



CONTEMPORARY IMAGES IN PRINT SINCE 1915

85th Annual International Competition: **Printmaking**

Jurors' Statements

Contemporary printmaking is flourishing with artists integrating new digital approaches, renewing age-old techniques and adopting alternative methods and materials. The prints of these competition finalists are simply refreshing as they present an exciting range of developments arising from their different influences, stories and experiences.

These works, noteworthy for their visual appeal, foster a new confidence in contemporary printmaking which continues to drive creative expression. The story of a print renaissance is just beginning with such budding talents and we look forward to see it adding new exciting chapters to ongoing dialogues in contemporary art.

- Emi Eu
Director
Singapore Tyler Print Institute

One of the great joys of pouring over a group of international submissions is getting a sense of what artists from around the world, from Philadelphia to Posnan, are interested in. The entries for The Print Center's 85th Annual International Competition: Printmaking remind us that these mediums - ancient and recent, from woodcut to inkjet – offer a creative lingua franca, with themes and techniques crisscrossing geographic and national boundaries with great fluidity, evidencing shared interests and concerns.

Printmaking has historically been a vehicle for the icon – from ink rubbings of the Buddha rubbed from stone carvings and religious images sold to pilgrims en route to sacred sites, to engravings of French royalty and Shepard Fairey's ubiquitous Obama Hope. One strand of the selection of works in this exhibition reflects the continuing strength of this tradition, with depictions of both fictional characters and historical figures. Brian Johnson's versions of The Thing show the superhero in a decidedly more nuanced, introspective, and self-doubting light than the traditional "it's clobbering time!" version that appears on the pages of Marvel comic books. Jiha Moon playfully combines traditional tropes of Asian ink painting – mulberry paper, stamped seals, elegantly stylized figures, decorative floral and cloud motifs – with an instantly recognizable American cultural figure – Walt Disney's Snow White, with her customary attendant bunnies and bluebirds. Seemingly anthropological in nature, Rick Wright's inkjet prints play with our sense of perception, depicting not African tribal masks, as they seem at first glance, but plastic bottles, imbuing quotidian objects with a transformative power.

In the realm of the real, Sarah Dekker offers small-scale depictions of contemporary celebrities, from Hillary Clinton to Lil Wayne, masquerading as intimate, devotional images one might find inside a locket. Nils Karsten goes in another direction size-wise, offering a depiction of the performer Lou Reed of nearly heroic magnitude. David Curcio offers an evocative portrait of the complicated American author Patricia Highsmith in an etching overworked with embroidery. Annie Bissett's woodcut depicts the historical figures John Alexander and Thomas Roberts, lovers who were tried and convicted of "lude behavior and unclean carriage one with another," in the Plymouth Colony in the 1630s.

There are, of course, many other exciting threads of interest visible in the selection – landscapes both real and imagined; views of brambles and constellations, cells and circuits; narratives that are intensely personal and schematically constructed. And while relief mediums of linoleum and woodcut have a particularly strong showing, intaglio, lithography, screenprint, and digital techniques all appear, sometimes with the added tactility of collage or embroidery. Taken together, these prints testify to the ongoing vitality of the printmaking mediums, offering a full palette of tools for expression and creativity with which artists are creating and depicting the icons of the 21st Century.

-Sarah Suzuki
Associate Curator of Prints and Illustrated Books,
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