

**HORSE AND RIDER: THE PHOTOGRAVURES OF CYNTHIA BRANTS**

By

**SARA JANE BLACKWOOD**

Master of Arts, 2007  
Texas Christian University  
Fort Worth, Texas

Submitted to the Faculty  
Graduate Division  
College of Fine Arts  
Texas Christian University  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS**

May, 2007

Thesis approved:

---

Dr. Mark Thistlethwaite, Major Professor

---

Dr. Marnin Young

---

Dr. Frances Colpitt

---

Jane Myers, Curator of Prints and Drawings, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas

---

H. Joseph Butler, Graduate Studies Representative

For the College of Fine Arts

Copyright © 2007 by Sara J. Blackwood  
All rights reserved

CONTENTS

ESSAY.....1

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....21

EXHIBITION HISTORY.....23

ILLUSTRATIONS.....27

CATALOG ENTRIES.....35

VITA

ABSTRACT

## INTRODUCTION

Known primarily as an abstract painter, Cynthia Brants (1924-2006) was a prolific artist who worked in an array of mediums, including sculpture and printmaking, until the day she died. Born and raised in Fort Worth, Texas, Brants traveled extensively, exposing herself to the world of modern art. More than just an artist, Brants also taught art on the college level and was a respected horse rider. Because of her intense passion for riding, horses and riders became dominant subjects within Brants' works.

While Brants is known for her paintings, her photogravures particularly show her originality. Incorporating the art of origami into her photogravure process, Brants utilized a technique traditionally reserved for photography and reproductions. By bringing the waning technique to the level of fine art, and incorporating the art of Japanese paper folding into the process, Brants produced a style innovative and strikingly sculptural, while simultaneously looking to the past and calling attention to a printing process that had fallen by the wayside. Exhibited alongside her paintings and sculptures, Brants' photogravures are the culmination of her stylistic experimentation in search of a unique mode of representation for the subject of horse and rider, which the artist held so personal. Focusing specifically on fourteen photogravures in her personal collection, this thesis addresses the horse-and-rider subject in the artist's prints. Formatted as an exhibition catalog with introductory biography and thematic essay, it serves to document the equestrian prints of Brants, as well as provide a scholarly account of the life and artistic contributions of an artist who is relatively unknown today.

Cynthia Brants was an active member of what is known as the Fort Worth Circle. An informal group of artists and friends, the Fort Worth Circle was most active from 1943 to 1958, though the members of the circle continued to produce art well past the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Despite being deemed a “school,” the members did not share a common school of thought. In fact, the group did not give itself a name. Instead, the artists came to be dubbed the Fort Worth Circle only in the 1980s. The term refers to three generations of artists who broke away from regional subjects and introduced modernist art to Fort Worth.<sup>2</sup>

This catalog serves a range of purposes: to offer a brief biography of the artist, to document a small but significant selection of her prints, and to provide a scholarly evaluation of the innovative styles incorporated in her equestrian imagery. Like many of her fellow members of the Fort Worth Circle, Cynthia Brants is relatively unknown despite her showing work extensively, including in New York, and continuing to work diligently until her final days. Because Brants’ artistic contribution has yet to be appreciated fully, it is necessary to provide biographical information about the artist to introduce her artwork adequately. Over the past decade a revival of interest has occurred in the work of Brants and other artists active in the Fort Worth Circle. This growing attention to the artist and her circle has manifested itself in several different ways: the Fort Worth Art Collectors group; the extensive research of a local historian, Scott Barker; a Texas Christian University Masters thesis written in 2005 by Morgan Womack on the paintings of McKie Trotter; and the mounting of a number of exhibitions, including

---

<sup>1</sup> Andrea Karnes, “Fort Worth Circle,” in Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110, ed. Michael Auping (London: Third Millennium Publishing Limited, 2002), 63.

<sup>2</sup> Cynthia Brants, “Lecture for Retrofest” (transcript of lecture presented at the Tarrant County Junior College, Northeast Campus, March 4, 1988,) Curatorial Files, Amon Carter Museum.

“Cynthia Brants: Beyond the Circle,” at the Old Jail Art Center, Albany, Texas, opening in 2007, and a Fort Worth Circle show at the Amon Carter Museum, opening in 2008. Still, most of these artists’ works—including Cynthia Brants’—need cataloging and critical evaluation. In the case of Brants, the cataloging of the artists’ works is underway, but that of prints has just begun. Because of this, it is important to note that not all of Brants’ equestrian and horse prints are included in this essay, but rather a specific selection of prints, her photogravures, that best exemplify her originality and arrival at a suitable style for the horse and rider subject. While ideally I would have included every possible print, the incomplete state of the cataloging of the Brants Estate, at this point, did not allow for such inclusion. Because the prints included in this catalog come from the artist’s personal collection, a few of the available works are the original artist’s proofs, which lack identifying information (i.e. titles, dates, editions). Despite these obstacles, this catalog attempts to chronicle and assess as accurately as possible an important group of prints by Cynthia Brants.

### **LIFE OF THE ARTIST**

Cynthia Helen Brants was born on June 20, 1924, in Fort Worth, Texas, to Harry E. and Elizabeth Humble Brants. The first of two daughters in the affluent family, Brants grew up on what was then her grandfather’s farm west of the city limits. In the summer of 1934, Brants decided she was going to be a painter. Her family had summered on Cape Ann in Massachusetts, an artists’ colony, and after watching artists at work, Brants

“got the bug right then.”<sup>3</sup> Her parents bought her first set of paints that year during a visit to the 1933-1934 World’s Fair in Chicago. When she attended public school at North and South Hi Mount Schools, education in drawing and painting was extremely limited, so she began studying at the Fort Worth School of Fine Arts in 1936, under the tutelage of the well-established artist Blanche McVeigh (1895-1970).<sup>4</sup> It was she who first introduced Brants to printmaking. Although etching was not taught at the Fort Worth School of Fine Arts, McVeigh taught the process privately to those whom she thought would take advantage of the technique. On McVeigh’s own Sturges press in 1938, Brants made her first print: an aquatint of a rodeo clown and his donkey, which she entitled *Parkyakarkus* (Fig. 1).<sup>5</sup>

Brants continued to study art at the School of Fine Arts, while she attended Stripling Middle School and Arlington Heights High, until she moved to Virginia to attend the Madeira School. Upon graduating from boarding school in 1941, Brants enrolled in Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. While at Sarah Lawrence, the artist studied painting under the abstractionist Kurt Roesch (1905-1984). At the time, the college utilized a seminar system of one class a week in each subject, with more than fourteen hours of preparation for each class. Students were encouraged to develop their own style while still learning the basics.<sup>6</sup> While attending Sarah Lawrence, Brants also began studying etching and engraving at Stanley William Hayter’s Atelier 17, New York City. As a printmaker, Hayter had considerable influence in the printing and artistic communities because of his revival of the workshop practice, and because he was “an

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Brants Lecture.

<sup>5</sup> Cynthia Brants, interview by Scott Barker, 9 March 2002, transcript, Archives, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy David, The Fort Worth Press, 5 April 1950.



artist with a philosophy, a philosophy that assigns a particular function to art in life, and to the artist in the life of society.”<sup>7</sup> The New School for Social Research offered a course at Atelier 17 and Brants worked and studied there from 1944-1945. The atelier was where Hayter taught not only printmaking techniques, but also automatism and expressive abstraction to aspiring and established artists.<sup>8</sup> While there, Brants worked alongside Jacques Lipchitz, Marc Chagall, and Hedda Sterne.

In 1945, Brants graduated from Sarah Lawrence with her Bachelor of the Arts in painting. She returned to Fort Worth and joined a group of local artists committed to changing the local scene. The group today is known as the Fort Worth Circle. In a lecture given at the Tarrant County Junior College in 1998, Brants explained that though originally this group was referred to as a “school,” and included individuals practicing the musical, theatrical and literary arts, it was the visual artists who the “Fort Worth Circle” came to represent.<sup>9</sup> At Brants’ urging in the early 1990s, the term “Fort Worth Circle” began to gain acceptance over the older “Fort Worth School.”<sup>10</sup> Largely social in nature, the circle shared a common interest in modernism, the desire to discuss ideas, and an eagerness to explore new techniques in printmaking.<sup>11</sup> Varying in age and style, the circle consists of three groups. The original group included Bror Utter (1913-1993), Veronica Helfensteller (1910-1964), Dickson Reeder (1912-1970), Flora Reeder (1916-1995), Bill Bomar (1919-1991), and Kelly Fearing (b. 1918). The second group consisted of artists who joined in the 1940s, such as Brants, Marjorie Johnson Lee (1911-

---

<sup>7</sup> Stanley William Hayter, *New Ways of Gravure* (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1949, 15.

<sup>8</sup> David Cohen, “Hayter, S. W.,” Grove Art Online <www.groveart.com> (24 February 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Brants Lecture.

<sup>10</sup> Scott Barker, “The Path Up: Days of the Fort Worth Circle to 1955,” unpublished manuscript, Amon Carter Museum, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Andrea Karnes, “Fort Worth Circle,” in *Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110*, ed. Michael Auping (London: Third Millennium Publishing Limited, 2002), 65.

1997), George Grammer (b. 1928), and Emily Guthrie Smith (1909-1986). Then, in the 1950s, a third group of artists began exhibiting with the circle, including Charles Williams (1918-1966), McKie Trotter (1918-1999), and Jack Boynton (b. 1928). Despite their differing styles, the artists were all concerned with and intrigued by “art, past and present, from all over the world,” and “were especially interested in the ideas which were born in Europe” and were “assimilated into the work of the more adventurous American artists – such as John Marin, Arthur Dove, Stuart Davis, Charles Sheeler, Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, [and] Charles Burchfield....The possibilities of Cubism, Surrealism, Non-Objective Abstraction, and Abstract Realism as in the work of Picasso, Braque, Klee, Kandinsky, Miro, and Mondrian.”<sup>12</sup>

As a member of the Fort Worth Circle, Brants began to exhibit her works locally; first showing in the Tarrant County Local Artist’s Show in 1946. The Fort Worth Art Association, which was established in 1892, organized the Tarrant County Local Artist’s Shows in 1939, in a “windowless, airless stock room” in the Public Library building.<sup>13</sup> These juried exhibitions were open to anybody who wished to submit a work of art. Works entered into the exhibition could not be created immediately before the hanging of the exhibition; Brants quoted Sam Cantey, prominent Fort Worth lawyer and one of the heads of the Fort Worth Art Association, on this rule, “*No hot ceramics and no wet pictures!*”<sup>14</sup> A leading force in the association and organizer of the exhibitions, Cantey had burnt his hand on a hot ceramic included in one exhibition. Eventually, the exhibitions were moved to a larger space, in what is now the Fort Worth Community Arts Center.

---

<sup>12</sup> Brants Lecture.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Brants Interview.

Besides the Tarrant County Local Artist's Show in Fort Worth, Brants' work appeared in the Texas General Exhibition, the Southwestern Exhibition of Prints and Drawings, and several exhibitions at the Betty McLean Gallery (considered the first contemporary art gallery in the area), all in Dallas. The artist also exhibited nationally: as early as 1951, her work appeared in a "newcomers" show at the Downtown Gallery in New York, which also included pieces by Fort Worth Circle artists Kelly Fearing and George Grammer. In 1952, she contributed to "Texas Contemporary Painters," an exhibition at M. Knoedler & Co., in New York, which traveled to the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, Texas. The following year, the artist was included in the 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of Western Art held at the Denver Art Museum and in "Ten Texas Painters" at the Frank Perls Gallery in Beverly Hills, California. (Cynthia Brants' exhibition history appears at the back of this catalogue.)

While Brants' work was shown nationally, though not necessarily extensively, she had numerous solo shows in the Fort Worth-Dallas area. The Fort Worth Art Association selected a local artist each year for an exhibition, and Brants was the featured artist in 1954 and again a decade later, in 1964.<sup>15</sup> Artists were not allowed to have a second solo show within ten years of their first, explaining the lengthy time between these two exhibitions. Brants also displayed her work in several galleries, including the local Betty McLean Gallery, Carlin Galleries, David Dike Fine Art Gallery, and in New York at the Bodley Gallery.

Although Brants' art appeared primarily in Texas, the artist both traveled extensively and lived for brief periods outside of the state. She had desperately wanted to travel abroad while she was in college, but because of the outbreak of World War II,

---

<sup>15</sup> Brants Interview.

traveling to Europe was not a possibility. Sailing from New York to Liverpool in October 1948, on the Cunard White Star, R.M.S. “Media,” the artist was finally able to visit such cultural centers as Oxford, Rome, Florence, and Paris. It was during this trip that the artist met modern artists, such as the French Dadaist and Surrealist painter, Francis Picabia.<sup>16</sup> Other artists included Nicolas de Staël, who took Brants to the studio of Georges Braque.<sup>17</sup> In 1962, the artist left to teach art at Sarah Lawrence College, replacing her former teacher for a year while he was on leave. She continued as a member of the faculty after his return.

In 1965, Brants settled back in Texas for good, making her home in Granbury, a small town near Fort Worth in which she became personally and emotionally invested. For twenty years, from the 1970s through the 1990s, Brants participated in the revitalization of Granbury, specifically its opera house and courthouse.<sup>18</sup> The artist created sets and props for the opera house, motivated by her relationship with another supporter of the cause, Joann Miller, her close friend and life partner. Brants also served on the local zoning board to help preserve the town’s historic square.<sup>19</sup> With the arrival of a local highway, “chain” restaurants began to emerge in Granbury. Brants wanted these establishments to remain on the highway, instead of creeping into the square. Her deeply-rooted attachment and support of the square most likely led to the establishment of Gallery 206, her own personal gallery, office and studio located directly off the town square. Brants’ gallery studio (she also had a studio in her home) functioned as more than just a workroom. Positioned at the back of the building, adjacent to her office,

---

<sup>16</sup> Texas Modern: the Story of the Fort Worth Circle, Marshall Lee Fletcher and Mark A. Nobles, Bótwäs Multimedia Production, 2003, videocassette.

<sup>17</sup> Cynthia Brants Journal, “It’s a Petite Monde: A Trip,” 1948, Cynthia Brants Estate.

<sup>18</sup> Diana Bonelli, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 23 March 1975.

<sup>19</sup> Jerry Lemke, interview by Sara Blackwood, 11 February 2007.

Brants' studio consisted of several rooms, including storage space for her paintings, prints and sculptures. Brants not only had a printing studio, complete with two flatbed presses for intaglio and lithographic prints, but also a darkroom to create photogravures.

The front of Brants' gallery served as exhibition space. Although modest in size, the gallery allowed the artist another space to exhibit not only her own work, but also the works of other local artists. Keen on the idea of an artist colony, something she had seen when she was younger in New England, Brants wanted to start one in the area.<sup>20</sup> The artist's closest attempt was establishing her gallery as a co-op. The local artists who Brants invited to show at her gallery, such as David Conn, a professor of printmaking at Texas Christian University, only had to pay the cost of the facility's rent.<sup>21</sup> Together these artists not only mounted exhibitions, but also fostered artistic dialogue, which Brants so avidly supported.

Continuing the conversations that took place in the heyday of the Fort Worth Circle, Brants talked about art and printmaking with local artists, such as Conn and Jerry Lemke, a local artist and printer at the former Peregrine Press of Dallas. Brants had paid to utilize the Peregrine Press facilities in the 1980s, before her gallery studio in Granbury was established. Lemke worked with Brants on the photogravure process, including her prints of the Granbury courthouse (part of her attempt to boost support for the maintenance of the historic city square) and some of her equestrian prints. Lemke described Brants as open-minded, liberal in thought, and talkative about art.<sup>22</sup> Engaging in a dialogue with younger artists allowed Brants to pass her knowledge of art and processes on to another generation. In the case of Peregrine Press, photogravure was not

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> David Conn, interview by Sara Blackwood, 5 February 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Lemke Interview.

a technique the printers employed, nor did they have materials for the process. Using her own materials, and those Peregrine Press specially ordered for her, Brants taught Lemke the photogravure process. Now not only do her works remain to spread Brants' artistic innovations, but so do the artists whose lives and art she influenced. This scholarly account of their recollections and her personal opinions continues the dialogue on art she began.

## **HORSE AND RIDER**

In western art, the equestrian subject has served many purposes—as images of authority, warfare, religion, allegorical—and taken innumerable styles. Brants' use of the theme relates directly to her first-hand knowledge of horses and a passion for riding, and explains, or at least lends credence to, the frequency of the equestrian imagery in Brants' prints and paintings. It is, however, the artist's prints that best exemplify the importance of the artist's stylistic experimentation. As horses and riding became common subjects in her prints, Brants began to work progressively in several different styles and mediums. The evolution of style in her equestrian prints suggests a search by the artist to find both a style and medium that suited her beloved subject. With these prints spanning over a period of nearly fifty years, the stylistic variations have ranged greatly from rudimentary linear works, to abstraction, to a unique combination of photogravure and Japanese paper folding, known as origami. The photogravures included in this catalog, prints from the late 1960s through early 1980s, exhibit a particularly fascinating sculptural quality, sense of depth, and increasing complexities in their composition.

Brants' inclusion of the horse and rider into her prints sprang from more than just a desire to represent animals or a sporting theme. Her interest was less objective or scientific, and more personal. She was only six when she first started riding, a few years before she began her formal study at the Fort Worth School of Fine Arts.<sup>23</sup> Thereafter, Brants lived her life with two loves: riding and art. As Brants said in regard to her two passions, "My two different worlds give balance to my life and there cannot be art without balance."<sup>24</sup> While she was attending the Madeira School, she rode in the Fairfax Hunt, made the Riding Club and Varsity riding teams, and won trophies in the hunter and jumper classes. When at Sarah Lawrence College, she still made it a point to ride everyday and attend as many horse shows as possible in the New York area. In 1955, Brants started classes in dressage and flew to Germany in 1957 to further her abilities (Fig. 2).<sup>25</sup> Dressage is a means of teaching a riding horse to be obedient, willing, supple and responsive with minimal or light "aids" from the rider. The goal is to develop the horse's body and mind "harmoniously" in order for the horse to remain balanced and energetic while competing, with its actions appearing effortless and natural.<sup>26</sup> Brants devoted much of her acquired knowledge to the dressage of one her horses, "Pistol," but her favorite horse was her champion hunter, "Colonel" (Fig. 3).

Given her passion for horses and riding, it is not surprising that Brants' love of horses remained her favorite artistic subject.<sup>27</sup> Because horses were one of the artists' favored motifs, numerous prints of the subject in varying mediums remain in Brants'

---

<sup>23</sup> Aline de Grandchamp, Boston Science Monitor, 17 April, 1959.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> "Spectators Guide to Dressage," The United States Dressage Federation <<http://www.usdf.org/AboutUs/SpectatorsGuideToDressage.asp>> (21 February 2001).

<sup>27</sup> Lloyd Stewart, Fort Worth Star-Telegram, [n.d.] 1959.

studio in Granbury. While Brants seems to have kept much, if not all, of her artist's proofs and remaining prints from editions, many of the prints are not signed, dated, or titled. Presently prints are found scattered throughout portfolios and document boxes, waiting for cataloging. Photogravures appear the most artistically significant prints in Brants' collection: they are the most numerous, as well as the most technically proficient and innovative of her prints.

Brants began creating prints as early as 1936, under the tutelage of Blanche McVeigh. By the mid 1940s, when she worked primarily in aquatint, horses and riders became common subjects in Brants' prints. *Horse and Rider*, 1945, exemplifies the works of this period (Fig. 4). An uninspiring work, the etching depicts a horse and rider on an abstracted, depthless background rendered through use of a soft ground. The rudimentary linear style of the horse and rider calls to mind the drawings of a small child attempting to render the subject for the first time. The artist has reworked the physical outline of the head of the horse. Reworking is also evident around the tail and rump of the animal. The legs of the horse are covered with a large printed area created by the soft ground. The multiple lines of the print cause the viewer to read the horse in two separate positions, much like the frames of a movie. Consequently, the horse depicted may be read as in motion, reminiscent of Eadweard Muybridge's *Bouquet with Rider* (.004 second), from *Animals in Motion*, 1957 (Fig. 5).<sup>28</sup> The awkwardness of the horse and the overlapping of the patches of soft ground printing and the figures indicate a degree of early experimentation with medium on the part of the artist. This experimentation by Brants is the method by which she sought a style that best suited her subject.

Brants' stylistic and material experimentation also results from the teachings of

---

<sup>28</sup> This book was found on a shelf in the artist's studio.



Kurt Roesch, her instructor at Sarah Lawrence. As Brants remembered in a 2003 interview, Roesch would say, “I’m not teaching you all the *métier* stuff and how to do. I want you to be clear to the point. Keep your brushes clean. Have a clean rag. And keep your palette clean. But I’m not telling you how to apply pigment.”<sup>29</sup> Though specifically addressed to painting, she applied Roesch’s methodology to other mediums. Brants was taught the fundamentals of art, how to properly maintain her supplies, but she was encouraged to develop her own style through personal experience and experimentation. This freedom to discover attitude allowed the artist to paint/print/sculpt as she wanted.

One artist whose works contain strong stylistic similarities to two of Brants’ prints is the Surrealist and Abstract Expressionist, André Masson. Masson was a colleague of Brants’ at Atelier 17 in the 1940s.<sup>30</sup> His works from the mid to late 1950s, such as *The Abyss* (1955), exhibit a spontaneity of brushwork that “both veils and discloses” the head of a figure in profile (Fig. 6).<sup>31</sup> The white lines of the brush overlap across the work, while simultaneously juxtaposing the multicolored background. The gestural quality of Masson’s brushwork and the marbled colored background bear striking similarities to two abstract works by Brants: *Roping*, c. 1970s, and *War Dance*, 1972 (Figs. 7 & 8). In masses of lines, which like those of Masson, flow across the print in a gestural manner, abstracted figures emerge from the marbled planes of color. The addition of the formal element of color into her prints allowed Brants another means of modifying a print to produce several different versions of the same image that were strikingly different. In the case of *War Dance*, Brants manipulated the colors of the print, producing nearly ten

---

<sup>29</sup> Brants Interview.

<sup>30</sup> Cynthia Brants Journal, May 12, 1945 – April 18, 1947, Cynthia Brants Estate.

<sup>31</sup> Carolyn Lancher, “Andre Masson: Origins and Development,” *Andre Masson* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1976), 190.

different versions of the same print (Figs. 9-11). The artist pushes color by trying different combinations of warm and cool colors.

Looking at the artist's entire body of equestrian prints, the number of intaglio works printed in color totals only three. Like *Roping* and *War Dance*, Brants' work *Gallop*, 1973, was also printed in color, though this work possesses one striking difference from the other two: *Gallop* is not an abstract and linear work, but rather a photogravure of an origami horse (Cat. 7). These three colored prints mark what I believe is an important point in the artist's search for an ideal style to represent the horse and rider. Though Brants began experimenting with color and an abstract, Surrealist style in the 1970s, the artist had already started working in the photogravure process in the late 1960s. This overlap in dates suggests a period in the career of the artist where she was experimenting with multiple styles and processes simultaneously. Ultimately, as Brants worked in these two distinct styles, the artist synthesized specific aspects of the two into one work, *Gallop*. Brants produced no color intaglio prints after this 1973 print, but did continue using the photogravure process well into the 1980s. This continuation of the photogravure technique, and use of origami to render the forms, indicates the artist's preference for photogravure and form over abstraction and color. Mentioned previously, Brants' photogravure prints of origami horses and riders possess a distinctly sculptural quality.

The use of photogravure as a medium for fine art is particularly fascinating, as photogravure is traditionally reserved for photography and reproductions. Photogravure, like most other ink printing methods, is a halftone process where the photographic image is transferred through small dots of varying depth across a metal plate. A

photomechanical process, light is used to harden a sheet of gelatin which is adhered to a sheet of copper. The gelatin resist, which is sensitized with bichromate, is what the artist exposes with a continuous tone positive transparency made from a photograph to produce the image. This gelatin-copper sheet is immersed in an etchant, ferric chloride, which is controlled by a resin. After the etching is complete, the gelatin resist is removed, leaving the tiny dots that are inked to run through an etching press.<sup>32</sup> The photogravure process fills the need of reproduction because it can replicate the stark black-and-white contrast of a line drawing and the complex continuous tonalities of a photograph or, in the case of Brants, translucent wax paper origami horses and riders.<sup>33</sup> It is not surprising that Brants would employ the medium of photogravure, as she had learnt the technique from Hayter while studying at Atelier 17. Considered one of the foremost authorities on what he called “gravure,” Hayter published guides to the practice and theories, including his New Ways of Gravure of 1949. Hayter considered “gravure” a generic term for all forms of art which get their effect from the incision of a groove on some resistant material.<sup>34</sup> Hayter worked in mediums that were otherwise regarded as a means of reproduction, and discovered the artistic potentialities of overlooked processes. New possibilities in photogravure were passed on to Hayter’s pupils, such as Brants, who added original values to the art.<sup>35</sup> In Brants’ case, her incorporation of origami into the photogravure process brought a new sculptural value to the process.

The art of Japanese paper folding has existed for at least four hundred years.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> Notes from “Guide to Contemporary Photogravure,” by Gassen, and notes written by Brants, from the personal files of artist, Jerry Lemke, given to him by Cynthia Brants.

<sup>33</sup> Gary P. Kolb, Photogravure: A Process Handbook (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), xi.

<sup>34</sup> Stanley William Hayter, New Ways of Gravure (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1949), 15.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Susan Orlean, “The Origami Lab,” The New Yorker (February 19 & 26, 2007): 116.

Originally limited to a few basic shapes (boats, hats, cranes, and boxes), origami developed into more elaborate designs. By the 1860s, Japan's isolationism came to an end and resulted in increased travel between Japan and the United States by magicians, among others.<sup>37</sup> Performers, such as Harry Houdini, embraced paper folding and innovated new origami patterns and write their own books on the subject, in which they published their new creations. By the mid 1940s, the American folklorist Gershon Legman became interested in origami and later organized an exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, of origami works by the Japanese prodigy, Akira Yoshizawa.<sup>38</sup> The following year, Robert Harbin, a preeminent British magician, published a book on origami, Paper Magic, which became a bestseller.<sup>39</sup> Harbin published, in 1971, More Origami: The Art of Paper Folding No. 2, which Brants owned.<sup>40</sup> While it is certain that Brants did not attend the exhibition in Amsterdam, the increasing international interest in origami in the 1950s provides an explanation for Brants' interest in origami in the 1960s, though when she became fascinated with origami is uncertain. What makes Brants' origami so notable is that she folded her horses freehand. As the artist's sister, Gretchen Barrett explains, Brants taught herself origami through the numerous books of designs she owned and then "bent the designs to her own use."<sup>41</sup> Brants clearly adapted origami, like the photogravure process, to suit her needs and subjects.

While it is hard to determine when exactly Brants began using origami horses in conjunction with the photogravure process, the earliest dated prints are from 1969. There is one print that arguably could predate these works. *Untitled*, [n.d.], depicts a lone

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> This book was found on a shelf in the artist's studio, along with several other books on origami.

<sup>41</sup> Gretchen Barrett. Interviewed by Sara Blackwood. 24 February 2007.

origami horse on a background that the artist took no effort to alter (Cat. 1). What is left is a background that depicts every fold, crease, and impurity in the wax paper in which the origami horse is sandwiched. The works that date to 1969 possess a dark background that Brants has created by manipulating the photogravure process. The unmodified background may result from Brants foregoing the use of a transparency to develop the resist. Instead, she may have sandwiched the actual wax paper horse between sheets of wax paper, which functions like a transparency, to develop the resist. This would explain the highly detailed image. The simplicity of the composition of the rider-less horse, in conjunction with the unmodified background, points to the print serving as an early experiment in the photogravure process.

In the late 1960s, Brants truly began working in the photogravure process. Included in this catalog are five works dating to 1969. This group of works exhibits an active experimentation by the artist in composition, style, and the registration of the plates. Most of these works are small, with white horse and rider figures isolated on stark black backgrounds. The figures in such works as *Levade*, *Capriole*, and *Courbette* remain distinct reproductions of origami horses and riders, unincorporated into any background (Cat. 2-4). Instead of fitting into a landscape or interior, the figures lay flat on the surface, like a folded paper horse and rider would on a table. The inclusion of multiple figures (horse and rider) makes these works more complex than the likely earlier, untitled work; the figures appear ghostly, lacking depth and weight. Brants may not have found this stylistic outcome completely desirable, as she later printed the three previous plates together as one print, *Equipoise*, 1969 (Cat. 5). Apart from printing the three plates simultaneously, something else points to Brants' dissatisfaction with her

technique. In *Equipoise*, the artist reworked the background of *Levade*, adding a ground to anchor the horse and rider and provide a sense of space.

Another work from 1969, *Leap*, displays another aspect of Brants' early experimentation (Cat. 6). The print depicts an origami horse leaping over a paper fence. Instead of the black background of earlier works from the same year, *Leap* contains an illusionistic space created by a back wall and ground that the artist constructed and photographed with the origami model horse. The appearance of a realistic interior scene represented in the print is emphasized by the shadow cast by the origami horse on to the wall. The figure of the horse has evolved from the ghostly, floating figures of the earlier prints from the same year to a modeled figure which now begins to have a sense of body and weight, emphasizing the sculptural quality of Brants' origami. *Leap* foreshadows the prints which I believe follow in the 1970s.

While only one print—*Gallop* (1973)—in the artist's collection dates to the 1970s, the stylistic similarities between *Leap* and the five undated works (Cat. 7-11) suggest that these works followed shortly after. This leads me to believe that these undated works probably date to the 1970s. Four of these undated prints belong to "The Horse and Rider Series," I include a fifth undated print in Brants' series based on stylistic similarities. These works resemble *Leap* in representing a constructed scene rather than purely reproducing a folded paper figure. Brants depicts in The Horse and Rider Series a combination of competitive horse riding scenes, such as *Jumper Descending* and *For Show*, as well as scenes reminiscent of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century western art (Cat. 8 and 9). One specific work included in the series, *Running*, draws a striking comparison to the works of early twentieth-century western artist Frederic

Remington. With Muybridge's sequence photographs proving that the horse, when running, has all four legs off the ground and tucked under the body rather than spread out in a "flying gallop," artists such as Remington painted images that incorporated this new scientific discovery. Brants depicts a horse and rider in mid-air, much like the horse and rider of Remington's *The Stampede*, 1908 (Fig. 12). While Brants may not have seen *The Stampede* in person, she owned the book Frederic Remington by Peter Hassrick.<sup>42</sup> Published in 1973, the book includes a small reproduction of a detail of the painting which is cropped in the same way as the print produced by Brants. The similarities between the print and the reproduction of *The Stampede* suggest the artist was looking to Remington for subject matter and exemplifies Brants' appreciation for this earlier artist, famous for his rendering of horses in motion. One of Brants' closest friends, Ruth Carter Stevenson, author of the foreword of Hassrick's book and daughter of Amon Carter, an avid collector of Remington and other western artists, contends that Brants "absolutely" had an appreciation for western art, though she would not have seen Mr. Carter's collection until the opening of his museum in 1961.<sup>43</sup>

Brants' increasing complexity in both style and composition peaks with her works of the early 1980s: photogravures that can best be described as sculptural prints. This may seem impossible, as sculpture implies a three-dimensional aspect that prints inherently lack. What I mean is that the origami works that Brants created for the photogravures are sculptures in themselves, with elaborate compositions, subjects, and bases on which they stand. The prints *Bulldogging* and *Shades of Times Past*, 1983, possess the strongest sculptural quality of all the prints Brants produced (Cat. 13 and 14).

---

<sup>42</sup> This book was found on a shelf in the artist's studio.

<sup>43</sup> E-mail from Jane Myers, Senior Curator of Prints and Drawings, Amon Carter Museum, 12 April 2007.

The figures, specifically in *Shades of Times Past*, appear three-dimensional with a strong light emanating from outside the right side of the work. The origami figures and shadows define the forms and produce the illusion of mass. These last photogravures of the horse and rider subject also show Brants coming full circle. While Brants' photogravure style would continue to evolve with these two prints, the artist returned to the stark black background of the 1960s prints. *Bulldogging* depicts a scene that looks realistically set in a deeply recessed space, while *Shades of Times Past* returns to the shallow space with which Brants began her experimentation. This return to the beginning may indicate an artistic dilemma by the artist; she had reached the best way to represent her subject and there was nowhere to go but back to the past. She produced no photogravures after 1983.

There is still much to be learned about the art Cynthia Brants. With the countless paintings, sculptures, and prints created by the artist, the research possibilities are endless. Despite the multiple mediums in which the artist worked, Brants' photogravures, however, show the inventive nature of the artist at its best. Her search to find a medium and style that would represent one of her favorite, and undoubtedly most personal subject, the horse and rider, facilitated an experimentation in several differing mediums that ultimately resulted in Brants' most inventive and ambitious printing technique. By incorporating freehand origami into the reproductive process, and elevating it to the level of fine art, Brants expanded to the possibilities of the medium and continued the innovative artistic tradition of her teacher and mentor, Stanley William Hayter. While Brants, and the rest of the Fort Worth Circle, may not have received the attention they deserve, hopefully this thesis not only offers a scholarly account of a



selection of her prints, but also serves as a valuable start towards the artistic recognition  
Cynthia Brants warrants.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barker, Scott. "The Path Up: Days of the Fort Worth Circle to 1955." unpublished manuscript. Amon Carter Museum, 2006.
- Barrett, Gretchen. Interviewed by Sara Blackwood. 24 February 2007.
- Bonelli, Diana. Fort Worth Star-Telegram. 23 March 1975.
- Brants, Cynthia. Exhibition catalog. Fort Worth Community Art Center. n.d.
- Brants, Cynthia. Interview by Scott Barker. 9 March 2002. transcript. Archives, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.
- Brants, Cynthia. "Lecture for Retrofest." transcript of lecture presented at the Tarrant County Junior College, Northeast Campus. March 4, 1988. Curatorial Files, Amon Carter Museum.
- Cohen, David. "Hayter, S. W." Grove Art Online <[www.groveart.com](http://www.groveart.com)> (24 February 2007).
- Conn, David. Interview by Sara Blackwood. 5 February 2007.
- "Cutting horse." Encyclopedia Britannica. 2007. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9028339>> (12 April 2007)..
- Cynthia Brants Journal. "It's a Petite Monde: A Trip." 1948. Cynthia Brants Estate.
- Cynthia Brants Journal. May 12, 1945 – April 18, 1947. Cynthia Brants Estate.
- David, Nancy. The Fort Worth Press. 5 April 1950.
- de Grandchamp, Aline. Boston Science Monitor. 17 April, 1959.
- "Dressage." Encyclopedia Britannica. 2007. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9031182>> (12 April 2007)..
- Hassrick, Peter. Frederic Remington. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1973.
- Hayter, Stanley William. New Ways of Gravure. New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1949.
- Karnes, Andrea. "Fort Worth Circle." Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth 110. ed. Michael Auping. London: Third Millennium Publishing Limited, 2002.

Kolb, Gary P. Photogravure: A Process Handbook. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986.

Lancher, Carolyn. "Andre Masson: Origins and Development." Andre Masson. New York: The New York Museum of Modern Art, 1976.

Lemke, Jerry. Interview by Sara Blackwood. 11 February 2007.

Muybridge, Eadweard. Animals in Motion. ed. Lewis S. Brown. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1957.

Orlean, Susan. "The Origami Lab." The New Yorker (February 19 and 26, 2007): 112-119.

"Spectators Guide to Dressage." The United States Dressage Federation  
<<http://www.usdf.org/AboutUs/SpectatorsGuideToDressage.asp>> (21 February 2001).

"Steer wrestling." Encyclopedia Britannica. 2007. Encyclopedia Britannica Online  
<<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9069523>> (12 April 2007).

Stewart, Lloyd. Fort Worth Star-Telegram. [n.d.] 1959.

Texas Modern: the Story of the Fort Worth Circle. Marshall Lee Fletcher and Mark A. Nobles. Bótwäs Multimedia Production. 2003. videocassette.

## EXHIBITION HISTORY

### 1946

- 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist's Show, Fort Worth Art Association

### 1947

- 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist's Show, Fort Worth Art Association, February 11-24

### 1948

- 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist's Show, Fort Worth Art Association
- 10<sup>th</sup> Texas General Exhibition, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, October – February 1949

### 1949

- 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist's Show, Fort Worth Art Association

### 1950

- 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist's Show, Fort Worth Art Association
- Fort Worth Art Association, Solo Show, December 4-31

### 1951

- 4<sup>th</sup> Southwestern Exhibition of Prints and Drawings, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, January 21 – February 18
- "Newcomers/A New Generation," Downtown Gallery, New York, May 1-19
- "Spring Membership Exhibit," Texas Fine Arts Association, Austin, TX, May 11 – June 11
- "Nine Texas Painters," Betty McLean Gallery, Dallas, Texas, September 17 – October 13

### 1952

- "Texas Contemporary Artists," M. Knoedler & Co., New York, Selected Group Show, June 10 – September 28
- "Texas Contemporary Artists," Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas, October 11 – November 2
- 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist's Show, Fort Worth Art Association

### 1953

- Betty McLean Gallery, Solo Show, Dallas, Texas, April 9 – May 4
- 59<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition of Western Art, Denver Art Museum, June 15 – August 2
- "Ten Texas Painters," Frank Perls Gallery, Beverly Hills, California, October – November 1

#### 1954

- “Group Exhibition: Gallery Artists,” Betty McLean Gallery, Dallas, Texas, January 16 – February 8
- Fort Worth Art Center, Solo Show

#### 1955

- 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist’s Show, Fort Worth Art Center, March 29 – May 1

#### 1956

- 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarrant County Local Artist’s Show, Fort Worth Art Center
- Texas Fine Arts Association, Paintings and Prints of Cynthia Brants and David Brownlow, Laguna Gloria Art Gallery, Austin, Texas, September 30 – October 28
- 18<sup>th</sup> Texas Annual Painting and Sculpture Show, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, October 6 – November 18
- D.D. Feldman Exhibition of Texas Artists, Traveling Group Show, October 23 – March 31, 1957
- 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition for Painters and Sculptors in Tarrant County, Fort Worth Art Center, December 3-31
- 7<sup>th</sup> Southwestern Exhibition of Prints and Drawings, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, December 30 – January 27, 1957

#### 1957

- “Horse and Rider” Exhibition, Fort Worth Art Center, January 7 – March 3

#### 1958

- “The Contemporary Work of Eighty-Two Texas Artists,” D.D. Feldman Exhibition

#### 1959

- Fifth Avenue Gallery, Fort Worth, Texas, April 4-26
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Exhibition for Painters and Sculptors in Tarrant County, Fort Worth Art Center

#### 1960

- 10<sup>th</sup> Southwestern Exhibition of Prints and Drawings, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, January 17 – February 14

#### 1961

- Fifth Avenue Gallery, Fort Worth, Texas

#### 1962

- Carlin Galleries, Fort Worth, Texas

1963

- Carlin Galleries, Fort Worth, Texas

1964

- Fort Worth Art Center – Solo Show

1967

- Carlin Galleries, Fort Worth, Texas

1968

- “Sphere of Art in Texas,” HemisFair, San Antonio, Texas
- Fort Worth Art Center, Solo Show
- “Watercolors, Drawings, Prints and Small Sculpture From the Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Cantey, III, Fort Worth,” The Museum, Texas Technological College, Lubbock, Texas, October 20 – November 10

1970

- Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, February 22 – March 16

1971

- Bodley Gallery, New York, Solo Show, January 5 – January 16
- “Texas Painting and Sculpture: The 20<sup>th</sup> Century,” Pollock Galleries, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, January 17 – March 7 [Traveled to Little Confluence Museum, San Antonio, Texas; University Art Museum, Austin; Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth; and The Museum, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas]

1973

- Carlin Galleries, Fort Worth, Texas

1974

- “20<sup>th</sup> Century Women Artists in Texas,” Laguna Gloria Art Museum and Longview Museum and Art Center, September 3-29

1975

- Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, March 23 – April 13

1980

- “Twenty-Second Collectors’ Christmas Annual,” Carlin Galleries, Fort Worth, Texas, November 16 – December 24

1986

- “Beyond Regionalism: The Fort Worth School (1945-1955),” The Old Jail Art Center, April – July

1991

- Evelyn Siegel Gallery, Fort Worth, Texas

1992

- “Prints of the Fort Worth Circle 1940-1960,” Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, College of Fine Arts, the University of Texas Austin, September 4 – November 1

1996

- “A Point of View: Texas Women Painters 1900-1960,” El Paso Museum of Art, January 18 – March 30
- Lone Star Regionalist Auction, The McKinney Avenue Contemporary, November 9
- “TEXAS ART of the 50’s and 60’s,” Valley House Gallery Inc.

1998

- David Dike Fine Art Gallery, Solo Show, Dallas, Texas, May
- Valley House Gallery Inc.

2005

- “Celebrating Early Texas Art,” Fort Worth Community Arts Center, Fort Worth, Texas, February 14 – March 26
- Layland Museum, Cleburne, Texas
- “Texas Artist –Living Legend,” Monticello Fine Arts Gallery, Fort Worth, Texas, February 14-26

2007

- “Timeless: A Retrospective of Selected Women Artists of Texas 1940 to Present,” David Dike Fine Art Gallery, April 20 – May 19
- “Cynthia Brants: Beyond the Circle,” The Old Jail Art Center, Albany, Texas, September 29 – December 30

ILLUSTRATIONS

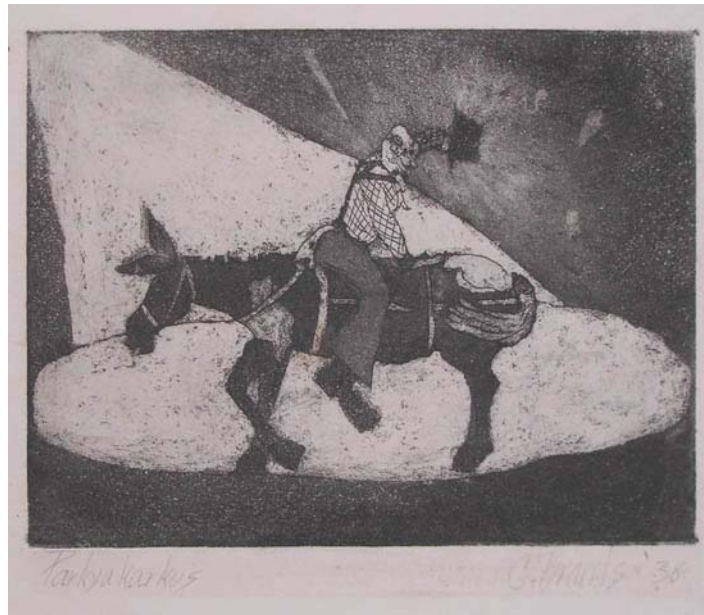


Fig. 1  
Parkyakarkus, 1938  
Etching  
Cynthia Brants' Trust





Fig. 2  
Cynthia Brants  
*Jumping horse*, 1955  
engraving and etching  
Cynthia Brants' Trust



Fig. 3  
Cynthia Brants with Colonel, [n.d.]  
Photograph courtesy of Scott Barker



Fig. 4  
Cynthia Brants  
*Horse and Rider*, 1945  
etching  
Cynthia Brants' Trust

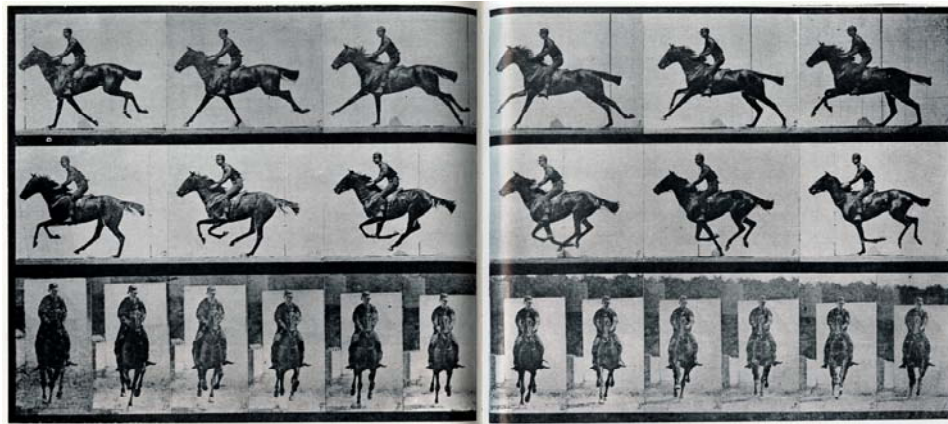


Fig. 5  
Eadweard Muybridge  
*Bouquet with Rider* (.044 second), n.d.  
gravure  
Animals in Motion (1957)



Fig. 6  
André Masson  
*The Abyss*, 1955  
oil on canvas  
Collection Arturo Schwarz, Milan





Fig. 7  
Cynthia Brants  
*Roping*, [n.d.] c. 1970s  
linocut  
Cynthia Brants' Trust



Fig. 8  
Cynthia Brants  
*War Dance*, 1972  
color intaglio print  
Cynthia Brants' Trust

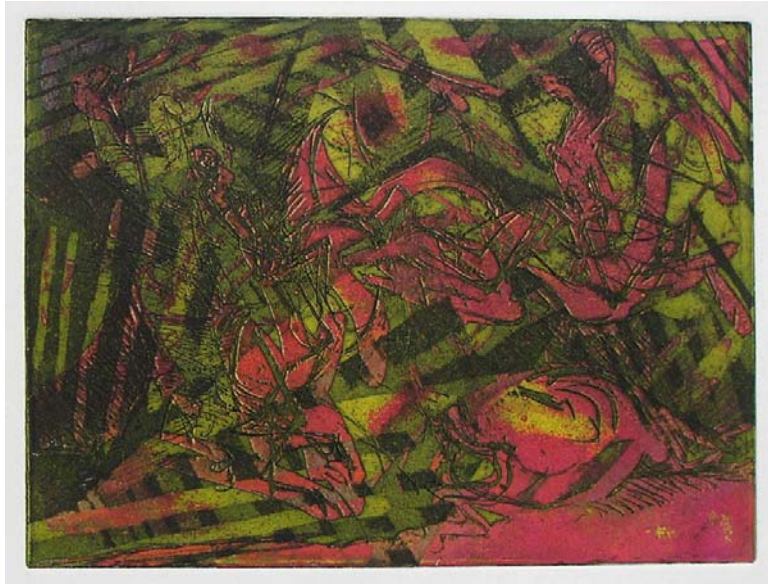


Fig. 9  
Cynthia Brants  
*War Dance*, 1972  
color intaglio print  
Cynthia Brants' Trust



Fig. 10  
Cynthia Brants  
*War Dance*, 1972  
color intaglio print  
Cynthia Brants' Trust





Fig. 11  
Cynthia Brants  
*War Dance*, 1972  
color intaglio print  
Cynthia Brants' Trust



Fig. 12  
Frederic Remington  
*The Stampede*, 1908  
oil on canvas  
Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma



Fig. 13

Frederic Remington

*The Old Dragoons of 1850, 1905*

bronze

Formerly owned by the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas

Deaccessioned in 1988

## CATALOG ENTRIES



Cat. 1

*Untitled*, [n.d.]

Photogravure with aquatint

9 x 12"

Edition unknown

Cynthia Brants' Trust

It is unclear when Brants began working in the photogravure technique to represent the horse and rider. This undated print appears to be an early work in the process. Unlike the works to follow in the catalog, the artist makes no effort to modify the background of the print to hide the wax paper that holds the wax paper horse in place. This may be due to the artist using the wax paper model instead of a transparency to develop the photogravure's resist. The folded corner of this paper is visible in the upper left corner of the print. Brants folded her origami horses freehand, that is, without the use



of a pattern, in translucent wax paper. This horse seen in this print corresponds to a folded wax paper horse found in the artist's studio after her death.



Cat. 2  
*Levade*, 1969  
Photogravure with aquatint  
4 7/8 x 6 1/2"  
19/25  
Cynthia Brants' Trust

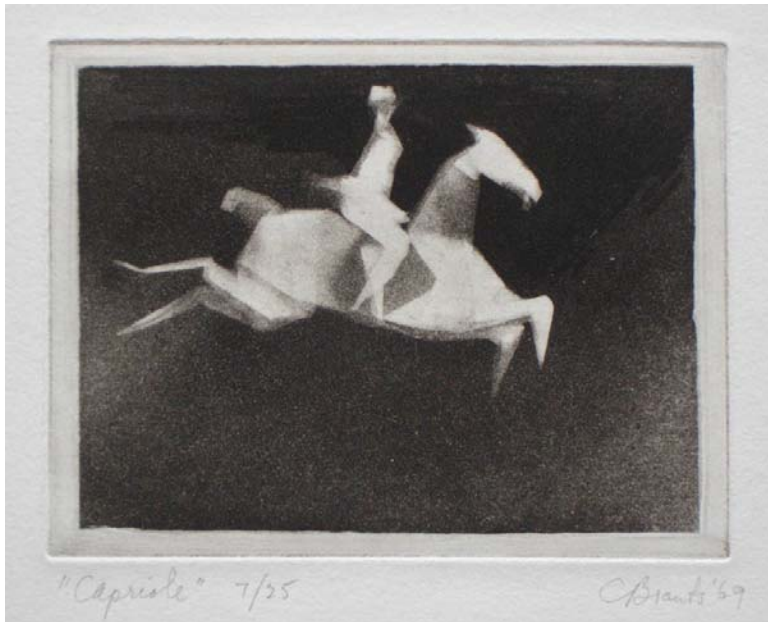
Exhibited:  
Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, February 22 –March 16, 1970

“Levade” is a dressage term that refers to a horse raising up on its hind legs and drawing in the forelegs.<sup>1</sup> Brants’ depicts this dressage maneuver with her folded paper horse, represented in the intaglio print. While the image refers to a specific aspect of dressage, it also recalls the long tradition of portraits of riders on rearing horses. The artist’s early prints from the late 1960s exhibit a stark black background. This shallow space forces the ghostly white origami rider to the surface of the print, forcing it to

---

<sup>1</sup> “Dressage,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2007, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 12 April 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9031182>>.

appear flat on the surface of the paper, much like a photocopy. This process ultimately would prove unsatisfactory to the artist, as a printing of *Levade* included in the work *Equipoise* (1969) includes a reworked background that includes a ground on which the horse stands.



Cat. 3  
“Capriole,” 1969  
Photogravure with aquatint  
4 ½ x 6”  
7/25  
Cynthia Brants’ Trust

Another representation of a dressage maneuver, *Capriole* depicts a horse, with rider, jumping straight upward, with forelegs drawn in, kicking back with its hindlegs horizontal.<sup>1</sup> While this representation of a horse and rider may easily be mistake for a “flying gallop,” a historical representation of a horse in mid-air with all four legs extended, the horse represented is in fact not moving forward at all. Instead, during this maneuver the horse jumps up into the air and lands in the same spot from which it took off.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Dressage,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2007, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 12 April 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9031182>>.

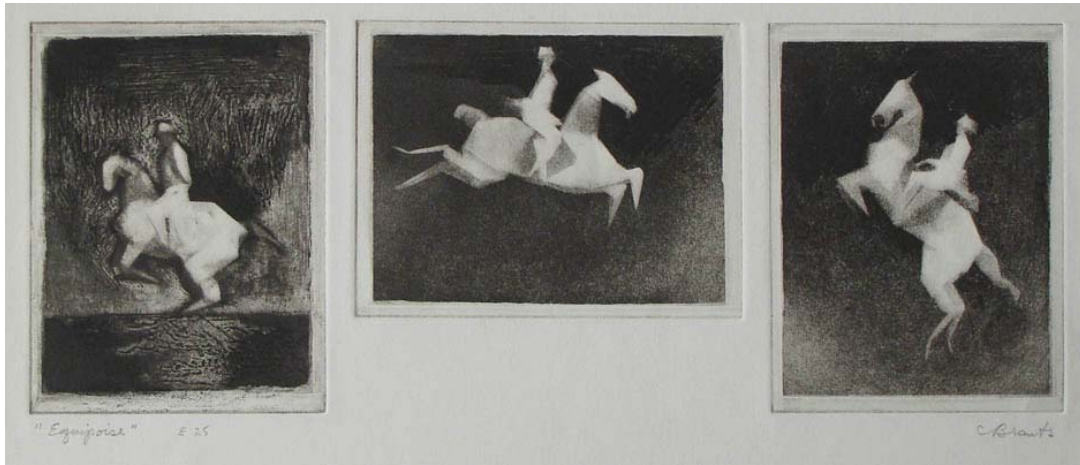


Cat. 4  
Courbette, 1969  
Photogravure with aquatint  
4 7/8 x 6 1/2"  
8/25  
Cynthia Brants' Trust

Like *Levade* and *Capriole*, *Courbette* portrays yet another maneuver in dressage. The “courbette,” or “courvet,” maneuver calls for the horse to rear up into the “levade” position, and then jump forward.<sup>1</sup> Because the intaglio print lacks a ground, it is not readily apparent that the horse is jumping forward off the ground. Instead the figure appears to just be rearing, more so than in *Levade*, in the conventional equestrian portrait tradition.

---

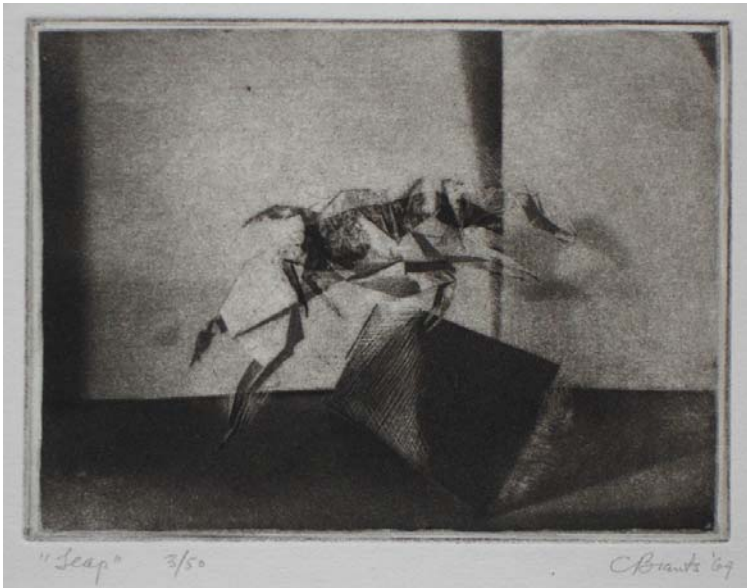
<sup>1</sup> “Dressage,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2007, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 12 April 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9031182>>.



Cat. 5  
Equipoise, 1969  
Photogravure with aquatint  
6 3/8 x 17”  
Edition of 25  
Cynthia Brants’ Trust

Exhibited:  
Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, February 22 –March 16, 1970

Quite possibly the most unique of Brants’ early photogravures, *Equipoise* is a combination of three other early photogravures: *Levade*, *Capriole*, and *Courbette*. The term “equipoise” refers to a state of equilibrium, which is exhibited in the symmetry of the plates’ registration on the paper. Printed side by side, aligned along the top edge of the plates, these share the common stylistic elements of Brants’ early photogravures: light origami figures floating on a black background. The one exception is the image of *Levade*, in which the artist has added a ground and appears to have reworked the background around the horse and rider figures. The result is a feeling that the far left image in this printed triptych does not fit with the other two images, despite their close temporal relation. “Equipoise” was also the name of a champion thoroughbred race horse from the 1930s.



Cat. 6  
*Leap*, 1969  
Photogravure with aquatint  
5 7/8 x 7 5/8"  
3/50  
Cynthia Brants' Trust

Exhibited:  
Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, February 22 –March 16, 1970

Although created in the same year as *Levade*, *Courbette*, *Capriole*, and *Equipoise*, *Leap* does not share the same stylistic characteristics as these other works. Brants has created not only a background, but also a gate for her origami horse to leap over. The horse is read not as a static representation of a dressage maneuver, but rather an active depiction of a horse practicing or competing in a riding event. With the clearly reproduced background providing a definite space in which her origami horse can fit, Brants has evolved her prints into a more complex representation of the subject. *Leap* also exhibits a new means of rendering the figure, with increased modeling to give the horse a greater sense of weight and substance. Brants' works no longer feel like photocopies of flat paper figures. Instead these works have taken on the photographic

quality of the photogravure, which gives the feel of a physical event taking place in the print.





Cat. 7  
*Gallop*, 1973  
Photogravure with soft ground etching  
12 ½ x 5 ½”  
Edition of 5  
Cynthia Brants’ Trust

Exhibited:  
Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, February 22 –March 16, 1970  
Carlin Galleries, Fort Worth Texas, 1973

Unlike the other photogravures included in this catalog, *Gallop*, is the only work printed in color. Created during a period when the artist was experimenting with color, abstraction, and Surrealism, as well as the photogravure process, this print combines color experimentation and photogravure. Printed in pink, orange and yellow, four distinct horses are represented but read as one horse in motion, galloping. These multiple figures’ separate instances of movement, recall the many still frames of a movie, or the photographic studies of Eadweard Muybridge. Indeed Brants’ figures look like they transposed into one another, after being taken directly from *Bouquet with Rider* (.044 second). This propensity to depict the horse (and rider) in a seeming state of movement harkens to the earlier print by Brants, *Horse and Rider*, 1945.



Cat. 8

*For Show* from Horse and Rider Series, [n.d.] c. 1970s

Photogravure with aquatint

8 ¼ x 6 ¾”

6/10

Cynthia Brants' Trust

Exhibited:

Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, March 23 – April 13, 1975

Though the works included in the Horse and Rider Series remain undated, the solidity of the origami figures and clearly defined ground and background of the works places them stylistically with the other Brants works produced between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. Closely related to *Leap*, 1969, these works display more complex figures, which include horse and rider, as well as a greater sculptural quality to figures. Taken from scenes of competitive horse riding and traditional western art, these subjects show an evolution of the artist towards more developed compositions. Like many of the works in this series, the title of the work *For Show* suggests a narrative aspect of the image. The horse and rider depicted in this intaglio print may be competing in a horse

riding competition or demonstrating one of many dressage maneuvers. It is important to note that the title of the work is in dispute. While I contend that the title is *For Show*, the estate of the artist believes it is *Fox Show*. My contentions are based on my own reading of the title written by the artist, as well as records from the Carlin Galleries that list the title of the work as *For Show*.



Cat. 9

*Jumper Descending* from Horse and Rider Series, [n.d.] c. 1970s

Photogravure with aquatint

8 x 10"

5/10

Cynthia Brants' Trust

Exhibited:

Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, March 23 – April 13, 1975



Cat. 10  
*Hunter*, from Horse and Rider Series, [n.d.] c. 1970s  
Photogravure with aquatint  
8 ¼ x 6"  
5/10  
Cynthia Brants' Trust



Cat. 11

*Running* from Horse and Rider Series, [n.d.] c. 1970s

Photogravure with aquatint

8 ¾ x 12”

5/10

Cynthia Brants’ Trust

Exhibited:

Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, March 23 – April 13, 1975

Of all the prints included in the Horse and Rider Series, *Running* draws the most striking comparison to western art of the early twentieth century. Based on Eadweard Muybridge’s sequential photographs proving that the horse, when running, has all four legs off the ground and tucked under the body rather than spread out in a flying gallop, artists such as Frederic Remington created works that exhibited this new scientific knowledge of horses. Brants’ composition shows a horse and rider in mid-air, much like the horse and rider of Remington’s *The Stampede*, 1908 (Fig. 12). While it is not evident whether Brants saw this specific work, her close friendship with Ruth Carter Stevenson,

daughter of the prominent western art collector, Amon Carter, facilitated an exposure to the art of Remington, one of the artists Carter actively collected.



Cat. 12

*Cutting Horse* from the Horse and Rider Series, [n.d.] c. 1970s

Photogravure with aquatint

7 5/8 x 11 1/2"

10/10

Cynthia Brants' Trust

Exhibited:

Carlin Galleries, Solo Show, Fort Worth, Texas, March 23 – April 13, 1975

A cutting horse is a light saddle horse trained to “cut,” or isolate” livestock, especially cattle, from herds. Most cutting horses are quarter horses, possessing intelligence, speed, and the ability to make quick starts, stops and turns. A well-trained cutting horse can maneuver an animal, such as the cow represented in *Cutting Horse*, away from a herd and into a corner with little or no direction from the rider.<sup>1</sup> Many of the prints included in the Horse and Rider Series depict typical events and activities in the life of a cowboy, numerous of which are competitive events in rodeos.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Cutting horse,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2007, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 12 April 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9028339>>.





Cat. 13  
*Bulldogging*, 1983  
Photogravure with aquatint  
9 x 11 ¼”  
12/25  
Cynthia Brants’ Trust

“Bulldogging” is another term for steer wrestling. Like *Cutting Horse*, *Bulldogging* depicts a traditional responsibility of a cowboy, where a mounted cowboy chases a full-grown steer and dives from the horse on top of the animal. The rider then grasps the horns of the steer, digs his heels into the ground bringing the animal to a stop while twisting it to the ground.<sup>1</sup> In this print, the steer is located between two horses, one of which is with the rider who will soon bring the steer to the ground.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Steer wrestling,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 2007, Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 12 April 2007 <<http://www.search.eb.com/eb/article-9069523>>.



Cat. 14  
*Shades of Times Past*, 1983  
Photogravure with aquatint  
8 1/8 x 12”  
8/10  
Cynthia Brants’ Trust

Brants produced this work at the Peregrine Press in Dallas, Texas, with the help of Jerry Lemke, a local Fort Worth artist and printmaker. Complex in its composition, *Shades of Times Past* exhibits the most striking sculptural quality of all of Brant’s photogravures. Unlike *Bulldogging*, the other photogravure printed in 1983, *Shades of Times Past* returns to the stark black background of Brants’ works from the 1960s. This return to the shallow background marks not only the artist’s coming full circle, but the end of Brants’ experimentation with the photogravure process and the horse and rider theme. The title of this work is unlike many of the other photogravures. While the titles of other works explicitly point to the subject of the work, naming specific dressage maneuvers and cowboy terminology, *Shades of Times Past* seems more reflective than direct. Brants takes the subject matter directly from a sculpture by Frederic Remington,

*The Old Dragoons of 1850, 1905* (Fig. 13). The question remains to what “shades of times past” is the artist referring? Is it the time of Remington and his large bronze sculptures, or is it a more distant past represented by the horses and riders in Remington’s sculpture?

The following applies to all works from the Cynthia Brants' Trust:

**ATTENTION:**

**The right to make reproductions and/or derivations of this artwork and documentation, and all other rights conferred by copyright or moral rights under United States or International Law, has been retained by the heirs of the artist. Any person or entity making unauthorized copies, whether by photograph, lithograph, or any other process, infringes on the copyright in this artwork unless permission is obtained from the artist's estate.**

To contact the artist's estate, write to:

RON WENNER  
221 WEST DOYLE STREET  
GRANBURY, TEXAS 76048

[rwenner@yahoo.com](mailto:rwenner@yahoo.com)  
817-219-0555

## VITA

Personal Background	Sara Jane Blackwood Born June 10, 1983, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas Daughter of Robert Emerson and Phyllis Dee Blackwood
Education	Diploma, J.M. Hanks High School, El Paso, Texas, 2001 Bachelor of Arts, art history, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, 2005 Master of Arts, art history, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas, 2007
Professional Memberships	Phi Beta Kappa Kappa Pi American Association of Museums Texas Association of Museums College Art Association

## ABSTRACT

This thesis project is formatted as though it were an exhibition catalog of fourteen horse and rider photogravures from the personal collection of artist, Cynthia Brants. Brants (1924-2006) was a prolific painter, sculptor and printmaker who exhibited with a group of local artists known as the Fort Worth Circle. Though she grew up in Fort Worth, Texas, the artist lived and worked in Granbury, Texas from 1965 until her death. An avid rider since her youth, the equestrian subject was particularly personal to the artist and frequented many of her prints. As she searched for a style and medium, Brants works varied from rudimentary linear works, to abstraction, and finally resulted in a unique combination of photogravure and Japanese paper folding, known as origami. By bringing the photogravure technique to level of fine art and incorporating the art of Japanese paper folding into the process, Brants produced a style that is innovative and sculptural, while simultaneously looking to the past and calling attention to a printing process that had fallen to the wayside.

Additionally, this catalog includes a brief biography of the artist, as well as an exhibition history and section of catalog entries. This work is not intended to serve as the definitive word on Cynthia Brants. Instead, it aims to shed light on a select portion of the artist's works and to provide an impetus to the artistic recognition Brants warrants.