

## **Interview with Peter Weaver at his house**

It's Graham Smith and Margaret Ashman talking to Peter Weaver and Felicity Weaver  
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**Peter we'll start,  
How did you get into Printmaking?**

How did I get into Printmaking, oh, yes, that's right yes, St Martins, um, I was doing a foundation, or what was, it wasn't called foundation was it,

Intermediate (Felicity)

Intermediate, that's right, you had to have a craft, in this case it was lithography that I took up. I used to do awful little pictures of people coming out of graveyards and tombs, rather mysterious kind of, rather grim little things. Then I went onto Camberwell where I continued doing litho, not very much to be said about that except that Michael Rothenstein was the teacher there when I was a student there, that would be in 1952. And then I went onto the slade as many people from Camberwell did, and I did litho there, that's right, and then the thing was that after that when I was looking round for jobs of one kind and another, and I went to Camberwell and think there had been some slight problem about the people who were there before me, Cackett and Watson, who were the two people teaching litho before me there, anyhow, partly because Felicity was also teaching there, weren't you Felicity, and so I got a job teaching litho there. And I taught litho for, quite a long time I suppose. I was teaching for about 30 years there and then most of the teaching I did really became after the teaching litho, was to do drawing, location drawing, that kind of thing, for the graphic design area.

**At one point you wrote a book on litho**

That's quite right, that's right yes, I was asked to write a book on it. I don't know why, how that happened. The thing I do remember about it was that when I was writing it I was explaining it to the editor of it that I couldn't spell you see because I'm rather dyslexic, and she said don't bother about spelling because we've got typists that spell and I thought to myself 'good' geniuses don't have to bother to spell..... That was Batsfords.

I did another book too on it called 'Printmaking as an approach to basic design' Basic design was a thing that suddenly came in in a big way and it went out in a big way. It was forgotten about.

You did what's called basic design.....

**At what stage did you become a member (of the PmC)**

Michael as I was saying had his room on the other side of the corridor teaching woodcutting and linocutting and I was on the other side of the corridor teaching lithography in the litho room and he came across one day and said Peter, what do you think about the idea of us trying to start and

other people were of course were involved, Bernard Cheese obviously because they lived near one another and probably Stanley Jones, because he was always in, the big litho man, and as an upshot of that we had another little meeting together at, what's the name of the place, the restaurant, Bertorellis\*, there was Michael Rothenstein, and probably Stanley Jones, but there was only about five people there, only about five sitting round the table, near the way out, or the way in, just chatting about it and I think that's where we decided that we would make the thing bigger and use the RBA gallery, Suffolk Street as a place to set up a meeting for a lot of people. So I suppose, I can't remember what I did towards that except that I, we just asked people that we knew if they would like to come along and think about it, but Michael Rothenstein obviously would have the most people because, you know, he was the big name.

Where did Birgit Skiold, where did she come into it? Was she early on?

She would have been early on, yes, yes.

But she wasn't at that, at those early meetings

No, no, she wasn't at that, but she was at the meeting at the RBA gallery, almost certainly, because there would have been 20 or 30 people at that.

That wasn't very much later, was it.....

That must have been the beginning. That must have been the beginning when it really started to work, as an organisation.

So initially it was the idea being floated.

That's right, yeah. People being asked whether they were interested in joining it and making it, and presumably making a contribution.

Can you remember when they went about applying for funding? To the Arts Council?

I don't remember anything about any of that, I mean the thing is.... I think Michael was the one who had all the contacts, if there was the Arts Council it would have been Michael who would have been able to organise it. Michael Rothenstein and his family have always been in, the Art World haven't they.

There seemed to have been an American Printmakers Council as well or prior to it

Was there really?

So I wondered whether they got the name from America? Or whether it was because of the British Council and that kind of organisation.

There was a time when they wanted to change the name of the Printmakers Council.

Oh, that's interesting.

There was some talk about it. One of these things, you've established the name, a patent as it were, a sort of trade name as it were and it's silly to change it, because why, you're starting again if you change the name of it. There was a little, there was a meeting at some stage or other in which that was suggested.

Recently we've had discussions round that, haven't we

I think it's something that they ask the members every ten years or so....

What would you change it to? (Felicity Weaver)

Well, we decided to keep it

You can't think of anything better in the end, can you (Felicity Weaver)

So really the motive for joining other than it being suggested it would be a good thing, was there anything as a sort of motive for joining as a group?

No, we just wanted to have somewhere where we could exhibit, and make a point about the importance of printmaking, and I think we were thinking of International Biennales, setting up International Biennales and things like that, but of course that never really got off the ground and we were simply a sort of organisation just like I suppose any of these things, RBA, RI and any of those sorts of clubs as it were for exhibiting, it was just another one of those. The only thing we failed to get is an 'R' at the beginning of it. We ought to invite the Prince of Wales, you know, he likes helping people,

Well, there was the RE I suppose

There was the RE as you say, yeah.

I'd heard mention that the Print Biennale was also one of the things that spurred people on to getting a group

That may be, that may be

That it was linked somehow to that aim

Yeah

They recently had one on the continent somewhere, France

I daresay that some educational ideas were around as well, but in the end it's going to be just exhibiting isn't it. That's how it turned out anyhow.

Let's get onto contribution then that PmC has made to British Printmaking, do you consider it's been a good.....

I think it certainly has, yes

The fact that it has gone on for so long must mean something

Yes, it gets groups of people together in exhibitions and talking together. In certain ways it's a club as well as a place to exhibit because people are bound to get together, hanging committees and all those kinds of things, sort of argue with one another, and yes there's quite a lot of that going on, and has gone on

Do you remember any of that social aspect?

Really at the private views more than anything else.

Was it PmC where they had all that port? (Felicity)

Oh, I think you may have got onto something there. That's right, that's an interesting anecdote. Of course with the amount of drinking that went on ..... Harvey Daniels organised a party for us at a Yacht club down on the river somewhere beyond Hammersmith, there's a Yacht Club there and he for some reason or other knew about it. We hired the room and had a party there. He organised it all because he was quite into that kind of thing, Harvey Daniells, and um, the band didn't turn up and because we'd paid and that kind of thing he tried to work out, well Okay, he walked round, the table was all continuous as you were all sort of all together in a big party, chatting and shouting and all that kind of thing and he just put bottles of port in intervals all the way round it, you see, so that you had a bottle of port between about two people, probably four actually, but anyhow I remember that because we were all.... we're talking about 1 o'clock, 2 o'clock in the morning now and we'd all come by car, and we were obviously driving away absolutely tanked up with this port wine, except of course back in those days, it's a long time ago now, it must have been in the 70s I suppose..... And of course there were no cars on the road anyhow so if you wove around a bit perhaps nobody would notice and of course it was well before they had, what do you call it, breathalysers.

I think there was some things some social things weren't there (Felicity)

You're better at remembering than I am

I get mixed up because some were the illustrators things, I seem to remember near your Yacht club I suppose and almost driving into the Thames (Felicity)

Did anything happen at that Yacht Club, what's the name of that..... Yacht club,

The Greenwich

The Greenwich, did we ever hold anything there? I don't know that we did

No it wasn't there but it was somewhere in that area, I just remember that that's all (Felicity)  
It's one of those things that you can point to the area and say down over there but actually the river is in between

A club that did try and start was the Senefelder. I forget who tried to..... that's specifically for lithography you know. But of course lithography's a ..... If you sort of limit it to one technique of course you are going to have not so many chances of getting membership

Was that a separate club or within the Printmakers Council

Oh no no, that was a completely separate thing. There had been a Senefelder Club before the war I think but they were trying to re-establish it.

Did it have a premises, when you were trying to.....

No, no

There was no office base

No there wasn't

It must have all happened from where ever the Chair's house was

Yes, well, I think it was just an idea that really..... they tried to re-establish it, I don't know what sort of premises they used to have before the war, but you know.....

No, I mean PmC.....

Oh, the PmC.....

Yeah, did that have an office....

Well it had that place in, where is it darling?

Clerkenwell

Clerkenwell, they had a place in Clerkenwell. Do you remember that.

No, I've just heard about it.

Let's see, where there's a block of, sort of warehouses I suppose, which were full of a lot of different people working

Crafts people (Felicity)

Crafts people working there, yes, that's right and er we had an office there, that's right. The printmakers Council had an office there where the administration went on and where pictures were kept, and also lost or whatever, you know

..... place where you could put the pictures round, where you could choose them for exhibitions and so on, it was very good. But you must know more than me. There was some sort of, somebody took all the money somehow and then they had to move into Bermondsey.  
(Felicity)

Oh yes there was some sort of .....

Didn't get as far as having like a gallery.....

Oh no

I think I read that Birgit wanted there to be a workshop for foreign printmakers to come

Yes, that was very bad luck for her, wasn't it, yes, I mean when she died

Birgit's Skiold's press eventually went to Morley didn't it

It seemed to disappear (Felicity), Maybe they didn't really want it, it was the wrong size or something. They didn't have much room there.

Birgit did have a little school of her own, didn't she. In a little place, in where was it, Charlotte Street.

I think it was, yes, so did they used to hold meetings at her.....

Not as far as I know, but I don't know

I think she'd died before they lost the place in Clerkenwell, you know

Right, are there any other memorable things you can think of...about particular shows or, while you were a member

The main thing is all that port wine.....

I remember reading there was a show with the American group

Yes, that was one of the first shows....

At the Barbican Gallery, that was after your time.....

The London Group used to exhibit at the Barbican Gallery at one time but the London Group broke up

Is that still going, isn't it (Felicity). We used to be at that Gallery near Morley

You could hardly call that a gallery, it had those big exhibitions at the Barbican but otherwise it really

So the early shows, there were some in America, at the Argus Gallery at the AAA gallery, this was very early on in the sixties, and then the touring exhibition went to Bradfore, Derby, Oxford, Birmingham..... does that ring any bells

Not specially, no, I mean, the Bear Lane gallery in Oxford I do actually know, but apart from that. I did try and show some of my bits of sculpture there but they weren't interested.

So were you on the committee? Do you remember?

Do you remember the committee members?

I think I actually steered fairly clear of it all actually

Harvey Daniels was chair at one time

Is he still alive or did he die (Felicity)

He died recently, 6 months ago

Yes, well he was always at Brighton wasn't he. I'll tell you who was there really early on and that's the, what's the ladie's name now, she does those prints that are photographs of gardens, what's her name darling? That's Jennifer Dickson. She was a very early member I remember. Yes, her name was definitely there.

Agatha would have been there

Well she was a student of course

Another thing that they did was create an index of printmakers. Do you remember that.

I don't remember that but I have another idea that they actually did do was an index sort of thing of the equipment held by various schools throughout England, Art Schools, how many presses each one had, I only remember that because Camberwell had so many more than anybody else. It's still got 5 transfer presses so that's quite a lot of transfer presses in the litho room and a couple of offset presses.

The slade was another school that was quite involved. People that worked and taught at the Slade.

You reckon so? I was at the Slade but I don't especially remember that although

Dos Santos, he was an early person or something (Felicity). He taught at the Slade, he was an etcher. I always thought he was good, did you like it?

I just know the name

They were fairly small but fairly interesting, on the whole people often have bigger things.

The first international print biennale, in this country, I know the Printmakers Council were involved because there were two or three on the committee,

Oh really,

Yeah, choosing the work for that and arranging that, I would have thought they probably instigated that, because you mentioned the biennale

Yeah, that's right, yes, I mean I know that was one of the things they thought ..... it never really came off, this biennale set up and coming off every couple of years, you know

Oh yeah

Oh did it really

About seven of them

Biennales?

Yes, every two years. I've got catalogues at home

I think in the end they couldn't find a venue that was cheap enough or the venue disappeared

They had an auction didn't they (Felicity). Do you remember the auction? I don't think you were a member then. I don't know that I was either. I remember that when we went noone wanted to buy anything.

That wasn't anything to do with the Printmakers Council

Not one.....(F)

[They did have auctions](#)

Oh did they

No, the one you were thinking of was different (F) This one was Printmakers

Oh really, obviously I don't know much about it

I remember going..... I must have gone to see how it was going..... we didn't stay very long..... No one wanted to buy anything..... At least they wanted to buy somebody well known cheaply (F)

I think we've probably got all we can get?

Unless we can jog your memory further somehow?

Tell me who else is there around who was very early on?

Well, there's Clem Beer

Clem Beer, have you talked to him at all?

No, not yet, we've only talked to Adrian.

Adrian Bartlett?

We're going to talk to Agathe Sorel

Agatha, yes..... Agatha was actually a sort of Chairman at one time wasn't she?

She did the Imprint. She was the editor of Imprint

Do you remember anything like that at that time

I remember Agatha as a student, in litho certainly, but apart from that I lost contact with her

Apparently the first Imprint was just on one theme and then the second one was on a different theme, so, I think the first one was on materials and on printmaking supplies, and they had to get in checked by a lawyer to make sure that they weren't saying anything that was going to cause difficulties..... And then the second one was on education. You don't remember those?

Not at all.

I think that once one had been involved with it to begin with, I was really not the sort of person who wants to spend time helping other people if you know what I mean and I've always absolutely hated any kind of meeting, with people talking and voting and all those kinds of things. That's completely out as far as I'm concerned. I can't bring anything else to mind, I have been thinking about it.

I've ticked off the people that I thought was early on that thing (1977 list of members)

What about Sue Gollifer, she was 70s..... that's not early enough?

'65, fifty years ago wasn't it (F)

Trevor Allen, Clem Beer, Peter Daglish, Harvey Daniels, Jennifer Dickson.....

Does Jennifer Dickson live in England? Cos she's an RA isn't she

She is. Stanley Jones.....

Is Stanley Jones still around (F)

Sally McClaren, do you remember Sally McClaren. She was there at that first meeting.

Yes, I think she may well have been, oh yeah. She wasn't at the meeting in the restaurant, but she would have been at that first meeting at the RBA gallery. You think she was in an earlier meeting?

Her name is there on the very first meeting unless you met prior to that recorded meeting.

The recorded meeting is the one in the RBA gallery isn't it.

Think so

Oh well of course, these two little meetings that we had you know, (are off the record)

Yes, they're off the record, yes.

That was what you would call the beginning of it. Before that there was just two or three people driven along by Michael Rothenstein was just bringing people in

Was he quite a driving force?

Oh very much so, absolutely a driving force, yeah..... Really it's very much his creation, I think, you know.

He made a film of printmaking, lithography, he made a film of lithography

He himself was very....

He showed it to us students.....

Would you like to have a look at what my studio is?

\* Bertorelli's restaurant, 19 Charlotte Street was established in 1913 to serve chauffeurs and taxi drivers. It is still going but has become more up market.