

VARIATIONS

SELECTIONS FROM THE BENEFIT PRINT PROJECT

A print combines creativity and precise technical skill and it may be produced by any of a dizzying array of traditional processes, woodcut, lithography, linocut, intaglio, engraving, aquatint, and screen printing, or by today's digital techniques. Often made in multiples, the print is a quintessentially egalitarian form of artmaking, more affordable than expensive one-of-a-kind works like an oil painting or a sculpture. Although some prints involve elaborate production and time-consuming labor to create perfection, at root printmaking

is a mechanical process that allows artists to create multiples of their imagery and then broadly disseminate their art at modest prices. In an art world obsessed with discussions of equity, prints democratize art.

Multiples are not perfect reproductions of one another but, instead, "variations"—screen prints pulled with different colors, prints hand-embellished, etchings of varying sharpness that depend on the number of prints in the series. Prints of the acclaimed artists in *Variations* were published by the Benefit Print Project, New York. Since its 2010 beginnings, the Benefit Print Project has supported the work of major artists, who interface with culturally significant institutions and organizations in Africa, Asia, and North America. The word "Benefit" in the Project name is significant. The signed and numbered prints published by the Benefit Print Project enable artists to connect with international audiences, to donate their works to nonprofit public collections, and to use proceeds from sales of their works to fund cultural and educational endeavors in many countries.

Among the 19 artists on view in *Variations*, El Anatsui, a Ghanaian active for much of his career in Nigeria, is one of the contemporary art world's most famous African artists, and he has a close working relationship with the Benefit Print Project. Known for his "bottle-top" installations in which he transforms aluminum pieces gleaned from alcohol recycling stations into metallic cloth-like wall sculptures, Anatsui works with the print form to translate his ideas into multiples. In this exhibition, follow Anatsui's gradual widening of the print process into printed 3-D sculptural forms.

Lehman College Art Gallery also presents *Sky wide: Mobiles of Joy*, a print-based Rotunda installation by Bronx artist Moses Ros that is truly designed to lift the spirits. A plethora of colors and mobiles in motion, these 3-D prints literally leap off the walls and like the works in *Variations* remind us that the generosity of artists who share their visions with the public is what is at the heart of artistic endeavor.

