



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, Nov. 30, 2016

CONTACT:
Nicole Darling at 619-533-4505 or ndarling@sandiego.gov

Library Art Gallery Showcases Creative Graphics from ‘Mad Men’ Era

EXHIBITION CONNECTS DEFENSE INDUSTRY WITH ARTS COMMUNITY

SAN DIEGO – A new exhibition exploring San Diego’s mid-century arts scene opens Saturday, Dec. 10, at the San Diego Central Library @ Joan A Irwin Jacobs Common. “Print Culture” draws attention to the unique creative relationship between the defense industry and San Diego’s community of artists.

In the 1950s and 1960s, many local artists were veterans of either World War II or the Korean conflict. As this exhibition reveals, the artists discovered that working in the defense industry was a good way to pay the bills. Many of them worked for the Navy or in the burgeoning aerospace field.

“Print Culture” presents a rich variety of fine graphic design created in the mid-century era by San Diego designers, illustrators, photographers, artists and art directors – described as San Diego’s own “mad men.” A variety of techniques and creative processes are represented with some intimately handmade items and others more commercial.

Exhibited items fall into roughly two categories. The first relates to activities in the city’s art community. One display includes announcements for groundbreaking exhibitions, such as a one-person show by a young John Baldessari at Vroman’s Bookstore. Another announcement advertises avant-garde poetry readings performed by Richard Allen Morris and the late David Antin.

The second, perhaps most distinctive, category involves stylish graphics created for use by defense industry giants. Among these is an inventive typographic logo designed for General Dynamics’ Industrial Security Section by Bob Matheny. There is also a clever Jim Sundell-designed cover sheet for a once-top secret document for naval strike force commanders.

Also on display in “Print Culture” are screen-printed fabrics by Barney Reid, an extensive collection of greeting cards and innovative layouts from “Psychology Today” magazine which provide insight to the evolution of print design.

“Print Culture” opens Dec. 10, 2016 and runs through Feb. 26, 2017 in the Art Gallery on the ninth floor of the Central Library. A reception is planned on opening day from noon to 2 p.m. Both the reception and exhibition are open to the public and admission is free.

“Print Culture” is organized by guest curator Dave Hampton and made possible by a collaboration between the San Diego Public Library and the City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture. Photographs are available upon request.

About the San Diego Public Library

San Diego Public Library, which is the largest library system in the region, serves a population of more than 1.3 million people. Its mission is to inspire lifelong learning through connections to knowledge and each other. Learn about other events at the San Diego Central Library @ Joan A Irwin Jacobs Common and 35 community branch libraries, find links to numerous additional resources, or search for materials in the Library’s online catalog at www.sandiegolibrary.org.

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