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The University Gallery of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst is pleased to host Naum Gabo Monoprints, an exhibition of a little-known body of work by one of the pioneers of 20th-century sculpture. On view from February 4 through March 17, the exhibition presents prints made from engraved woodblocks which are two-dimensional interpretations of Gabo's sculptural theories and interests.

With the 1920 publication of the Realist Manifesto, Naum Gabo and his brother, Antoine Pevsner, proposed the Constructivist theory of art. This theory was partially inspired by Gabo's love of physics and the spirit of scientific discoveries which involved the structure of the universe and the time/space continuum. Gabo and Pevsner established an artistic parallel to these scientific explorations by viewing sculptural form as consisting of distinct planar and linear elements, as a skeleton of structural planes rather than as a carved or modelled object. If a solid cube represented a volume of mass, then a 'stereometric' cube represented the "space in which the mass exists made visible." Constructivism, in its scrutiny of space as a formal artistic element, introduced a radical vision to the tradition of sculptural techniques and greatly contributed to the insights later reached within applied art.

Gabo discovered printmaking through the encouragement and guidance of William Ivins, Jr., retired Curator of Prints of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Gabo's earliest print dates from 1950; he continued to work in this medium until his death in 1977. The present exhibition includes examples from the portfolios Gabo titled Opus 1 through Opus 12, as well as examples from untitled woodblock designs and stencils. Although templates were made for the replication of the individual designs, Gabo's printed artworks are correctly referred to as monoprints. Each print was hand-pulled; the resulting image was not pre-determined but revealed during the printing process.

The relationship between Gabo's sculpture and monoprints embraces similar interests by way of vastly different techniques. Of utmost importance to Gabo was the depiction of intangible space as abstract form. In his sculpture, Gabo used planes of glass and plastic to achieve a level of transparency which attempted to erase the difference between solids and surrounding space. His printed images were created with simple, irregular lines that correspond to the plastic and glass edges of the sculptures' contours. Stippling and striations provide texture and, in combination with

Gabo's subtle use of color, emphasize the forms and planar relationships causing the viewer to 'see through' the shape and sense its weightless volume.

The University Gallery is the first American venue of Naum Gabo Monoprints. The exhibition was organized through the generosity and assistance of the Gabo family and the Tate Gallery Archive. Naum Gabo Monoprints opened in 1987 at Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge, England, and traveled to the Talbot Rice Gallery, University of Edinburgh, Scotland. The exhibition here is made possible with the support of funds from the University's Arts Council and Alumni Association, and with a grant from Graham and Nina Williams of Ashford, Kent, England. A catalogue, published in conjunction with the exhibition, is available at the University Gallery.