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Screenprint on Plastic (Some Assembly Required): A Case Study of Joe Tilson's *The Software Chart* 1968

By the beginning of the 1960s, contemporary printmaking in the Americas and Europe was already in the midst of a renaissance. Artists and printers actively began to collaborate to produce artworks that challenged traditional concepts of printmaking. The boundaries of size, materials, content, and production were virtually obliterated and resulted in some of the most unique, affordable, and accessible art produced at the time. *The Software Chart*, 1968, by British artist Joe Tilson, is a screenprint on plastic printed by the Kelpra Studio, leaders of the era in the production of artists' screen printing in London, England. The five-color screenprinted image, appropriated from print media and referencing a major international event, is printed on plastic (noted as Astrafoil) and backed with a reflective surfaced plastic (noted as Lumaline). The print and backing were adhered to each other with double-sided masking tape, mounted to card, and framed in a shallow metal frame. Printed and produced in an edition of 150, most known versions of this print assembly exhibit severe pressure-related distortions and off-gassing (vinegar odor). The print was not considered to be in exhibitable condition and came to the conservation department for review. This presentation described in detail the print history and concept, components, condition issues, material analysis, treatment stages, degree of treatment success, and the many issues relating to possible reconstruction, final presentation, and long term prognosis.

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