

February 2021

Multiples, Inc., 1965–1992

Three years ago Marian Goodman invited me to curate an exhibition for her gallery. I would like to do something special, was my answer, namely to relate the history of Multiples, Inc. It took me two years of research to trace the multiples and prints brought out by this art publishing company through time, to find the works for the show and to write the catalogue. The result is a comprehensive exhibition of more than 150 works – some of them consisting of several parts – by more than 70 artists. The show has now just opened in New York and runs to February 27, 2021.



Multiples, Inc. was founded in 1965 in New York by a group of five people, including Marian Goodman, who took on the task of working with the artists. The idea of the “multiple”, a work of art produced as a limited edition, was in the air. In New York there were already several publishers of multiples, but there was no platform where the works could be presented. The Multiples Gallery that opened at the end of 1965 thus aimed not only to bring out multiples, but also to exhibit, sell and distribute them. Multiplication opened up new sales channels; the objects were affordable, making contemporary art accessible to a wider public. New materials and production techniques replaced painting and bronze casts; many multiples had the shape of convenient boxes that could easily be placed on shelves.



The first edition published by Multiples, Inc. was “Four on Plexiglas”, works by Philip Guston, Barnett Newman, Claes Oldenburg and Larry Rivers – all of them silkscreen prints on Plexiglas. Whereas the painters had images printed on Plexiglas, Oldenburg used an industrial procedure to vacuum-shape the acrylic glass for his gigantic “Tea Bag”. At first, Multiples Inc. commissioned artists from the world of Op and Pop Art, but it was not long before the works of less well-known artists were produced too, such as Sol LeWitt, Fred Sandback and Robert Smithson.



The new generation of artists were soon searching for other ways to distribute their works. In 1970 Multiples, Inc. supplied an ideal medium in the form of the “Artists & Photographs” edition. Works by nineteen artists from the USA and Europe were collated in a box. These were artists who used photography, not as a traditional medium, but for their documentary and conceptual pieces – LeWitt and Smithson, but also Jan Dibbets, Dan Graham, Bruce Nauman and Edward Ruscha, to name but a few. Instead of objects there were artists’ books, brochures and foldouts in various formats, which were produced in black-and-white by offset printing. In spite of its large print run of 1200 this edition did not prove to be a commercial success at the time; nowadays, however, the contents are highly sought-after.



At all events it was difficult to run a gallery on Madison Avenue just by selling multiples, and so Multiples, Inc. transformed step-by-step in the 1970s into a publishing house for prints, covering classical techniques such as lithography and etching as well. In 1972 alone some of the remarkable works published included “Star Quarters” by Robert Rauschenberg printed on mirrored acrylic, the four-part screenprint suite “Horse Blinders” by James Rosenquist, Edward Ruscha’s “Insects” portfolio and Andy Warhol’s ten Mao screenprints. Multiples, Inc. brought out etchings by the theatre director Robert Wilson and the stage props he designed, and were the first to publish works by Joseph Beuys and Marcel Broodthaers in the USA. For several decades Multiples, Inc. also continued to collaborate steadfastly with Richard Artschwager and Sol LeWitt. In 1977 Multiples Inc. became incorporated into the newly-founded Marian Goodman Gallery. The extent of the publishing activity is documented in the catalogue of the exhibition, which also provides a complete list of all the multiples and the prints published.



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in conversation about Multiples, Inc.:
<https://www.mariangoodman.com/mgg-presents/multiples/>