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Saul Steinberg at Gemini

Exhibited at **Gemini G.E.L. at Joni Moisant Weyl**
January 15 - February 28, 2000

Thirteen lithographs and etchings by the late artist Saul Steinberg will be on view from January 15th at Gemini G.E.L. at Joni Moisant Weyl. Published over a period spanning 1984 to 1997, these prints survey the artist's collaborative efforts with the Los-Angeles-based artist's workshop, Gemini G.E.L.

Steinberg, whose death in May 1999 was marked by a front page obituary in *The New York Times*, saw the world metaphorically and expressed his perceptions of it through drawing. Although known as a "philosopher of representation" and a "commentator on the nature of modernism", Steinberg felt burdened by labels such as these. He described his work as autobiographical, and, in his own words, "about time, about people, about being around." His mind was constantly transforming his surroundings into images that not only give us a glimpse into his unique world, but also are laden with societal criticisms.

Steinberg was a prolific artist, best known for his drawings. In his fifty-year career at *The New Yorker* magazine, he produced 86 covers (the last of which was published shortly after his death) and over 600 drawings for that magazine alone. Despite the confident command of line and form evident in his work, Steinberg confessed to being intimidated by the printmaking process. He described himself as spontaneous and free when alone but the collaborative nature of the print-making process introduced a sense of responsibility and a pressure to perform. He found that the heroic effort of the printmakers, "the acid-people and the other difficult and dramatic professions" affected the pace at which he normally worked. It is clear, however, that Steinberg was able to overcome his initial trepidation. With Gemini G.E.L., he produced insightful and thought-provoking work, colorful in imagery and content, if not always in hue.

Steinberg once said, "the doodle is the brooding of the hand." In doodling, he elevated comic illustration to fine art. His dry, cynical, even sinister sense of humor endowed everyday objects with desires and intentions. For example, in *Legs* (1992), the female figures are reduced to a head, long legs and high heels. In *Ten Women* (1997), only the faces and legs are drawn in detail. These simply drawn images have a remarkable eloquence and finished quality to them. It must be remembered that Los Angeles in the 1990s, complete with the resurgence of mini-skirts and platform shoes, was Steinberg's inspiration for these prints. The nose is the subject of a series called *Gogol*. These 1984 prints spoof a tale by the nineteenth-century Russian writer Nicolay Vasilyevich Gogol. In one print from this series, the nose erupts into a hyperactive calligraphy. In another it is turned inward. In yet another it engulfs the entire face, forcing the subject to peer outward, trapped by its own nose. These impressive prints have ample color, and add a pleasant touch to an otherwise black and white exhibition.

In each of the works on view, Steinberg's simple line drawing tells a tale much more complicated than it initially seems. Only the title suggests the subject matter; it is dependant on the viewer to speculate on the story behind the image. As the late critic Harold Rosenberg wrote "in linking art to the modern consciousness, no artist is more relevant than Steinberg."

For further information, please contact the gallery at 212-219-1446.