimental prints from Atelier 17
- The role of commercial galleries in exhibiting modernist prints and supporting members of Atelier 17

Historiography

- Why has Atelier 17 not been included in mainstream histories of twentieth-century modernism?
- How does Atelier 17 stand historically in relation to other printmaking studios, such as Universal Limited Art Editions, Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop, and Pratt Graphic Art Center? What was its influence on these formative later institutions, such as Kala Art Institute?

This online workshop is open to all regardless of academic tenure or field. We hope to bring together a diverse group of scholars interested in Atelier 17, its impact, and its international membership. Presenters should plan for 15-minute presentations and include relevant slides or images. Abstracts and presentations should be in English. If participation in English is a barrier, please reach out for possible accommodation.

To participate, please submit a 300-word abstract and an abbreviated CV or résumé (2-page maximum) by April 30 to Christina Weyl (christinaweyl@gmail.com) and James Chadwick (j.chadwick@uva.nl).

Feel free to reach out with any questions! We have research tidbits to share about many of the topics above.

Reference:

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