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The Mid America Print Council Journal
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Collaboration and Print

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Letter from the President

This issue of The Mid America Print Council Journal is collaborative in its conception, construction, and content. In the fall of 2009 the MAPC board began a search for a new editor for The Journal. It was also time to begin developing this issue. We saw this as an opportunity to work together to collaborate. We chose to edit this issue of The Journal as a collaborative project with “Collaboration and Print” as our theme.

The manuscripts for this issue began to arrive with the new year and we soon found our new editor. I am very excited to welcome Lari Gibbons, Associate Professor of Art at the University of North Texas; as our new editor. From the moment that she joined us, Lari has been a tremendous help on this project. We are grateful for her generosity, her insight, and the many ideas that she has already brought to us. We are eager to see The Mid America Print Council Journal continue to grow through her vision.

Many years ago I was talking to a friend, an Episcopal priest and religious scholar, who said that for him the most tangible evidence he saw of God in everyday life was a couple working on a life together, a collaboration. He went on to say that as much as love is the foundation of a committed relationship, it is the symbiosis of understanding, respect, concern, encouragement, honesty and support that are essential for its success.

While I think it would be excessive to assert that collaboration in printmaking is somehow divine, I do think that collaboration and the community that is built through such efforts are things that make printmaking so inspiring. Although it might be the top to say that collaboration in the making of art is like a marriage or committed partnership, these two danced do have a lot in common. And while I’m not so sure where I stand on God and religion, I do believe in beauty and the romantic—the existence of mystery, excitement, and remoteness from our everyday lives; something beyond us, that sometimes carries us away. A successful collaboration in printmaking is a lot like a collaboration in everyday life. It is a holding fast and a letting go, an opening up and a standing firm, an act of giving and one of receiving. Collaboration is a togetherness that allows us to achieve our goals and exceed beyond our everyday isolated, independent capabilities. It is valuing something bigger than we can be as individuals. I see all of these things in the daily environment of a printshop.

Collaboration is deeply embedded in the tradition of printmaking. For many of us, collaboration is an essential, practical part of our process. For others it is not a so appealing prospect. I am sure that we all agree that it is a challenge, welcomed or not, when effective, is worthy of admiration. In the following essays and interviews we celebrate the role of collaboration in printmaking. This project has been a wonderfully enriching experience that has reaffirmed my belief in the richness of the MAPC community. I have learned from this issue’s contributors and enjoyed an expanded dialogue with my colleagues on the board and with our new editor.

Best wishes to you all and thank you for all that you each contribute to the collaboration that is The Mid America Print Council.

Charles Beneke

Letter from the Editor

For as long as I can remember, I’ve turned to books and periodicals for information about art, artists and culture. Publications provide documentation of artwork and exhibitions, and perhaps most importantly they enable me to participate in an ongoing exchange about art. Filled with critical insight and commentary books and periodicals give context for new cultural developments and reinterpretations of familiar art movements. For that reason, it is my privilege and pleasure to serve as the new editor of The Mid America Print Council Journal.

I support public discourse and welcome the alternative methods of communication that have emerged as traditional modes of printing and distributing publications wane. I am encouraged by innovations—such as the recent adoption of a hybrid print/electronic format for The Journal—and the sharing of information through blogs, social networks and on-demand books. A few other changes in the publishing industry such as the recent closure of Art in America are more disappointing. Nevertheless, the new direction in publishing resembles what art critic David Shapiro describes as “…a polyphony of real historical and conditioned voices speaking of their common predicament.” While Shapiro was writing about artists who work collaboratively, his words also describe the ongoing dialogue that creative partnerships sustain.

Entitled “Collaboration and Print,” this issue of The Mid America Print Council Journal embodies its theme as current officers worked together to develop the collection of articles. The resulting stories describe what happens when printmakers work with other artists, critics, or participants in a variety of ways: through collectives at professional presses; in university print shops;—even with traditional book publishers. Some projects result in a tangible product, such as an exhibition edition of prints, or a textbook; others are ephemeral and provide a performative or experiential component that invites additional people to collaborate. No matter what the outcome, the creative processes are dynamic and flexible, and the projects transform and rejuvenate the participants. I am grateful to the officers for the ideas, energy and commitment that they brought to this issue. Several of them, including Charles Beneke, worked especially hard to ensure a smooth transition when I recently signed on as editor.

Building on this momentum, I am in the process of forming The Mid America Print Council Journal Advisory Committee whose members will provide critical input on upcoming issues. This will allow the publication to continue serving its audience while bringing in new voices and viewpoints. Look for more information about the inaugural Advisory Committee in the next issue, where we’ll provide a list of members and information about their areas of expertise.

In the meantime, I invite you to send me feedback on this issue and your ideas for future articles or themes by writing me at lgbibbons@mac.com.

Best regards,

Lari Gibbons

Lari Gibbons is an Associate Professor of Art at the University of North Texas, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate students in drawing and printmaking. She has won numerous grants—including the inaugural Research and Creativity Grant at the University of North Texas (2009–10)—and her work is held in many private and public collections, including Reijng Natural Culture Center, Musée d’Art Contemporain de Chamalières and the New York Public Library. She has been an Artist-in-Residence at several institutions, including Anchor Graphics (Chicago, Illinois), Baff Centre (Alberta, Canada) and Ulruss Foundation (Utruss-Wyoming). Since 2006, she has worked as a freelance consultant for Oxford University Press.

Contributors

Catherine Chauvin uses printmaking to examine what is done to the environment in the name of progress. Currently her work is based on battles nature is fighting that neither technology nor human intervention have been able to repair or reverse. Catherine holds an MFA in printmaking from Syracuse University and is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Denver. She also received Master Printer Certification from Tamardin Institute and collaborated with a variety of artists (including Jaune Quick-to-See-Smith, William Wiley, Enrique Chagoya and Gladys Nilsson) at Anderson Ranch Arts Center and other fine art presses in New Mexico and Texas. Catherine has a considerable national and international exhibition record and her recent work was included in the 2009 Christchurch Arts Festival in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Dana Giacofci is an artist and writer currently based in Washington, DC. A recent graduate of the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Dana has largely been working among other artists and thinkers and has had work featured at the Cranbrook Art Museum, the Graphica Creativa print triennial in Jyväskylä, Finland, and The Garage in Charlottesville, Virginia. Her print-based work and installations explore themes—historical and contemporary—that are woven throughout America’s cultural and physical landscapes. She is, and has been a member of The Printmaker’s Left, a collaborative that has published two volumes of The Exquisite History—Volume I: The Land of Wandering, and Volume II: A New World.

Phyllis McGibbon works in a range of media including prints, drawings, artist books, and site built installations. Currently a Professor of Art at Wellesley College, she has also mentored students in the graduate print program at RISD, the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the University of Georgia program in Cortona, Italy and the low residency MFA programs of Plane College of Art and Vermont College. Awards for her work include fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Elizabeth Greenshields foundation, the WISTAF Regional NIA, Art Matters, Inc, the Mellon foundation and the Howard Foundation at Brown University. McGibbon received her BFA and MFA degrees in graphics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Justin Quinn received his BFA from the University of Wisconsin-Superior and his MFA in printmaking from the University of Iowa. He also holds a MA in art history and a Center for the Book certificate from the University of Iowa. Justin is Associate Professor of Art at St. Cloud State University where his printshop commands an awesome view of the upper Mississippi River. He is represented by Conduit Gallery in Dallas and Cain Schulte Gallery in San Francisco and Berlin. Upcoming shows include Printerестиng’s Copy Jam at Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction in Philadelphia and Drawing from Ideas—the distance between reading and seeing—a two-person exhibition with Werner Linter at Cain Schulte, Berlin.

Cole Rogers is Artist Director and Master Printer at Highpoint Center for Printmaking which he co-founded with Carla McGrath in 2001. From 1995–2000, he was Printshop Director and Printmaking Coordinator at Minneapolis College of Art and Design previously he was chief printer at AKASHA in Minneapolis and a Senior Printer at Tamarind Institute in New Mexico. He holds an MFA from Ohio State University and a Master Printer Certificate from Tamarind Institute.

Sarah Schleicher is currently the Coordinator of Fine Arts Admissions and Promotions for the School of Art at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Previously she served as a Curator for the Artmobile Program, an educational outreach program at the University of Wyoming Art Museum. In 2003, Sarah received a BFA in printmaking from the University of Wyoming in 2001, she completed an MFA at Bowling Green State University. Her most recent achievements include first place award at the Sixteenth International Mini Print juried Exhibition in Binghamton, New York, Junior’s Choice award in Small Wonders Exhibition, Annapolis, Maryland, and acceptance into the 8th National Janet Turner Print Exhibition in Chico, California.

Buzz Spector is an artist and critical writer whose artwork has been the focus of exhibitions in such museums and galleries as the Art Institute of Chicago, Concoria Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, PA; and the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, Grand Rapids, MI. Spector’s work makes frequent use of the book, both as subject and object, and is concerned with relationships between public history, individual memory and perception. Spector is Dean of the College and Graduate School of Art in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis.

Adam Welpa grew up in Los Angeles and was drawn out of the West by The University of Virginia, where he earned a BA in Studio Art. Welpa continued his studies at the University of Iowa, where he earned an MFA and an MFA in Printmaking. He is currently Assistant Professor of Art at Calvin College, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he lives with his wife, Erika, daughter Agnes, and cats, Billy and Little Juanita. Adam recently realized a long-time dream of teaching a course called Earthworks of the American Southwest, in which he traveled over 6,000 miles to visit the epic sculptures of Smithson, Holt, Heizer, De Maria and Judd. Besides camping and Land Art, Welpa enjoys bicycling, cooking and listening to records.
Poetic Clashes and Midnight Suns
Dispatches From the 2009 Graphica Creativa

The bubble had burst, and as 2008 drew to its close, engines of commerce and industry had collapsed or stood poised on the brink. Global systems faltered, markets shrank, wars escalated. All arrows seemed to point to apocalypse, and yet, from under the rubble emerged a new dialogue: hope, change, and intervention. Gaining voice were calls to action, calls to rebuild, and calls to examine existing cultural values and question their validity. Out of despair an energetic spirit germinated and 2009 brought with it cautious optimism. Out of ruin, there is opportunity to build, create, and make. Daniel Birnbaum, in his introductory notes for the exhibition catalog writes, “Beyond the world of spectacle culture, there is still the possibility of poetic clashes—a collision that also creates sparks of novelty.” Presumably it is through these sparks of novelty that real change and innovation occur. If the collapse of world financial systems and multinational industries and governments illuminated anything, it illuminated the infrastructures of spectacle culture—objects of postmodern cultural theory—and failures of globalization. Birnbaum suggests that with the possibility of poetic clashes comes the possibility to move beyond disillusionment caused by those illuminations and build “something common, something shared”. And in his production of the 2009 Biennale, he called to our attention artists using the language of poetic clashes to spark new worlds.

The theme of the 2009 Venice Biennale—an established barometer of contemporary art movements and practice—was Fare Mundi, Making Worlds, an ambitious concept reflective of an ambitious global mandate for change. Out of the an ambitious global mandate for change. Out of ruin, there is opportunity to build, create, and make. Daniel Birnbaum, in his introductory notes for the exhibition catalog writes, “Beyond the world of spectacle culture, there is still the possibility of poetic clashes—a collision that also creates sparks of novelty.” Presumably it is through these sparks of novelty that real change and innovation occur. If the collapse of world financial systems and multinational industries and governments illuminated anything, it illuminated the infrastructures of spectacle culture—objects of postmodern cultural theory—and failures of globalization. Birnbaum suggests that with the possibility of poetic clashes comes the possibility to move beyond disillusionment caused by those illuminations and build “something common, something shared”. And in his production of the 2009 Biennale, he called to our attention artists using the language of poetic clashes to spark new worlds.

The trauma of 2008 and 2009 was to fracture the world of poetic clashes, a collision that also creates sparks of novelty. Presumably it is through these sparks of novelty that real change and innovation occur. If the collapse of world financial systems and multinational industries and governments illuminated anything, it illuminated the infrastructures of spectacle culture—objects of postmodern cultural theory—and failures of globalization. Birnbaum suggests that with the possibility of poetic clashes comes the possibility to move beyond disillusionment caused by those illuminations and build “something common, something shared”. And in his production of the 2009 Biennale, he called to our attention artists using the language of poetic clashes to spark new worlds.

An important lesson garnered during the era of late capitalism is what economist Amartya Sen terms “the plurality of human beings” and the idea that when this plurality is disrupted or undermined, conflict occurs on a global scale of distance and time truncated by technological innovation and expanded communication. As such, collaboration, not isolation—realizing and allowing for the plurality of human beings—is the only mechanism through which poetic clashes can be achieved. Collaboration is the way to work through the reductive miniaturization left in the wake of globalization toward a reclamation of our shared world and reclamation is necessary. Terry Eagleton describes the outcome of globalization in After Theory: “In a world of film actor presidents, erotically alluring commodities, political spectacles, and a multibillion dollar culture industry culture, economic production, political dominance, and ideological propaganda seemed to have emerged into a single, fracturless whole.” The trauma of 2008 and 2009 was to fracture that whole, creating a ruinous void that we are now left to interpret and fill with meaning.

A significant problem—one that post structuralist thinkers seized upon in the nascent stages of globalization—is that in such a fractureless culture, ruled by leveling impulses and “dull sameness,” we resigned ourselves to an absence of meaning, or an irrelevance of meaning. In Eagleton’s words, “as the grand narratives of capitalist globalization, and the destructive reaction which it [brought] in its wake unfurls across the planet, it catches the intellectuals at a time when many of them have almost ceased to think in political terms.” A consequence of globalization is global interdependence, but a benefit is social exchange and the obliteration of historical boundaries of geography and space. We live in a world of open source communication and collaboration is the vocabulary of social exchange. So though we resigned ourselves to a postmodern lack of meaning, we are in fact equipped with a vocabulary to find new meanings—to locate poetic clashes hiding in the rubble of our catastrophic condition. Artists know this indwellingly. The exhibition’s curators, in choosing to limit the exhibition to collaborative projects, give the endeavor its subtitle Co-Op. The Band of Nod’s printmaking efforts are a rich example of this approach. The artists, seven in number, are chosen for their ability to collaboratively work through the tension between anonymous, collective, grassroots action on a micro-political scale, and the second is a movement toward the slow, the local, and artisanal. And, at the same time, the exhibition submission criteria of ninety projects were submitted and only twenty were selected.
representing Finland, Sweden, Norway, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, The United States, Canada, Korea, and China. Though relatively few in number, the works stood as a testament to the power of collaboration—visual artists joined together with critics, artisans, social historians, and experts across many fields of study—setting printmaking on “an experimental journey” and creating a host of new worlds to ponder and explore.

Given printmaking’s self-appointed history as a democratic medium, it seems intuitive that it would lend itself to interdisciplinary collaboration within these two dimensions. For the guerrilla activist, printed matter— even that which is transmitted over virtual networks and interactive design platforms—is invaluable. Likewise, for the slow craftsman, the art and pace of making prints is a way to regain control over a schizophrenic society through careful dedication to craft and work. These two forces seem to stand in opposition to one another and, within the theoretical discourse of contemporary printmaking, there has been a long-running debate over which defines the true “nature” of printmaking. There has been a long-running debate over which defines the true “nature” of printmaking. However, most contemporary printmakers would argue that it is the tension between these two forces that creates something new and different. The Band of Nod, a loose collective of visual artists and musicians from Great Britain, arrived in Jyväskylä ready to party, performing “shambolic and frenzied songs on acoustic guitar and kazoo.” Printed matter for this fatalephian ensemble is utilitarian; their banners, costumes, posters, and memorabilia inform us of the band’s existence. We see a poster that proclaims, “Up to the Neck is Fekke,” and we can’t help be drawn in by curiosity, and we look to the poster for logistical information—when, where can I know more? Prints are the hook for the Band of Nod, but the ensemble’s artistic purpose is performance. Following a trajectory set forth by Fluxus in the late twentieth century, The Band of Nod invites participation, either as an audience member or as a fellow performer. Anyone can join in the fun and make a bit of merry. But its merriment and revelry are merely forms of a larger social activism at play. Individual participation in The Band of Nod is frenzied and chaotic, but the overall shambolic presentation of the entity itself reads as a metaphor for our larger global society. As a world, we are frenzied and chaotic, and we are also accidentally bound together. The Band of Nod’s activism takes form in celebration and raucous merriment, but in fact, it is a disruption of the every day routine—a disruption that emphasizes the spirit of collective action. Out of a frenzied and chaotic individual existence is borne a commons shared experience with a positive outcome for the larger whole.

In contrast to The Band of Nod’s frenetic energy which transfused physical boundaries of the museum, taking over a tavern or two after hours in Jyväskylä, Hans Karelloos van Djik and Eveline van Bauwel’s Humamals recording #2 was a quiet, steady, contemplative performance executed for the purpose of visually recording “traces of certain actions, or patterns of living creatures.” The singular living creature in this instance was Eveline van Bauwel, a dancer from Belgium. With custom spiked heeled shoes and gloves, she danced atop a copper plate stage to a score composed specifically for this performance by Dierk De Blaauw. Her choreography attempted to be a bridge between… animalistic acts and the specific mammal called the Human,” and her movements echoed both those of an animal in captivity and a woman well aware of her own physical presence. Left at the conclusion of the performance were plates physically etched by Van Bauwel’s human/animal form reacting to musical cues from the outside world. And, Hans van Djik’s prints of these plates are the physical record of that reaction. In this collaboration, prints become not only a visual archive of the project as dozens of individuals contributed to the larger research endeavor. The outcome, the thing produced in book form, is an attempt to talk about how present realities, visions and perspectives find their way into and metaphors in the discovery of the New World.” Prints in the context of collaboration are components in a visual archive of The New World’s comprehensive research. No one author can claim ownership of the project as dozens of individuals contributed to the larger research endeavor. The outcome, the thing produced in book form, is an attempt to talk about how present realities, visions and perspectives find their way into and metaphors in the discovery of the New World.”

The Band of Nod, a loose collective of artists, writers, and thinkers with international origins, brought to Finland the second volume of its ambitious Ensite History—an exploration of the history of the world in three parts modeled after the Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493. Volume Two, The New World is an attempt to document History to the Present Day—“a direct address of our collective histories and present day concerns … an attempt to talk about how present realities, visions and perspectives find their way into and metaphors in the discovery of the New World.”

Visitors to Galleria Harmonica catch glimpses of The New World archive.

Hans Karelloos van Djik, creator of Humamals.
writes presides ‘over the craftsman as a bringer of peace.’” Much the way Hephaestus tends to the flame of the world, Anshelm, Mellin, and Weinberg tend to the flame of their small corner of woods. On a basic human level, we understand this moment of tranquility and recognize its possibility amidst the chaos of global society.

Similar dialectics—loud/quiet, multicentered placed, and urgent/slow—united all of the other sixteen works on display at Graphica Creativa. Such oppositional forces coexisted in equilibrium because all of the participants share the same objective to survive the aftereffects of globalization and build new worlds, free of “leveling impulses and dumb sameness.” The experiment of Graphica Creativa was to provide a sheltered space in which these forces could stand together and communicate. Its language is the printmaking the democracy of printmaking in the twenty-first century is its ability to navigate social exchanges, adapting to the multidisciplinary interaction of visual, aural, and sensory technologies and experiences.

Dekeakes, Deak wants, and another prominent postmodernists claimed that finding true meaning out of the experience of living in a globalized world was a futile act because our unconscious is socially generated. That is, it is formed out of a collective public experience and leaving no room for subjectivity. Under those circumstances, the state of the world becomes restless, rootless, and trends toward schizophrenia. As such, meaning is always in flux—always moving and layered, never static. What we were left with was Hegemony of nothingness. The recent collapse of globalization’s infrastructure has forced us to come to grips with the postmodern concept of produced culture because we witnessed firsthand its failures. We both accept the postmodernist’s claims and concede to the failures of late capitalism, then we can begin to move forward and build worlds of the future.

In search of the poetic clashes necessary to do that, we look to the local to gain control over the restless and to establish roots where roots have been obliterated. We seek anonymous, radical action to oblige controlling forces that limit our ability to operate freely. Because we are boundary-less collaboration across and through many worlds is the only way possible to reconstruct ruins and build futures. Our gift as artists is the ability to facilitate communication—with languages universally understood: visual, aural, and experiential. The significance of Graphica Creativa’s experiment for printmaking is that now we, as printmakers, know it works.

During those early years I played the role of editor, gathering and arranging both raw material and completed page spreads from my fellow graduate printmakers, into each themed issue. Printing full color prints from woodcuts in large editions, and taking care of distribution. Eventually, we both accepted the spirit of the project, by subscribing to The Printmakers Left for five dollars each month, would receive a letter from the editor, and an original print made by one of the many great young Iowa City artists. These prints were generously donated by fellow printmakers in editions of about forty and ran the gamut, from etchings, woodcuts, and lithographs to monoprints and screenprints.

One decade later The Printmakers Left began a new project, which again merged the work of a group of artists in a unique and active collaboration. TPL was adopted as the moniker for this collective of printmakers, poets, and other revolutionaries, who in the past five years have published two of three volumes of Manifestos, jokes, and charged political content, mixed with drawing, collage, and appropriated stories of David Hasselhoff, written by one dedicated German fan.

The Printmakers Left (TPL), began in the hollowed halls of the Iowa Print Group in 1999 and has continued into the new century to join its wandering, calling for committed partnerships and improbable unity, uncommon strategies, and experimental resistance to various oppressions. TPL invites us into the possible, and sparks our desire to dwell there. The spirit of the project, from the beginning, has been one of collaboration, generosity, and accessibility. It is an art of the people, even at their most refined moments.

The first publication, a small, word-by-word, arose out of necessity, as a plea to “Save the Iowa Mice.” It was produced in response to the impending annihilation of the famous and fantastic Iowa Mice, who, in flat files, managed to nibble their way through a stock of stored paper and print. The hundred multiples were announced by megaphone and distributed on the streets, for passers-by to take for free. From there, TPL developed into a monthly publication, a saturated assembly of manifestos, jokes, and charged political content, mixed with drawing, collage, and appropriated stories of David Hasselhoff, written by one dedicated German fan.

In the year 2001, we all read “The Circular Ruins” by Jorge Luis Borges, and we began working for a couple of years to produce a variable edition of twenty five hand-sewn artist books. During the greater part of those two years, we sent editioned folios to each other through the mail, in order to work together in the development of imagery. Sometimes, collaboration was engineered specifically for a certain person, and other times work was sent to a perfect stranger, to which the recipient was kindly donated by fellow printmakers in editions of about forty and ran the gamut, from etchings, woodcuts, and lithographs to monoprints and screenprints.
This image is sending you are my attempts at inventing a kind of compression of pictorial space in direct response to MY subjective read of contemporary time and space. Supreme "enjambment," compression of pictorial space in direct response to MY subjective read of contemporary time and space. Supreme "enjambment," compression of pictorial space in direct response to MY subjective read of contemporary time and space.

The images I'm sending you are my attempts at inventing a kind of manifestation of subjective reads of particular space and time. This first volume of Exquisite History investigated life's origins, creation myths, and the forming and naming of flora and fauna. Though TPL participants all have different faith backgrounds and pursuits, we agreed to use the book of Genesis as our work's narrative structure. We were making a book about the beginning of the world which started with formlessness and ended with exile. Once again, an end was a beginning in our work; we called it The Land of Wandering. As a group, we generated artworks in our various towns and cities, and collaborated through the postal system, mailing individual works, a box of raw materials, sketchbooks, and written documents between us. Since we weren't necessarily editioning, the work began to accumulate at an alarming rate, and now included photography, video, and sculpture. Blogs were set up to share the latest images and the emails piled into volumes. Then, after a couple of years of production, some of us met in Charlottesville, where all of the work would eventually be organized according to the first eleven chapters of Genesis, and then edited and scanned into a selection of digital image files for the final layout in the digital labs at the University of Akron. Many works did not make it into the published volume, but appeared in the accompanying exhibition at University of Virginia's Off-Grounds Gallery where The Land of Wondering would celebrate its official release.

Volume two of Exquisite History, The New World, was released in the summer of 2009, and was exhibited along with related, original works at the Thirteenth Annual Finnish Print Triennial in Jyväskylä. Once again, after years of individual and collaborative production in response to the foundational themes and concepts of the project, the book was assembled into a selection of the most compelling images and writings from our group. While the book's dimensions remained consistent with the first volume, some adjustments were made to the paper stock and layout and design, in the pursuit of greater refinement and cohesiveness. Additionally, The New World focused even more on contextualizing the material produced, as theoretical and critical writing were now included in addition to the select poems, and chapters were arranged more according to specific projects or geographic locations. While work was still somewhat collaborative, there was a greater sense, in this book of individual approaches within the larger topic, keeping distinct voices and aesthetics separate in the volume, as if still reacting to the morass of The Circular Ruins. This book needed to reveal its logic. Conceptually, The New World is about the present time. It seeks to interpret and critique our desires, values, and behaviors, from the place where our wandering has brought us. It deals almost exclusively in failures. And now, as we begin work for the third and final volume of Exquisite History, we will be asking what is to come and for what we can hope. The Printmakers Left continues, in search of togetherness in the age of alienation, along our lines of flight, toward no conclusions, but only beginnings.

I’ve followed Cole Rogers since I read his technical research papers at the Tamarind Institute. His writing was clear and edifying, and his research was solid. I met him at the 2004 Editions/Artists Books Fair in Chelsea, NY where he encouraged and supported our small operation (PR: R.T. Press, Denton, Texas). Personally, I was a bit star-struck—both by him and the Julie Mehretu prints that Highpoint presented at the fair.

So, for The Mid America Print Council Journal issue “Collaboration and Print,” I thought of Cole Rogers and Highpoint Editions for their continued, multi-faceted approach to collaboration—from individual artists, to education, to the community. Cole and Highpoint are synonymous in embracing all facets of a collaborative creative endeavor.

CC: What are you working on right now?
CR: Prints by Carlos Amorales, whose work will be shown in fall 2010 (which will coincide with MAPC conference). Twenty-two editions (lithography, intaglio, and screen printing), video, and an installation will be shown in Highpoint’s gallery.

CC: It’s funny. I’m in a situation where folks are asking “Where do these “400+ year old” mediums fit in today’s creative work?”—how does an artist like Amorales answer that question?
CR: Well, he’s the son of an artist, has very wide ideas of art, and is open to ideas and interaction. For example, Amorales has been working with a sharable collection for over a decade. He’s been gathering images of mars, women, monkeys, skulls, airplanes, spider webs and other curiosities that other artists can access.

CC: Do you think this spills the end of a “sellable” system?
CR: Amorales isn’t opposed to it—but he’s not restricted to sellable commodities; he’s just following what interests him as primary. He loves collaborating with ideas—not products or techniques.

CC: Sounds like you do too.
CR: I enjoy collaborating with artists and using the intrinsic properties of each medium. It is harder to provide artists with multiple media as opposed to specializing. The professional artists we invite are willing to wrestle with new work in new media and we are willing to challenge ourselves by offering as much as we can.

CC: What else are you proud of at Highpoint?
CR: Outreach and how we involve the larger community in printmaking—by allowing people who wouldn’t necessarily try printmaking to experience it. This is the community that will support us in the future—that is, if we are important in their lives and give them a reason to care about printmaking.

For example, our International Exhibition Program—so far, we have organized and exhibited shows of contemporary prints from Pakistan, Poland, Australia, Mexico, Japan, Scotland, and South Africa. For the hundreds who see each of those shows, it broadens their ideas about these countries and the use of print media as a lively world-wide artistic endeavor.

Having Highpoint involved in different ways of engaging people is important. We share more of those moments when the first print is pulled...the one where everyone says “AAAHHH! We work hard to actively recruit new “choir members.”

CC: How do you encourage that interaction?
CR: Our 3,500 school age visitors each year—we partner with schools to bring art, and printmaking to the next generation. We have four “Free Ink Days” a year where 200-300 people (each event) explores monotype and relief—often families come in for the first time. We also have] teen mentorship programs, emerging artist residencies, tours, panels, work shops, doing three to four off-site events each year and being in a high traffic area with public hours.

CC: What do you think visitors to Minneapolis (MAPC 2010) will be surprised with in terms of art and printmaking?
CR: First, the new building—Highpoint has been in the new space since June 1, 2009 with an opening last October—so the MAPC conference attendees will see the new building and how the different aspects of Highpoint work together.

Highpoint Center for Printmaking was established in April 2001 and is the only accessible, community-oriented facility of its kind in the Upper Midwest. Until Highpoint opened its doors, broad public access to the printmaking arts was virtually non-existent in this part of the country. Highpoint is a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the art of printmaking. Its goals are to provide educational programs, community access, and collaborative publishing opportunities to engage the community and increase the appreciation and understanding of the printmaking arts.

Highpoint Editions, the publishing arm of Highpoint Center for Printmaking, was created in 2004 to form a clear identity for work made at Highpoint in collaboration with Artistic Director and Master Printer Cole Rogers.
Each member of the group began work on three 11” x 15” color monoprints using as or more elements pulled from the image bank, hereafter referred to as “the lexicon.” In most cases, students used gym arabic relief type to reductive monotype to begin transcribing this found imagery onto printmaking paper, but the more experienced students used black and white blocks and photo lithographic plates as well. The following week, each student passed her trio of unfinished monoprints to a classmate (chosen randomly, by drawing numbers from a hat), and received a set to “read” and to develop further. Again, students mined the shared lexicon for possibilities. As the weeks progressed, the meaning of the imagery mutated, depending upon how it was positioned, layered, or juxtaposed with various elements. By drawing from a shared pool of visual source materials, the choice of an image was not so much a statement in itself as it was finding a memorable way to re-envision it. According to Lawrence Lessig, “Remixed media succeed when they show others something new; they fail when they are trite or derivative. Like a great essay or a funny joke, a remix draws upon the work of others in order to do new work.”

Over the course of one month, each monoprint traveled through the hands of at least four individuals, who each utilized the lexicon’s potential in different ways. Working from three monoprints at a time enabled students to test and revise possibilities and to play with ghost proofs without the pressure of formal editing. Sometimes a print that appeared doomed was revitalized in the next round by a classmate who could view its apparent shortcomings as the proverbial “happy accident.” The students were free to manipulate the size, color, and physicality of the prints as they wished but collectively agreed to refrain from discussing their conceptual or formal decisions with each other from week to week. Admittedly, this meant that some great points of resolution were overlooked along the way but as the month progressed many students surprised themselves and each other ultimately creating a set of prints that could have emerged only by way of collective effort and insight.

Working in this manner prompted questions about the role of originality, creative ownership, and verbalization in contemporary studio practice. This non-verbal process of assignment and revision forced many students to make more assertive visual moves if they wanted their intentions to be understood and maintained by their peers. By temporarily removing the component of individual ownership from the process, most students took more creative risks. One student found the whole experience frustrating, though it may have benefited her nonethless she sprang into action with a renewed sense of conviction about her own aesthetic priorities once “freed” from the collective.

Thus, after four weeks, the group discussed all of the prints extensively, to better understand how each image had evolved technically and to reflect upon how the four players had read and misread each other’s visual and conceptual cues along the way. An extensive editing session followed to identify the most resolved work for inclusion in a small photo book. After scanning all the monoprints, the students worked together in subgroups to coordinate the book’s layout, write an introduction, and place an order so that each member of the collective would have a tangible record of the project, in addition to a few of the finished prints. The book’s colophon reads:

Monoprints made within the walls of Pendleton West room 218, the center of creativity and home of the printmaking collaborative known as Lexiconia. In February 2008 by the following self-proclaimed Lexiconians: Suzana Albar, Katherine Ackerman, Marie Ayabe, Annette Bayer, Amber Evans, Linda Frey, Sarah Gilligan, Lauren Ito, Kristen Mitosch, Courtney Richter and Brittany Sundgren.

Cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that our ability to respond to something unfamiliar depends upon the notion of place that we have cultivated over time. According to Tuan, place is wherever we have established a strong feeling of personal connection or belonging. Our willingness to pause, to take the time to become truly at home in a specific setting, language, or working method is vital to the construction of place as well as to the development of an authentic artistic voice. It is to paraphrase the painter Lucian Freud the difference between making art like a native or just being a tourist in the studio. Printmakers develop a native understanding of place not only by taking the time to learn complex technical procedures and tending to the needs of a print shop, but also by pausing to share effort, insight and advice with one another behind the scenes. Tuan says, “Members of that community create in part for one another. They are showing one another how they can create, as kids on a skateboard are showing their friends how they can create.” That showing is valuable, even when the stuff produced is not.

While most print courses aim to help students develop greater technical, visual, and critical skills, their less often stated, but perhaps more central task, is to cultivate a compelling, shared sensation of place among emerging artists who will transfer the memory of this onto subsequent professional endeavors. This also speaks to the role that short intensive workshops, such as those offered by Gorman’s, Pendleton, and Anderson Ranch, play in the continuous revitalization of the discipline. Printmakers flock to national conferences, studio residencies, and demonstrations not only to gain new techniques but also to reaffirm or repair a communal sense of place.

Nonetheless, whenever a cultural dynamic grows too comfortable, too settled, or too self-assured a trickster force is sure to upset the balance. As Lewis Hyde reminds us, this is an essential part of creative growth as well as broader cultural renewal. So besides needing to develop an authentic experience of place, of being comfortably at home in one’s studio habits of mind artists also need space, a sense of an open horizon, in order to recognize new possibilities, and make insightful connections. Space, according to Tuan, denotes openness, mobility, freedom, and the risk of art. Master printers in fine art publishing studios provide just this kind of space for painters and sculptors when they collaborate on new publications. Some of these artists may be extremely prolific, and perhaps even produce their best work in the form of prints, yet insistently self-deferred as painters or sculptors in order to reaffirm a sensation of space, of purposely not knowing, whenever they enter a print shop.

Phyllis McGibbon

Phyllis McGibbon, a self-proclaimed lexiconian, offers this insight: Part of every artist’s work is figuring out how to reconcile Tuan’s notion of place (belonging) with space (risk) in a personally relevant way. Printmakers collaborate, cross media, and reference the work of others to free themselves of unnecessary baggage, to step outside of comfort zones, and to consider other ways of being and becoming. We also need a place from which to begin. Postcards from lexiconia presented an opportunity for Wellesley College students to do just that.
Printmakers generously share information and techniques with each other forming supportive networks within their own print shops and across significant geographic distances. Recently, graduate students from two different state universities worked collectively on a set of multi-authored, multi-technique variable prints in order to tighten their supportive network while expanding their capabilities and expectations. This article chronicles their challenges and successes.

When she began her graduate work at the University of Georgia at Athens, Helen Farmer knew that she wanted to initiate a collaborative project with graduate students at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, where she had received a BFA. She identified interesting students, and together they secured funding for accommodations, travel and materials through the Lamar Dodd School of Art (UGA) and the Betsy Worden Foundation in Printmaking (UTK) for a project called Trouble in Tight Jeans.

In spring 2009, thirteen graduate students from both institutions joined each other for three days of printing and dialogue at UTK. They gave each other free access to a variety of matrices: Everyone grabs each other's plates, prints, blocks, etc., and alters them. We create "done" and "not done" racks, and have printmaking projects with graduate students at the university of Georgia at Athens, Helen Farmer and the lamar Dodd School of Art. She identified interested students, and together they secured funding for accommodations, travel and materials through the Lamar Dodd School of Art (UGA) and the Betsy Worden Foundation in Printmaking (UTK) for a project called Trouble in Tight Jeans.

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