



California Dreamin': Mark Adams and Frank Lobdell

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While the work of **Mark Adams** (1925-2006) and **Frank Lobdell** (1921-2013) may not be similar in terms of subject matter, the artists share a desire to explore how pattern and color develop a composition. In addition, they both made their way to California where they spent the better part of their artistic careers producing work and teaching.

Born in Fort Plains, New York, **Mark Adams** attended Syracuse University's School of Fine Arts. He then went to New York City to study under Abstract Expressionist **Hans Hoffman**. After that, he moved to San Francisco to help with the restoration of a Southern California mission. It was in California, in 1954, that he met his wife, printmaker **Beth Van Hoesen** (whose works are also represented in RAM's collection) and attended Columbia University.

Though Adams was an accomplished painter, he began his professional career as a tapestry and stained glass designer, having apprenticed for a time in Europe with famed tapestry designer **Jean Lurçat**, "a French painter and designer who is frequently called the most instrumental figure in reviving the art of designing and weaving tapestries in the 20th century." Adams designed windows and large scale tapestries for worship spaces in San Francisco, including Grace Episcopal Cathedral, Lafayette-Orinda United Presbyterian Church, and Temple Emanu-El (San Francisco's largest synagogue). His tapestries can also be found in secular buildings, including the San Francisco International Airport, the Marina branch of the San Francisco Public Library, the Clarendon School, and the Dallas Fairmont Hotel.

As noted in Mark Adams *Catalogue Raisonné of Tapestries*, "Adams's strong interest in color and in working in monumental scale first led him to explore the possibilities of tapestry." Though he continued to create tapestries throughout his life, Adams returned to painting in the early 1960s. He became the painter in residence at the American Academy in Rome in 1963. By the mid-1970s, Adams began painting with watercolor. He eventually shifted to watercolor, printmaking, and acrylic painting as his primary forms of expression.

Drawing on his experience building images with large planes of color, Adams created realistic, color-infused compositions. He favored everyday subjects, such as still lifes, reflecting on items that could be both personal to him and understandable to others.

Adams passed in 2006, leaving behind a body of work that moved "effortlessly from painting to printmaking to stained glass and fibers throughout a career that spanned the second half of the twentieth century."

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Frank Lobdell was born in Kansas City, Missouri, and raised in Minnesota. He studied art at the St. Paul School of Fine Arts, before leaving to serve with the U.S. Army during World War II. During the war, Lobdell witnessed many horrific scenes, including discovering nearly 1,000 charred concentration camp victims, an event that would become known as the Gardelegen Massacre. This experience influenced Lobdell tremendously and eventually became a pivotal factor in determining the kind of subject matter he would address in his work. Lobdell once said “no one who is involved in one of these wars truly survives.”

Lobdell returned to the United States after the war and settled in California, where he continued his art studies under the GI Bill, at the California School of Fine Arts, now the San Francisco Art Institute. Not surprisingly, his post-war work eschewed the human form. After witnessing so much as a soldier, Lobdell embraced abstract shapes and bright colors as his means of artistic expression. He became part of the Sausalito Six, a group of California artists including **Richard Diebenkorn**, **John Hultberg**, **James Budd Dixon**, **George Stillman**, and Lobdell’s mentor, **Walter Kuhlman**. This post-war group created prints and paintings, developing their own bold, colorful approach to Abstract Expressionism (an American post-war art movement defined by its nonfigurative style and gestural brushwork that conveyed feeling and emotion). In 1950, Lobdell went to Europe again, this time as an artist rather than a soldier, and studied at L’Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris, France.

Although primarily a painter, Lobdell also produced lithographs, etchings, and monoprints. He taught briefly at the California School of Fine Arts (San Francisco Art Institute) before taking a position at Stanford University, first as a visiting artist and then as a professor. Until his retirement in 1991, he taught at Stanford, all the while producing an extensive and innovative body of work. A laconic and disciplined individual, Lobdell would tell his students that “nothing worth anything is easy.” After his wartime experiences, and as his career developed, he sought to explore humanity in broader terms—utilizing a “vocabulary of archetypal themes and abstract symbols.”

Glossary

Artist’s Proof – an impression made during the print making process, to see the current state of the work while the artist is still working on or adding to the plate. Artist’s proofs are not considered part of the edition. They are identified, usually on the print itself, with the acronym “AP.”

Bon à Tirer – from the French, meaning “good to print.” A Bon à Tirer print is the best and final version of an artist’s proof, it is the piece that would be used as a guide for the print run.

Cartoon – a full-sized, preparatory drawing for a painting, mural, fresco, or tapestry.

Edition (limited edition) – the total number of copies of a book, newspaper or other published material issued at one time. For prints or artist's books there is often a number indicating that impression's specific place in order compared with the total edition size, such as 35/50 (meaning it is the 35th impression of a total of 50).

Engraving – the engraved plate is one that has not been etched in acid. Rather, the lines that will hold ink are "carved" into the plate by a hand-held tool called an engraver. Engraving tools come in many sizes and shapes. A preliminary drawing is usually executed on the plate to be engraved, and then subsequently "cut" into the plate with the tool. Engraving is the oldest form of intaglio printmaking (i.e. any kind of printing from lines or marks made by cutting into 'something,' such as copper or wood.)

Etching – the generic term "etching" refers to any of the procedures that employ acids to eat into a metal plate for the purpose of creating a printable matrix (e.g. hardground etching, softground etching, sandpaper etching, aquatint).

Lithograph (lithography) – a method of planographic (flat surface) printing in which an image is created on a stone or thin metal plate surface with incising. Lithography is based on the incompatibility of grease and water. Traditionally, greasy ink was employed to draw an image on a special limestone that was then treated with nitric acid and gum Arabic. The solution of acid and gum Arabic made the stone able to retain a thin layer of water. The stone could then be wetted with water and rolled with a greasy ink, which would only adhere to the greasy drawing. The inked greased image could then be printed.

Monotype – a one-of-a-kind print.

Proof – a proof is a preliminary version of a printed piece. It provides a close representation of how the piece will appear when printed.

State – a state is a different version of a print, caused by a deliberate and permanent change to the plate or block. Often, it is indicated in the title (e.g. state 2, state 3, etc.).

Tapestry – from Old French "to cover with heavy fabric, to carpet," tapestry refers to an image woven on a vertical loom. The front of a tapestry shows the weft (or woof), which are the horizontal threads woven through the warp threads (vertical threads), which hold the tension on the loom. In a tapestry, all the warp threads are hidden in the completed work. In cloth weaving, both the warp and the weft threads may be visible.

Compiled from various sources.