



EFA Robert  
Blackburn  
Printmaking  
Workshop

## The Only Thing That Lasts:

### An Oral History of Robert Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop interview with Eleanor Magid

Eleanor Magid is the founder of Lower East Side Printshop, which was established in 1968 and is still operating today. After Smith College, Magid moved to New York City in the early 1950s to further her arts education and practice. She studied printmaking under Robert Blackburn and taught art at Percy Ellis Sutton Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge (SEEK) Program at Queens College.

In this excerpt, she talks about The New York City Teachers' Strike of 1968, inviting local artists and their kids to her studio in the East Village, as well as Blackburn's role in the early formation of The Lower East Side Printshop and the benefits of intergenerational, collaborative models of education.

**Interview conducted by Camille Crain Drummond**

**November 2, 2023**

Eleanor Magid:

At that point, my friend called and said, "Would you like to teach at Queens College?" Maybe a month into our first. So, I went in and we got started. I took my students to Bob's shop. They were beautifully welcomed, that was going well, when all the schools closed down. The colleges. Columbia University had a riot on its campus. I know a philosophy professor who was whacked by a policeman, and he had been a liberal before that and he became a conservative after what a terrible thing happened to him. And it wasn't just Columbia, it was all the schools. Queens College was suddenly closed down. I said to my students, "You don't have to come. The school is closed. But if you want to come to my house, you can come." They all came. We turned on the radio and they said, the police have arrived on the Queens College campus, and I don't think there were heads bashed at Queens as there were at Columbia, but it was a serious business. The police had been called. So, there was not only no public school—grammar school—there was no college. So I said to the students, "Well, you can come." And I couldn't have, you know, little kids come at one time and older people come at another time, so we all met on Saturday morning. And, so I mentioned this to Bob, and every Saturday morning Bob arrived with throwaway materials from his professional artists. So we had beautiful materials to work with. We did a lot of work with—I mean, again, I thought the students were the backbone. The college students were the backbone of what was developing there because they would help the mothers. Mothers would come. Welfare moms who had never had experience with printmaking techniques. And the students would say, "You can do it!" And sure

enough, you know, people made discoveries. And the students were, I always thought they were the core of the whole thing. And they enjoyed it very much.

And I was just mentioning upstairs, Krishna Reddy came in one time. He would come through. He was still working in Paris, but he'd come through during the year, and work at Bob's for a while, and then go to California and come back. And he came to my little workshop, and he demonstrated a rainbow roll, which is a rather esoteric thing that had been developed by Krishna Reddy himself. He was an experimenter. And I remember a little five-year-old looking at the rainbow roll and watching. And he got it. And he demonstrated it to his mother. And his mother got it. Krishna said, "Look at this!" You know, it was the kind of thing he was showing his graduate students, but we could all do it there. And the thing that I felt was most unique about us—though it isn't really unique, I think, many civilizations have known—that if you keep everybody together, everybody learns faster. But for that time and place, we weren't first grade separated from second grade, separated from old folks, and so on. We were all there. And as I say, the marvel to me was the speed of learning, and the range of learning. Various people coming in, like Krishna, showing a particular technique and everybody of all ages beginning to get the sense of what that was and working with it.

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It was like Bob's shop!

Camille Crain Drummond:

Mm-hmm.

Eleanor Magid:

And that's why Bob loved it. When he would come, you know, he'd sort of sit back and enjoy it and recognize that it had a great deal to do with his introduction to the arts. His family were not in an art community, and it was this broadening of possibilities that was so important. So he always he would stay. He'd come to bring the materials, but he didn't want to leave, you know, he'd sort of sit back and watch. And he really did.