

Norton Simon Museum For Immediate Release

411 West Colorado Boulevard, Pasadena, California 91105 www.nortonsimon.org
External Affairs Department 626.844.6900 media@nortonsimon.org

April 2019

Media Contacts:

Leslie Denk | ldenk@nortonsimon.org | (626) 844-6941

Emma Jacobson-Sive | emma@ejs-media.com | (323) 842-2064

AIR LAND SEA: A Lithographic Suite by William Crutchfield

July 19–November 4, 2019

Pasadena, CA—The Norton Simon Museum presents a small exhibition of William Crutchfield’s intricate and highly imaginative lithographic suite *Air Land Sea*. Crutchfield, a master draftsman who possessed a wry wit and a lifelong fascination with engineering and transportation, produced this series at the renowned Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles in 1970. This exhibition marks the first time that the entire suite—one of the nine un-numbered editions traditionally reserved by Tamarind—has been shown together at the Museum since its donation in 1972.



William Richard Crutchfield (American, 1932–2015), *Air Land Sea IX: Zepp*, 1970, Lithograph, Norton Simon Museum, Anonymous Gift, 1972, © 2019 William Crutchfield

Born in Indianapolis, Indiana, William Crutchfield (1932–2015) received a traditional studio training at the city’s Herron School of Art and later at Tulane University in New Orleans. In 1967, he moved to Southern California and settled near the shipyards of San Pedro, amid views of the bustling Port of Los Angeles. This industrial setting provided the artist with plenty of inspiration for his mechanically derived artworks (the artist once professed that the 1928 transatlantic flight of the Graf Zeppelin was one of his prime spiritual sources). The move also gave him the opportunity to create a more public persona after many years of teaching; that same year, he created a series of lithographs for print publisher Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles and began regularly exhibiting in galleries. By 1970, he was granted a fellowship at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, where he created his incisive suite *Air Land Sea*.

Air Land Sea demonstrates the artist's fascination with modes of transportation and humankind's fraught relationship with modernization, themes he explored frequently throughout much of his career. On the title page, which spells out the words *Air Land Sea Alphabet*, each letter alludes to the subject matter of the series: an A, for example, is shown as a rocky, tree-covered tunnel; an R, the front of a propeller plane; an L, the curve of a two-lane road. The series continues with twelve prints, each more inventive than the next.

Cathedral Steamer, number eight in the suite, shows a large ocean liner sailing confidently at sea. In place of steam funnels are three Gothic spires, each tethered to the next by standing rigging—an unexpected confluence of architectural elements that demonstrates the artist's satirical point of view. *Zepp*, number nine, depicts a zeppelin airship ascending into the skies. Its seemingly effortless buoyancy is betrayed by four smokestacks atop the framework, suggesting that something other than internal gas cells keeps the aircraft aloft. *Narrow-Gauge Valley*, number twelve, illustrates a locomotive chugging along an unseen rail. Smoke and steam billowing from its stack transform into a mountainous landscape, complete with valleys, clouds and a river, as if envisioned by the train itself.

Crutchfield's images can be interpreted as lighthearted humor as well as critical commentary, and the two were not mutually exclusive in his mind. As the artist once remarked, "A lot of people have the idea [that] things that are humorous are not deep. But that's not so." Feats of engineering are often viewed with awe and wonder, and Crutchfield seems to marvel at them as well. But his interpretations and interventions encourage the viewer to look deeper, and to reconsider the innovations as well as the implications of progress.

AIR LAND SEA: A Lithographic Suite by William Crutchfield is organized by Curatorial Associate Tom Norris and presented in the Museum's small rotating gallery on the main level from July 19 through November 4, 2019. To complement the exhibition, three additional works on paper by Crutchfield from the Museum's collection will be installed in the modern and contemporary art wing. These include an original ink and watercolor on paper, *Duesenberg, Model J, 1931* from 1968, and the large-scale lithographs *Eucalyptus II* and *Tamarind-Tanic*, both of which were created at Tamarind in 1970 and explore similar themes to those in *Air Land Sea*.

About the Norton Simon Museum

The Norton Simon Museum is known around the world as one of the most remarkable private art collections ever assembled. Over a 30-year period, industrialist Norton Simon (1907–1993) amassed an astonishing collection of European art from the Renaissance to the 20th century, and a stellar collection of South and Southeast Asian art spanning 2,000 years. Modern and Contemporary Art from Europe and the United States, acquired by the former Pasadena Art Museum, also occupies an important place in the Museum's collections. The Museum houses more than 12,000 objects, roughly 1,000 of which are on view in the galleries and gardens. Two temporary exhibition spaces feature rotating installations of artworks not on permanent display.

Location: The Norton Simon Museum is located at 411 W. Colorado Blvd. at Orange Grove Boulevard in Pasadena, Calif., at the intersection of the Foothill (210) and Ventura (134) freeways. For general Museum information, please call (626) 449-6840 or visit www.nortonsimon.org. **Hours:** The Museum is open Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from noon to 5 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is closed on Tuesday. **Admission:** General admission is \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors. Members, students with I.D., and patrons age 18 and under are admitted free of charge. Admission is free for everyone on the first Friday of every month from 5 to 8 p.m. All public programs, unless stated otherwise, are free with admission. The Museum is wheelchair accessible. **Parking:** Parking is free, and no reservations are necessary. **Public Transportation:** Pasadena Transit stops directly in front of the Museum. Please visit <http://pasadenatransit.net> for schedules. The MTA bus line #180/181 stops in front of the Museum. The Memorial Park Station on the MTA Gold Line, the closest Metro Rail station to the Museum, is located at 125 E. Holly St. at Arroyo Parkway. Please visit www.metro.net for schedules.