

Faculty Profile: Harrison Burns



Harold Bernstein '85 and Art Department Chair Harrison Burns

RPS Art Department Chair Harrison Burns has divided his time between his life as a New York artist and the Rutgers Prep art studio since March, 1971, when he joined the RPS faculty. Harrison started his RPS career in the Lower School until he assumed the Chairmanship of the Art Department in 1974, when he shifted his teaching duties to the Upper School. All members of the art department teach part-time; devoting the rest of their time to their studio work. Harrison is on campus Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday.

The Upper School art curriculum includes courses in: Drawing and Design I and II, Art History and Basic Graphics. These offerings are so popular, they always reach full enrollment. Art courses are taught in the building once known as "The Carriage House".

Mr. Burns's unique paintings, which are based on images drawn from television, have been shown around the world for many years. As a confessed "product of the television generation", his style of painting originated when he was in art school, as he synthesized his major in painting and his minor in photography.

Today the only kind of photographs Harrison takes are of television images. Inspiration for his paintings comes from the shots he takes while watching television. The image is then drawn and transferred to a canvas by means of a stencil. The painting usually appears in black and white on a grid over a gold

background. A recent comprehensive one-man show was written up in the December, 1984, issue of *Art in America*, which is the preeminent art magazine in the world. They describe Burns's paintings to be "monuments of real and imaginary grandeur, that stare out blackly from their gold surroundings, deftly portraying certain realities which we would not usually care to freeze on the TV Screen."

Since 1978, Mr. Burns has spent his summers in Spain, where he owns a house overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in the province of Granada. In this setting he is able to put many of his ideas into sketches which can be finished in his better equipped New York studio.

The two most recent shows of Burns's artwork have been in Madrid, Spain (March, 1984) and in New York City (April, 1984). In Spain 700 people attended the opening, and eight paintings were sold on the first day. In addition his work has been shown at the New Jersey State Museum; The Museum of Modern Art in New York City; and galleries in Louisville, Chicago, New Brunswick, and Granada, Spain.

The instruction and individual attention Harrison gives his students has made a significant impact on them. Over the years more than 50 of his students have gone on to major in art. The educational contribution of Harrison Burns at RPS seems equal to the recognition his paintings receive around the world.