



From the Lives of the Saints, 1975
collage on paper, 29 1/4 x 27 3/4 in. (74.3 x 70.5 cm)

R.B. KITAJ

COLLAGES & PRINTS, 1964—75

6 NOVEMBER 2019 – 18 JANUARY 2020

OPENING RECEPTION: WEDNESDAY, 6 NOVEMBER, 6-8PM

“Printmaking ... is as close to SPONTANEITY
as I’ve ever managed to come.”

R.B. Kitaj, 1967

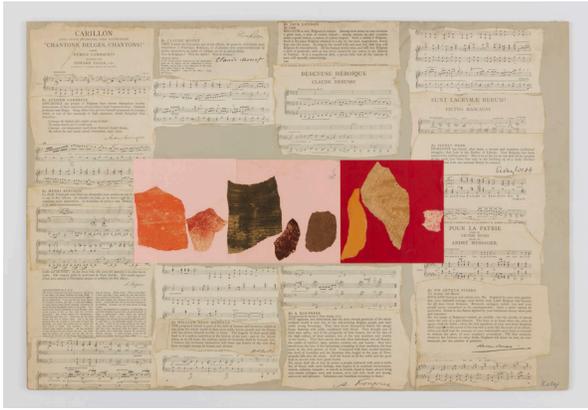
Venice, CA -- L.A. Louver is pleased to present an exhibition of collages and related prints by R.B. Kitaj (American, 1932-2007).

Kitaj used fragmented figuration and repetition to tell stories and develop narratives in his work. A self-proclaimed bibliomaniac; prodigious reader and writer; inspired by art historians Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl, Kitaj sought to investigate relationships between content and iconography, and image and word through layered compositions. The technique of collage offered the most immediate expression of this impulse, one in which he combined his own drawing with found images and text. In turn, the collages formed the basis of his prints. While Kitaj’s prints have been seen widely over the past five decades, this exhibition is the first time the artist’s collages are on public view. Both collages and prints span the 12-year period from 1964 to 1975. They include works Kitaj made immediately following his graduation from the Royal College of Art; while living in the United States, teaching at Berkeley (1967-68) and UCLA (1969-71), and afterwards when he returned to London.

Around 1962 Eduardo Paolozzi introduced Kitaj to the printer Chris Prater, who ran Kelpra Studio in London. Prater, who trained as a commercial printer, had recently begun to make fine art screen prints with artists who were emerging at the time, including Patrick Caulfield, Richard Hamilton and Bridget Riley, as well as Paolozzi himself. Screen printing involves a stencil that is either hand cut and attached to a woven mesh screen, or photographically transferred to the screen, blocking it in some places, leaving it open in others. Ink is then forced with a rubber blade through the open areas of the mesh into the paper below. The technique allows artists to work quickly and offers a wide spectrum of both bold and subtle colors.

Collaging gave Kitaj the freedom to explore a wide and diverse range of interests including poetry, literature, music, art and film. It allowed him to pursue the arcane and offbeat, and the results showcase his evident delight in creating obtuse juxtapositions that appear as visual puzzles asking to be decoded.

Kitaj’s collages also served in various ways as source material for his prints. Sometimes collage and print would be almost identical, such as *The Gay Science*, 1965 and *From the Lives of the Saints*, 1975; or he might sample an aspect of a collage and use it in different prints as with *Untitled (Heart/I’ve Balled Every Waitress in This Club)*, 1966. On occasion he used a small collage in a more complex print composition as with *Untitled (Glue-Words)*, 1967; or include his own drawing or painting in a composition, such as *Black Sea Abstract*, 1964, which he incorporated into the print *Old and New Tables*, 1964. A seemingly infinite range of options was possible and Kitaj relished sampling and experimenting. As the artist later wrote in his autobiography *Confessions*



Untitled (Heart / I've Balled Every Waitress in This Club), 1966
collage on paperboard, Board Dimensions: 32 x 22 in. (81.3 x 55.9 cm)



I've Balled Every Waitress in This Club, 1967
color screenprint, 22 7/8 x 32 5/8 in. (58.1 x 82.9 cm), Edition of 70

of an Old Jewish Painter: "I kept doing it because Chris was a magician and a wonderful guy and each collage egged me on..." Artist and master printmaker developed a very close collaborative relationship over this period, Kitaj trusting Prater's judgment implicitly. Whether working close by in London, or thousands of miles apart when Kitaj lived in California, they maintained a constant dialogue, with a stream of communication by mail going back and forth between the two men: collages and letters of instruction from Kitaj, responses and proofs from Prater. Once Prater had finished using the collages in the printing process he returned them to Kitaj, and they remained in the studio until the artist's death in 2007.

R.B. Kitaj was born in 1932 near Cleveland, Ohio. He traveled as a merchant seaman, before serving in the United States Army in Europe 1956-58. Settling in England, he attended the Ruskin School of Art, Oxford University, and in 1959 transferred to the Royal Academy of Art. Following the barrage of negative press surrounding his 1994 Tate retrospective, and the sudden death of his wife Sandra Fisher at the age of 47, Kitaj relocated to Los Angeles in 1997 where he spent the final decade of his life. In 1982 Kitaj was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters and in 1985 became a Royal Academician. In 1995, he received the Golden Lion Award at the *Venice Biennale*, and a year later was awarded the Chevalier of Art and Letters from the French Government. His paintings are included in numerous private and public collections worldwide, including the British Museum, Royal Academy of Art and Tate, London; The Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, to name a few.

L.A. Louver was founded in 1976. The gallery opened its doors to the public in the burgeoning arts neighborhood of Venice Beach, CA, with the objective of positioning artists from both Southern California and abroad within an international context. L.A. Louver first exhibited Kitaj's work in *This Knot of Life*, 1979, followed by *The British Picture*, 1988. A solo show of paintings and drawings was presented in 2003, and a posthumous exhibition in 2013.

L.A. Louver thanks the artist's estate and especially Tracy Bartley, director of the R.B. Kitaj estate, for invaluable assistance with the exhibition.

Concurrently on view at L.A. Louver (24 October 2019 – 18 January 2020)

Edward and Nancy Kienholz: The Merry-Go-World or Begat by Chance and The Wonder Horse Trigger (1988-92)

One of the artists' most ambitious tableaux, this is the first time this large-scale work will be shown in Los Angeles since it first debuted at L.A. Louver in 1992.

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Third Eye

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