

“THE REALM OF ALL POSSIBILITIES”

for “False Dichotomy/High Technology”, curated by Libby Clarke, March 30, 2016

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I see printmaking as a direct expression of consciousness, as in a feedback loop where the bilateral symmetry of the plate to print directly reflects the maker's body, its imprint. I see it as a method to look at oneself in a mirror, a psychological means to literally face oneself while making work.

It is a physical fact that while working on a plate one stands behind yet in front of oneself, as if unmediated. This phenomenon occurs throughout the processes intrinsic to what we ascribe as the medium: in the conceiving, in the making, in the reflecting. They are part and parcel of the process. I am consistently and continually intrigued by what this process offers emotionally and aesthetically. It is compelling enough to warrant prolonged study.

The history of what is called printmaking is one interpreted history of art. It's the short course in marking the time of our lives. That history begins as far back as the muddy hand print against the cave wall. Certainly before paper the hand as matrix impressed the wall. It attested to external reflection as well as internal, of the duality of body and mind from which could be thought to stem our seemingly unending sense of the this and that, the me and not, the us and them. From our earliest we have been bilaterally symmetrical and standing. Our mark recorded and recoded the splendor around us as well as the uncertainty of our existence, the relations between us, the disasters of war.

Traditional printmaking today retains the zip of the freeze-dried moment, artifice on supple yet fragile paper - the juxtaposition of labor (on a plate, on a stone) with the (almost) instantaneous nature and feel of the printed surface. With the inclusion of newer digital habitation within the output of intaglio, lithograph and silkscreen, printmaking now stands in the cross hairs. For the addition of any new technology is first and foremost of our making and then makes things complicated. It begs question of the artist/printmaker and taunts that one better know what one is doing.

What once was the domain of a medium, the mark made on matrix delivered in an imperceptibly seamless manner just below our visual threshold for recognition of duplicity and duplicate, is now only one possible outcome. We speak the language not only of the separate and specifically non-linked nature of shape, color, contrast, saturation, placement, texture, and form, but of whatever we dub the margins of content, each with seemingly endless permutations. In the least, we now layer everywhere - in fashion, in furnishings, in meaning, in what we call photoshop and in what we call printmaking. We are relayers [sic] of information.

The binary code has long been the structural core of the print (black or white, here or not) in both the perceptual and conceptual. Even while what around us can be described as random, or chaotic like the current physical theories of our time, printmakers still record, marking time and existence in relative bit by bit engaged in what Hunterwasser called “making art around the corner”. The nature of each generation's making of multiples alters the way each depicts and perceives. It may be that our hands no longer move as our eye moves in a tactile way, that we can no longer consider our past preoccupation with the fall of light on a surface, or description through color or line-weight alone. Now, we move in constructs. We move through the idea of moving. We are not jaded to our past, we're just different. There is new license and we've agreed to the terms. Whether it is line by engraved line, or pixel by pixel, this is no simple draughtsman's tool.

Digital manipulation, new media and traditional printmaking marry seamlessly. Digital imaging may remain “hidden” but is undoubtedly and undeniably present incorporated into the depth of an etching plate, the surface of a lithograph, the stencil of a silkscreen as these processes, once their own kind of virtual, now possess the feel of tactility itself. Wallpapered collaborative installations, incongruous objects in space, the floating and bedazzled, the impossible figure, tire treads on lit screens, these are the embodied realm of the virtual, that digital construct. As detail in pre-digital terms meant a closer look and as Pop Art harkened the halftone, now in real terms the enlargement of the pixelated image is a blur -- not a pre-echo of the fractal, but the true chaos of a post-post-post-impressionist berserker.

Again technology begs feeling. This is our new generations' inventory of less recent concerns – concerns over the plasticity of integrated space as even now collage and cut paper become layered cut and paste. We still make our mark but it's like a myth, like this idea of a live feed, but it is real - because it's (always) bits on the continuum. It is a visceral see saw of the temporal no matter how you cut it with cell phone shots of gun battles and videos of Burning Man. The medium can be (at least in part) the message. It is a punctuated and staccato equilibrium because it seems no matter – we are alive, we live and breathe breath into what we make even when we wish otherwise. Contemporary memory only goes so far and here we are once again destined, and we are destined, to borrow it all.