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It executed Robert Rauschenberg's 1967 lithograph "Booster," a 72-inch-tall piece that at the time was the largest print ever made by hand. Other artists, especially on the East Coast, learned about the workshop through Rauschenberg and became its frequent visitors.

"When Robert Rauschenberg came back to New York, he told other artists about Gemini and all of a sudden other artists started coming in," said **Ellen Grinstein Perliter**, a daughter of the late Grinstein, who died in 2014. "It was a perfect storm."

Felsen, 91, an accountant who initially saw Gemini as a hobby, and Grinstein hit on a creative business model: They don't charge the artists to produce the works, asking only for a handful of artist's proofs they sell at market prices in their on-site gallery.

Artists come to Gemini by invitation. They discuss their concept with the staff and work with them to produce a first print. After that, the artist departs, leaving the printmakers to finish the rest of the edition. Weeks or months later, the artist comes back to verify and sign the prints.

Besides printmaking and lithography, Gemini offers screen prints, sculpture, and etching services. The cost of the prints available through its gallery start as low as \$950, with work by **Ed Ruscha** listed for \$6,000 ("Cheese Oval," an edition of 39); **Richard Serra**'s "Double Rift II" at \$60,000; and Rauschenberg's "Borealis Shares II" priced at \$250,000. The studio does not produce more than 100 copies of any one piece; some editions run as few as three.

"If you're a creative person, tell us what you want to do and we'll figure out how to do it," said Felsen, 91, who is still active in the office. "We're here to help the artists."

Gemini's exacting standards have fueled its success, said **Jacob Samuel**, a lecturer in printmaking at UCLA's art department.

"Gemini inspired a couple of generations of printmakers and publishers," he said, adding that the workshop constantly pushes boundaries by setting high standards.

Artistic moonshot

Felsen and Grinstein named the workshop after NASA's Gemini space program, which started in 1961, choosing the name because it was an exciting time for artists and people who loved outer space, said **Ayn Grinstein**, another second-generation co-owner. The G.E.L. was more on-point: It stands for "graphic editions limited."

When co-founder Grinstein died two years ago, Felsen brought in his wife, **Joni Weyl**; his daughter **Suzanne Felsen**; and Grinstein's daughters to help him with the business.

"When Stanley died, I asked them to come to fill the void," Felsen said, adding that the three daughters had been immersed in the workshop since they were little.

Five co-owners run the workshop today. The women, who call themselves the baby generation, have given the business a boost.

The second generation owners also work closely with the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art**, preparing for the September opening of an exhibition devoted to the workshop's 50th anniversary. The show will showcase 16 artists whose work was produced at Gemini and is in the LACMA collection. One of the works is a series of Josef Albers prints, which the museum first exhibited in 1966 when it was just a year old. The exhibition will also present works by Johns, **Frank Stella**, and **Julie Mehretu**.

"Sidney will turn 92 in September, and we will celebrate him and his legacy through his activity," said **Leslie Jones**, a curator at LACMA, adding that Gemini donated more than 400 prints to the museum over the course of their 50-year relationship. "The timing could not have been better."



Stepped In: Ayn Grinstein, left, and Suzanne Felsen, co-owners of L.A.'s Gemini G.E.L. and daughters of the printmaker's co-founders.

The two-story Melrose workshop has several studios, each devoted to a separate project and each handling one artist's project at a time.

"They have a reputation for doing anything that an artist is interested in doing," said **Maggie Lomeli**, a lab manager at **Otis College of Art and Design** in Westchester. "If it means removing a ceiling, they will do it."

Last week, printer **Xavier Fumat** was at work on a new piece by Serra. Wearing blue gloves, Fumat lowered black paint sticks into a meat grinder and mixed them until they become a paste. He added silica, a sandlike substance that bonds with the ink, before applying the resulting paste in layers to the surface of a board, which will sit for a month as it dries.

"These all are Richard's ideas," said Fumat, who has been working with the artist for the last 20 years at Gemini. "We're just executing them."

The printmaking craft is an old one, and because it has changed little over the last 50 years, Gemini has not had to invest much in new equipment. Four of its five presses have been in operation since the 1960s. Two years ago, the company ordered a \$35,000 custom press the first unit of the kind it had purchased in more than four decades.

Artists are not charged for materials or time (they generally split the revenue from print sales with their galleries, which typically take 50 percent of the retail price), and so Gemini picks up the cost of everything from paper – which arrives in containers from Italy, France, and Japan and can run from \$5 to \$500 a sheet – to out-of-town artists' plane tickets and hotel stays.

"The biggest challenge is that when artists come, they have an idea," Felsen said. "They make a sculpture or painting, but as far as cost, it does not come to mind."

