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an international association of artists

Winter
2015

The Boston Printmakers *e-newsletter*

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Winter 2015

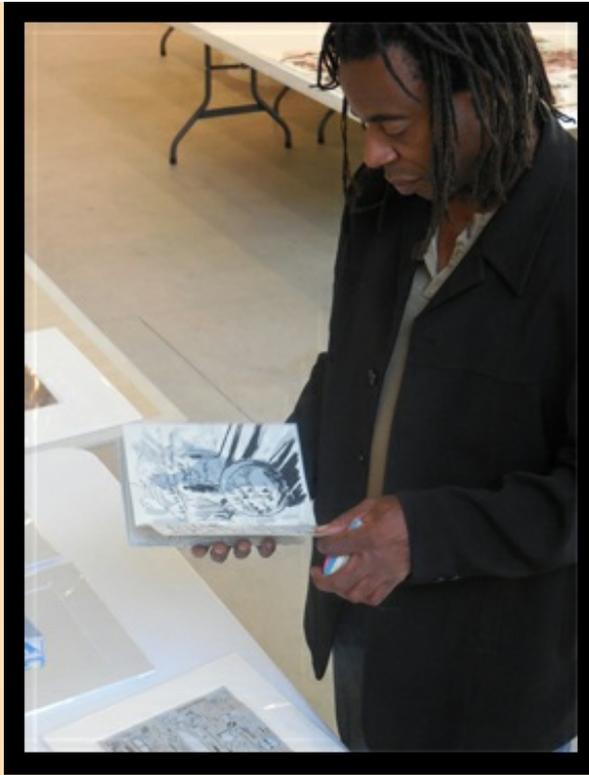
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Juror's Statement, 2015 North American Print Biennial

By Willie Cole

I am an artist who makes prints but I am not a printer. What I mean is that all my prints are collaborative. I show up at a print studio with a concept or sketch and then throw myself at the mercy of the master printers who then execute my ideas. These master printers have been my teachers, both technically and aesthetically. They bring their technical expertise to every project and I bring my vision. That's what collaboration means. But the real creativity rises when my ignorance crashes into their expertise. And when it does, that's when I know I'm really doing my job. And what is my job? My job is to push them beyond their scope of knowledge, and to challenge them to employ unorthodox and innovative approaches to printing.

With that said I will go on to say that, from the pool of entries for this year's Boston Printmakers 2015 Biennial, I selected the pieces that inspired me the most. They were the ones that showed the broadest range of possibilities of what printmaking can be. They were the ones that triggered full scenarios in my mind in a single frame without the use of words. They were techniques brilliantly executed. They were stories well told and emotions deeply expressed.



Willie Cole choosing artwork for the 2015 North American Print Biennial

In a world where any and all things are possible, it was surprising that narrative story-like images seemed to dominate this year's entry pool. In a way it felt as if I were selecting films for a festival rather than prints for an exhibition, and that all my selections had to be made based on viewing just one single frame from each film. The parallels with film and print were obvious to me not just in the subject matter but also in the lighting techniques, perspective, and point of view of many of the entries. Surrealism, German expressionism, film noir, Italian neo-realism, magic realism, and photography in general were and apparently still are big influences on how we view and represent the human experience in printmaking, and maybe even in art in general.

All the entries both confirm and emphasize that printmaking is the missing link between the so-called fine arts, i.e. painting, drawing, and sculpture, and commercial or graphic arts, i.e. photography, film, type, and illustration. Perhaps that's what pop art is, too. And if you agree with that then Andy Warhol, arguably the most famous printmaker of the 20th century, must have been Moses. We can blame or thank Andy for taking printmaking to new heights, at least in the marketplace. But the number of print editions he left behind dwarfs the number of technical innovations he achieved. And it's technical innovation that, in my opinion, makes real winners and really moves a medium forward.

With so many entries moving in the direction of storytelling, all or any entries slightly less representational or narrative stood out most. They, more often than not, reflected popular movements in western or European abstraction, and a clear understanding of art history, while at the same time (pursued or not) offered the greatest possibility for the employment of innovative techniques. And new techniques, not just in storytelling but in image execution, in my opinion, is what it should really be all about. I recognize that this is not any easy task. But think about the differences between classical music and jazz. Ask yourself how swing became bebop, and maybe you will get closer to an answer. Mastering existing techniques and practices in any art form is just the beginning.



Carolyn Muskat, Willie Cole and Liz Layton Shepherd at the 2015 North American Print Biennial

The Krakow Triennial, 2015: Interview with Deborah Cornell

by Stephanie Stigliano

Stephanie: Can you tell us a little about the Krakow Triennial?

Deborah: The International Print Triennial - Krakow is a respected international printmaking exhibition, a comprehensive, ambitious presentation of recent graphic art practice from around the world. Next year, they celebrate 50-years! Like our Boston event, there are satellite exhibitions/panels that occur around it, including a spectacular exhibition of “Young Polish Print,” a show honoring young printmaking professionals.

Stephanie: How would you say the printmaking community differs from what we have here in the New England area?

Deborah: Unlike here, the print media in Poland are centuries-old! They seem also to be highly visible. Their print community enjoys broad sponsorship and strong professionalism which seems to allow for a very vibrant forum for print. Poland is more compact than the more diffuse US community—this seems to be propitious, and their location in Europe gives a centralized point for the international view.

Stephanie: Would you like to talk about the piece you exhibited? Were there any special challenges with the installation?

Deborah: The piece was a large digital print mural, with a video projection over it, dealing with patterns of environment and culture—difficult to show, complex and totally dependent on accurate color. So, I was somewhat worried about it being installed in another country, without me there. But—it was perfect! The organizers actually built a house for my work within the large first room of the exhibition, creating a highly controlled environment for the light and sound. Needless to say I was very impressed, and now—unfortunately—very spoiled.

Stephanie: I heard that you received a special award. Congratulations! There must be a story behind that.

Deborah: Thank you! It has been doubly special, as it was two awards—an unexpected, deep

honor. Since this work is unorthodox, I was happy just to have it shown, and overwhelmed by the jury's decision. The 2015 Grand Prix was for the installation—and the Grand Prix D'Honneur was for “distinguished position in the contemporary art world.”

Stephanie: What were your impressions of the exhibition as a whole? How many artists were represented and where were they from?

Deborah: There were 105 artists exhibiting, chosen in a two-stage review from a field of 1105 artists submitting work—from around the globe. The quality and scale of the work that was shown was outstanding—it was the first time I have seen this exhibition first hand. The works included were virtuosic—engaged, substantial, and creating an enhanced contemporary conversation. The excellent selections speak to the standing of this respected organization and to the wonderful vision of the jury.

It was beautifully mounted—every work was hung so that it was seen to advantage—and many were monumental. It was a treat to see such acute understanding for how graphic art is best presented. The satellite exhibitions were of similar quality. I am especially impressed with the level of recognition offered to Poland's very accomplished young print artists, and the substantial opportunities offered to encourage them.

Stephanie: What was a particularly memorable part of the experience for you?

Deborah: The whole experience was memorable, but I think the deep appreciation for the print endeavor was most heartwarming! They even invited the US Ambassador!

Stephanie: Can you give us some details about your time in the city of Krakow?

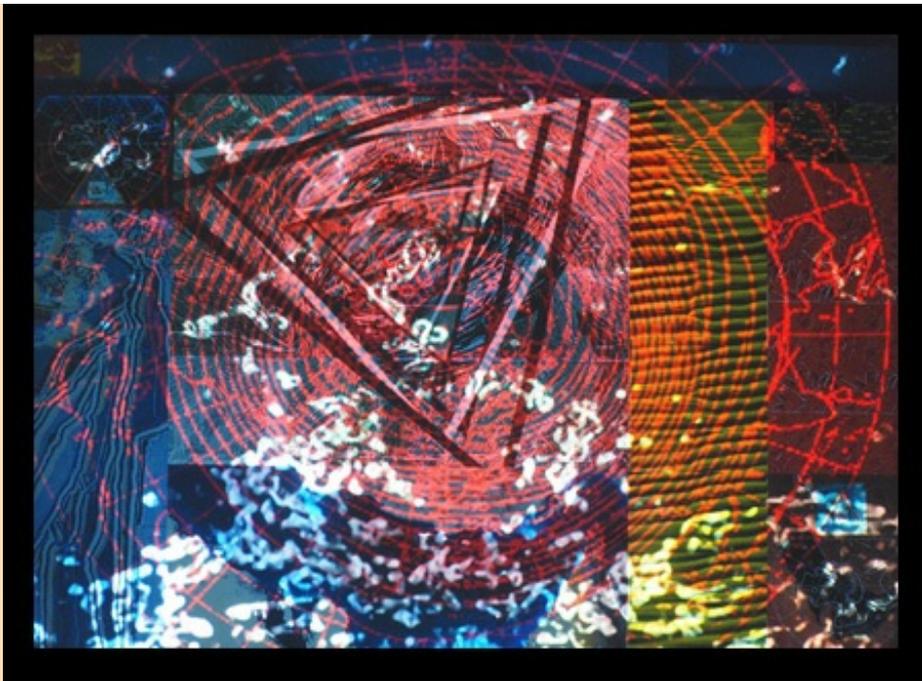
Deborah: Krakow is a beautiful, compelling city with a long history and a medieval center! Sadly I wasn't there very long (I'm now hoping to return). But the exhibition itself was in the Old City Square, so even walking there was intriguing...And true Polish cooking is not to be missed!

Stephanie: The Boston Printmakers is offering a trip to Krakow. Would you offer some advice for the participants?

(For information please contact Marc Cote at marccotestudio@gmail.com)

Deborah: Krakow is a hotbed of really accomplished printmaking – see as much of it as you can!

And do NOT miss the Old City!

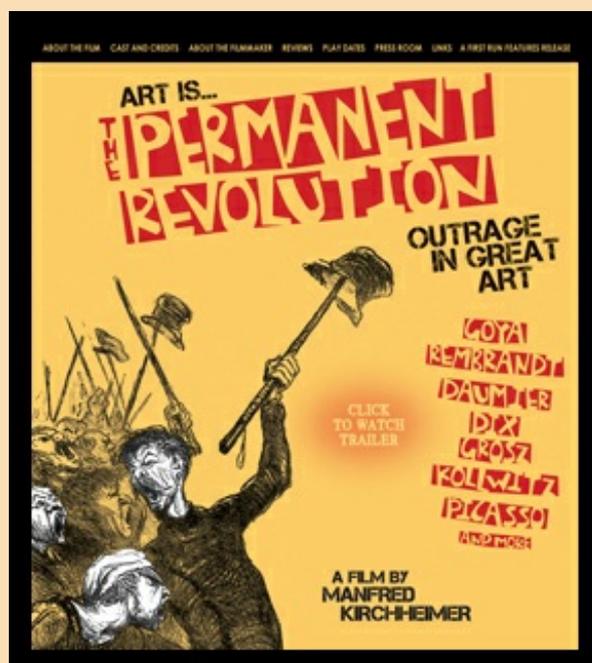


Deborah Cornell, *Reflecting Place*, Digital Print, Video, Sound

Art Is...The Permanent Revolution, Report from The Silvermine Gallery

By Nomi Silverman

Political propaganda, and its corollary, political criticism, has a long history in the print world. As far back as cave drawings, art has been used for some kind of communication. Medieval manuscripts featured comical drawings in the margins that guided the viewer as to what was expected behavior. In more current times, prints and posters were used to rally forth the population during WWI and WWII. Then there is the use of prints to criticize the status quo, as well as point to the horrors in the world, as expertly drawn by Daumier and Goya. On September 28, 2015, the Silvermine Arts Center in New Canaan, CT screened the film, *Art is... The Permanent Revolution*, by filmmaker Manfred Kirchheimer. The term permanent revolution refers to the continual and historical intertwining of art and social protest. It features Sigmund Abeles (intaglio), Ann Chernow (lithography), Paul Marcus (woodcut) and James Reed (master printer).



Each artist spends time in the film creating a new print and talking about art, and art in relation to the history of social and political criticism. James Reed talks about not only his role in the creation of the print, but also about the contemporary and historical collaboration of artist and printer. Political criticism here is broader than the contemporary concept of government. Political here refers to the body politic, comprising all the people in a particular country considered as a single group. This is an important distinction, as it incorporates all the citizens of a society as opposed to just those who rule. Goya's "Disasters of War" indicted the whole of the French army, if not all of France, not merely the king and nobles.



James Reed, printing

Prints are especially conducive to political and social protest; the work is made in multiples and therefore able to be distributed to many. In addition, the violent process of making prints—using acid, using gauges—are a physical and visual manifestation of the pictorial critique. The historical part of the film sorts through artists such as Goya, Dix, Kollwitz, Callot, Picasso, Grosz, Rembrandt and many, many others. The range of artists shown illustrate the breadth of critique that is out there—from the humorous but biting prints of Daumier, to the violently vivid depictions of war from Dix and Goya. The film weaves in and out between the contemporary artists and the historical prints creating a visual montage that links time, past and now.

Following the film screening was a lively panel discussion that in addition to Abeles, Chernow and Reed, included Bruce Waldman, Nomi Silverman, and Stephen Fredericks (moderator). The discussion ran the gamut from talking about the definition of political art to the definition of a print. To complete the circle, the Silvermine Arts Center is exhibiting prints from the New York Society of Etchers, of which Ann Chernow, Bruce Waldman and Stephen Fredericks are members.



Nomi Silverman, *Exodus*, Woodcut

New Beginnings in Hanoi

by C. David Thomas

The Boston Printmakers board member Theresa Monaco generously donated her Wright combination litho/etching press to Hanoi artist Le Huy Tiep. The press was shipped in mid-August and arrived safely in Hanoi in late August. Carolyn Muskat of Muskat Studios donated a large box of printmaking materials for the new studio. The Boston Printmakers donated \$500. toward the shipping cost. The Indochina Arts Partnership in Wellesley, MA did the coordinating of the crating and shipping of the press and supplies.

With this press, Tiep has created the first private professional printmaking studio in Vietnam and has already begun teaching printmaking to several Vietnamese artists. Until now, the only printmaking facilities were located in government-controlled universities and art centers. This has meant that Tiep has had little control over the selection of artists for his workshops. Tiep has plans to offer printmaking services to both Vietnamese and international visiting artists. He was responsible for helping to coordinate the Boston Printmakers trip to Vietnam in 2010, and the workshops and exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center. He has offered his services to any member of the Boston Printmakers visiting Hanoi. We hope that some of our members will take advantage of Tiep's generous offer. If you are interested, please contact former board member C. David Thomas at cdtartist@yahoo.com.



Above, left: Hanoi artist Le Huy Tiep lining up the paper to print on Theresa Monaco's former press.

Above, right: Hanoi artist Le Huy Tiep (center) with two artists from Hanoi showing off their first prints with the donated press at the new printmaking studio.

C. David Thomas Retires from The Board

By Julia Talcott

In 1976 a young David Thomas, recent MFA from RISD, new faculty member at Emmanuel College, and a Vietnam Veteran hailing from Prides Corner, Maine, joined the board of the Boston Printmakers with the intent of meeting other artists in the Boston area. Thirty-nine years later, it is safe to say he met his goal; among his many other accomplishments David got to know his fellow artists and printmakers well. More importantly, we all were able to get to know David.



C. David Thomas in his Jeep in Pleiku, Vietnam, 1969

David joined the Boston Printmakers when it was just a few people meeting in the evening in the back of the Ainsworth Gallery on Bromfield Street. He has held every position on the board, Treasurer, Secretary, President, multiple times. Back in '76 the Biennial was an annual show, and it was the main focus of the association. Carl and Sylvia Rantz, Sid Hurwitz, Vivian Berman, Marjorie Javan, Donald Conran, among others, came and went on the Board as they did everything... solicited work, accepted packages, juried and hung the show, gave out prizes, and sent the work back again, all the from the basement of the Rantz's home in Needham.

David had many accomplishments here in Boston... his tenure until 2001 as "Professor of Studio Art" at Emmanuel College, a lovely family, wife Jean, children Aaron, Mandy and grandchildren Cailleigh, Jocelyn, JD and Charlie and a tireless member of the Boston Printmakers. Perhaps most remarkable was his journey and life's work in Vietnam, beginning as an enlisted combat engineer in the Vietnam War to his work as founder and director of the Indochina Arts Partnership, promoting peace through art and educational exchanges.

I met with David in his home and studio filled with artwork from his beloved Vietnam. Calm, soft-spoken and self-effacing, he explained how after graduating from the Maine College of Art in 1968, he enlisted in the Army in an effort to avoid combat. He was sent for army training and was a draftsman and jeep driver for army officers. Time spent waiting for the officers was time spent

with his sketchbook. David initially demonized the enemy in order to survive, but the sketches he drew of the children and countryside affected him deeply. In 1987, he returned to Vietnam with a Quaker group promoting peace for “three weeks that changed my life.” He brought work made after his return from the Vietnam War to the fine arts museum in Hanoi as a peace offering, and was greeted with such sincere warmth and enthusiasm that he was undone. This encounter set in motion his life’s work as an artist and as a promoter of peace in this beautiful war-torn country.

David steps down from the Boston Printmakers with sadness but purpose. He wants to devote more time to his work in Vietnam and his own artwork. His studio is filled with beautiful work that artfully protests the lasting effects of the American presence in Vietnam.

The Boston Printmakers owes you so much David, but we know this is not good-bye. Thank you for your many years of service and we look forward to hearing more about your very important work in the larger arena of world peace.



C. David Thomas and artist Le Huy Tiep on a motorbike, Hanoi, Vietnam, 2013

C. David Thomas

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