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**EDITIONS WITH ADDITIONS: WORKING PROOFS  
BY JASPER JOHNS  
ON VIEW AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART  
OCTOBER 11, 2009 THROUGH APRIL 4, 2010**

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#### Jasper Johns

##### ***Target with Four Faces, 1968***

screenprint, working proof with chalk, ink, and collage

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund and Special Friends of the National Gallery. Art © Jasper Johns/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Washington, DC (Updated October 1, 2009) —The prints of Jasper Johns (b. 1930) are heralded for their beauty as well as their conceptual and psychological complexity. A group of the artist's "working proofs"—prints pulled during the working process on which Johns made drawn and painted additions—will be showcased as independent works of art for the first time in an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art, Washington. On view in the East Building from October 11, 2009, through April 4, 2010, ***Editions with Additions: Working Proofs by Jasper Johns*** will present some 40

works on paper selected from approximately 1,700 proofs for 300 lithographs, etchings, and screenprints that the National Gallery has acquired from the artist.

This extraordinary body of work, which incorporate a range of media that includes graphite, pastel, ink, and watercolor, has been created and carefully annotated by Johns over four decades. It will be the largest institutional repository of works by Johns.

Generous support for the Jasper Johns acquisition has been provided by Patrons' Permanent Fund, Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr., Glenstone, Mr. and Mrs. Frederic C. Hamilton, Gail and Benjamin Jacobs, Jo Carole Lauder, Robert and Mary Looker, Robert E. Meyerhoff and Rheda Becker, John and Mary Pappajohn, Sharon and John D. Rockefeller IV, Vicki and Roger Sant, and Andrew and Denise Saul.

"Jasper Johns is one of the most influential figures in the history of postwar art. The National Gallery of Art's and the donors' commitment to his work honors its profound historical significance," said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art.

### **The Exhibition**

Johns' proofs—including state and color trial proofs as well as working proofs—mark stages within the development of his printed images. It is in this context that his working proofs are best known. Part drawing and part print, the working proofs offer the additional opportunity to view Johns' motifs through the expressive lens of this combination of media, affirming the artist's comment that "an aspect always of interest to me is to develop an idea or an image and execute it in different ways to determine what its meaning could be."

The exhibition is arranged chronologically, and several works are on public view for the first time. The initial section of the show features working proofs from the 1960s and 1970s to introduce several motifs that Johns continues to revisit in paintings, drawings, and sculpture as well as in prints: letters of the alphabet, targets, names of colors, and body parts. Some of the artist's ongoing formal concerns are highlighted as well, such as repetition in *Cups 4 Picasso* (1972), and the rotation of imagery in *Passage III* (1967), a working proof related to a rare unpublished print.

Works in the second section include complex compositions from the 1980s and 1990s, in which Johns introduced autobiographical references, such as an image of his shadow, family photographs, a

floor plan of his grandfather's house, and works of art by others that he admires, including ceramic objects by George Ohr (1857–1918). Paralleling the visual and conceptual density of the printed imagery, Johns' additions to his proofs became bolder and increasingly diverse in these later works, seen in several works entitled *After Holbein* (1993 and 1994).

In addition to allusions to Holbein, the exhibition includes visual references to Marcel Duchamp, Buckminster Fuller, Matthias Grünewald, and Pablo Picasso, suggesting the breadth of Johns' engagement with artistic predecessors.

All of the working proofs on view are selected from the National Gallery of Art's recent and ongoing acquisition of the artist's personal collection of proofs for his print editions, assembled throughout his career. Documenting changes he made before achieving the final images, they provide nuanced insight into Johns' artistic process.

### **Jasper Johns and Printmaking**

Jasper Johns is internationally acknowledged as one of the most important artists of the postwar era. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Johns is a member of American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 1988 he was awarded the Golden Lion, the grand prize at the Venice Biennale. His work is highly provocative, combining intellectual challenge and extraordinarily sensual handling of materials.

Johns was born in Augusta, Georgia, in May 1930. His desire to be an artist dates to his childhood, which he spent in several rural South Carolina towns. He studied art for three semesters at the University of South Carolina before moving to New York in 1949. There he attended classes at Parsons School of Design and worked at a variety of odd jobs before serving in the army during the Korean War, including a period in Japan. When he returned to New York in 1953, Johns engaged with contemporary philosophy, poetry, music, and dance, and he immersed himself in the visual arts, undertaking an intellectual as well as visual pursuit.

In January 1958, marking his first solo New York exhibition, Johns' painting *Target with Four Faces* (1955) was featured on the cover of *Artnews* magazine, thrusting this virtually unknown artist into the public view. A master in many media, Johns is a printmaker of immense curiosity and skill. Since 1960 when he made his first

lithographs, he has added etching, screenprint, and other techniques to his repertoire and has completed more than 300 editions at some of the preeminent contemporary printmaking workshops, including Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles and Universal Limited Art Editions in West Islip, New York.

The indirectness of printmaking, and its capacity to generate multiple variant examples of images, is sympathetic to Johns' urge to revisit and manipulate iconography, materials, and processes in new and highly original combinations. He takes full advantage of the inherent nature of printmaking techniques to reverse and duplicate images. Johns often sets his matrices aside after an edition is completed, sometimes for years, and later reworks them for a new edition, evident from the working proofs on view here for different versions of *The Seasons* (1987, 1990).

Johns' recognizable images and his methods of setting them down—that is, his choice of materials and his many ways of making marks and handling color—combine to function as signs. These signs propose a range of possible meanings for his work. It is up to the viewers, who bring different histories and psychologies to this art, to decode the signs and, led by Johns' clues, discover connections among them. In other words, the viewer assists in creating meanings for the works, which invite multiple interpretations.

During the 1970s and early 1980s Johns made several series of paintings, drawings, and prints that look like abstractions. In them clusters of short, parallel strokes, which Johns termed "crosshatching," cover most of the surface in systematic patterns: for example, the *Cicada* working proof (1981), named after the locustlike insects that molt periodically as they develop from larvae into winged adults. Johns switched from secondary colors (violet, orange, green) at the sides to primary colors (red, yellow, blue) at the center, suggesting with these changes in color the metamorphosis of one thing into another.

The sensual beauty of Johns' handling of materials in these working proofs encourages repeated viewings. Simultaneously, the conundrums embedded in Johns' imagery encourage the viewer to consider the range of possible meanings in each work and in the relationship of Johns' drawings and prints to one another and to his works in other media.

#### **Curator and Related Activities**

The curator of the exhibition is Ruth Fine, curator of special projects in modern art, National Gallery of Art.

On Sunday, October 11, 2009, at 2:00 p.m., Fine will present an introductory lecture *Editions with Additions: Working Proofs by Jasper Johns* in the East Building Auditorium.

#### **Short Description:**

#### **Editions with Additions: Jasper Johns' Working Proofs**

National Gallery of Art, Washington—October 11, 2009–April 4, 2010



Jasper Johns, *Target with Four Faces*, 1968, screenprint, working proof with chalk, ink, and collage, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Patrons' Permanent Fund and Special Friends of the National Gallery

The exhibition will include approximately 45 proofs for lithographs, etchings, and screenprints that the artist expanded in a range of media, including pastel, ink, and paint. The show will be installed in two galleries. The first will feature prints from the 1960s and 1970s, highlighting motifs associated with Johns' art throughout his career such as the alphabet, targets, and body parts. The second gallery will introduce complex compositions from the 1980s and 1990s, among them autobiographical references such as family photographs and art objects owned by the artist. The works are selected from a collection of approximately 1,700 proofs for Johns' prints that he has maintained and carefully annotated over four decades. This extraordinary body of work is being acquired by the National Gallery of Art for its permanent collection.

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#### **General Information**

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday

through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). The Gallery is now on Facebook—become a fan at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering the East and West Buildings. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 x 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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