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Summer 2016

The Boston Printmakers e-newsletter



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"Iron Printmakers" Creates Iron Wills, by Deborah Cornell and Joshua Brennan

"Iron Printmakers" is a competitive printmaking event involving four Boston colleges. The brainchild of Carolyn Muskat, of Muskat Studios, it is held at MassArt, and this year marked the fourth edition. At 9am on a Saturday in MassArt's studio, competitors gather and are charged with creating an edition of 10 prints, using four distinct print media – by 2pm! A panel of three invited judges observes the editions unfolding and the teamwork of the students. There are few brave souls among print professionals who would be this daring, yet the intrepid students dive into the maelstrom. Making things more challenging, teams receive "mystery ingredients" which must be incorporated into the prints (past examples include googly-eyes and caution tape). Sixteen printmakers, moving at full speed, are an impressive sight! Participating colleges receive a set of the teams' prints, and a set enters the Boston Public Library collection.



Above, left: Overview of the MassArt print shop – all printing! Above, right: 2016 Iron Print 4 Mystery Ingredients: a silicone pot holder, seed starter pots, and plant label sticks!

This year, Boston University's team shared some of their impressions...

Julianna Katz: When I first heard about Iron Printmakers, I couldn't help but guess it was like the TV show: a chaotic competition where participants are given obstacles and barriers through which they are expected to create a masterpiece. I wasn't wrong. Most of us had never seen the MassArt studio before and had no idea what to expect: Are we going to be able to print the edition in time? Are the other teams master printers? Will our layers register? What will the "mystery items" be? The feeling of adrenaline was second only to the elation we felt after taking 2nd place.



Above, left: The BU team printing their screen layer – headed in to the home stretch! Above right: The Levigators (Team Boston University) with their finished print.

Front row: Caitlin Serpico (backup), Julianna Katz, Deborah Cornell (co-coach)

Standing: Josh Brennan (co-coach), Bryan Fountain, Edie Cote, Madeleine Bialke

Madeleine Bialke: This is the second time I participated in Iron Printmakers. I was especially eager to contribute again because I found the experience so thrilling. I love the collaborative aspects of the project. The most difficult part was figuring out how to coordinate each layer of the print. This was also the most rewarding aspect because it established working relationships with my team members. Iron Printmakers is a great confidence booster because it showed me that I was capable of time-critical printing and quick decision making. Watching the other teams approach the same kinds of problems was also a beneficial learning experience.



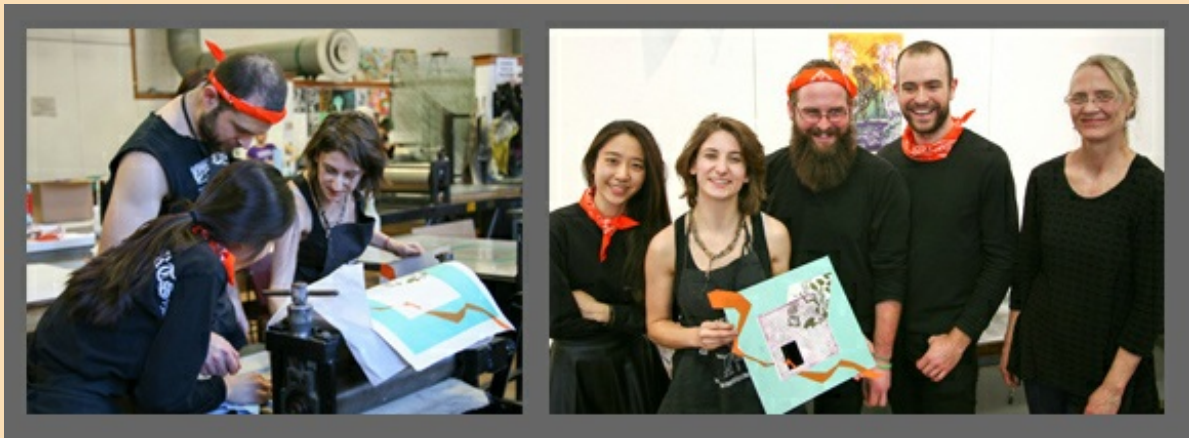
Above, left: The Fresh Prints of Bel Air (Team SMFA) planning their print. Above, right: Team SMFA, left to right, Co-coach Rina Ito, Dylan Runnion, Jennifer Murphy, Catherine Armistead, Lindsay York, Co-coach Audrey Hsia with their finished print.

Edie Cote: I agreed to the project because I thought it would be an excellent experience, even though I was slightly terrified. I had never printed an edition in such a short amount of time, but I trusted last year's team when they said they had fun. During the experience I learned that, while it's important to be on the same page at the same time, it's good to trust each other with artistic

liberties. I felt that our final print really emphasized everyone's ideas and skills, while also being cohesive. We also thrived in response to the mystery objects, with how well they fit with our plan. The best part was seeing the last layer being printed and how amazing they all looked together.



Above, left: MassArt team members working on their print. Above, right: The Elective Students (Team MassArt), left to right, Co-coach Andrew Stearns, Paulinka Meyer, Antonio Cardoso, Claire Blanchette, Victoria Barquin, Co-coach Kelly Differ with their finished print.



Above, left: LUCAD team members conferring about their print. Above, right: Jake and the Hot Plates (Team LUCAD), left to right, Jisun Lee, Julia Macchiarola, Ryan Godek, Gabe Richardson, and coach Constance Jacobson with their finished print.

Bryan Fountain: I had heard about Iron Printmakers throughout my time at BU. Friends said it was a blast. I never considered participating until asked by my professor, Deborah Cornell, to join the team as the screen printer. This was the first time I had exposure to the collaborative side of printmaking. Four people with differing aesthetics seemed like it would be a disaster. This was far from the truth. Collaborating together truly made for an impressive image. Our resulting edition was fluid, and the contrasting styles came together dynamically. The biggest takeaway for me is that collaboration and the pressure of time can help make an impressive body of work.



Above, left: Team MassArt: Antonio Cardoso, Paulinka Meyer, Victoria Barquin, Claire Blanchette with their trophy. Above, right: The 2016 judges for Iron Print 4: John Pyper, Deb Chaney, Phyllis McGibbon, and organizer Carolyn Muskat of Muskat Studios.

Iron Printmakers is generously sponsored by Carolyn Muskat of Muskat Studio, The Boston Printmakers, MassArt, Takach Press, and Canson US & Ed Brickler.

Teaching Printmaking, by Susan Schmidt

My classes at The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA gather students from across disciplines along with visual art majors. Students may come to printmaking with ideas from their majors in environmental studies or philosophy, or their study abroad experiences. My goal is to help them investigate artistic approaches and strategies of printmaking in service of their ideas. I also want them to use the process of printmaking itself to generate new ways of thinking.

When teaching monotype, drypoint, collagraph, relief or intaglio, I emphasize the interchangeable nature of printing from a matrix. I plan so that plates from different techniques can be layered together. Perhaps the stencil from a student's first project will become part of the vocabulary of her last one. Or maybe she will recycle her woodcuts later as Chine-collé. Working in multiples allows artists to recombine parts and be resourceful.



Left: Emily Vecchiarelli, woodcut; Right: Ana Philbrook, woodcut and Chine-collé

In addition to learning technique, students test out different artistic approaches. They read Grimm's fairytales as source material for one project and work with the concept of opposition in

another. They take a collagraph plate through a series of steps only to see what new and unknown material arises from the process itself, and then print it experimentally. It can be difficult to let go of literal notions and move towards more abstract representation. Likewise it can be hard to move from creating generic images towards the specific and particular. My print projects are designed to address those concerns and examine various ways of sourcing imagery. This semester students worked on exquisite corpse dry point drawings, based on chance associations. They exchanged their plates to continue a dry point drawing started by another person, that was almost concealed from their eyes as they drew. When finally revealed, each plate combined the work of three students. Using color top rolls and stencils, these were printed together on an oversize sheet of paper, as a sort of giant, exquisite corpse comic book.



Students' exquisite corpse dry point drawings

Printmaking is particularly suited to practice engagement, both socially engaged content and an engaged learning experience. This semester my students looked at a print by Kara Walker in the collection of the Worcester Art Museum and discussed her representations of race, history and power. Several students undertook projects addressing race or environmental concerns as content. On another level, printmaking is a particular kind of learning experience. Students labor through hours of physical work together in the print studio; it's difficult, repetitive, messy, frustrating and occasionally exciting. It is a workshop environment where we are all learning from each other's mistakes and successes. The emphasis is on working through the process rather than developing expertise. My students at Holy Cross College will go on to many different career paths and probably forget the technique of aquatint, but I hope they remember the value of collaborative learning.



Artists' Books, left: Maggie Walsh; right: A Thiel

As a teacher I am always working on my craft. Currently I am learning to replace oil-based inks and tar-based materials with newer, greener materials. I am discovering ways to integrate digital media into my classes in printmaking and artists' books. As an artist I go through the same uncertainty and doubt that my students do. I often feel inspired by the effort of my students, their breadth of knowledge and their willingness to tackle big ideas.

Note: This is the second in a series of articles by educators who teach printmaking.

Interview with Lyell Castonguay, Director, BIG INK, East Hampton, MA by Stephanie Stigliano

SS: *What is BIG INK?*

LC: BIG INK brings together artists, community organizations, and the public to produce large scale black and white woodcuts for exhibition and educational purposes. Artists from the US and abroad submit a proposal to create a big print through bigink.org. Print studios offer their facilities so artists may collaboratively print the work while museums and galleries mount exhibitions of the finished pieces. The project was initiated in 2012 by Lyell Castonguay and Carand Burnet to share their acquired knowledge of working large.



Above, Printing woodcut by Debra Olin at XOS Open Studios, Lyell Castonguay on right.

SS: *What do you define as “big”?*

LC: We want participants to feel challenged but not overwhelmed. That is why we allow the artist to choose his or her preferred block dimensions over the minimum requirement of 24” x 36”. We’ve found 24” x 36” to be a reasonable starting point because, for many, this may be their first time printing larger than a standard sheet of paper. However, artists are welcome to work larger.

SS: *What have you learned by working large?*

LC: There is more surface area to create gestural marks and the sheer scale of the work commands the viewer's attention - subjects take on a “larger than life” physical presence. Also, it's rewarding to work on a single project for extended periods of time. Creating a large woodcut requires patience and perseverance. Anyone can develop these skills they just need to carve, carve, carve!

SS: *Can you describe a typical BIG INK printing session?*

LC: BIG INK events are a frenzy of activity. The participants carve their blocks for two months leading up to their assigned printing day. Events typically involve twelve to fourteen people over a two day period. Artists are given various responsibilities during his or her printing day including tearing paper and mixing inks. Others keep clean hands to lay paper. It's low key and a great opportunity for networking. The public is also invited to attend. Participants appreciate the camaraderie and friendships that are created.



Left: Enrique Figurendo; Right: William Evertson at Zea Mays Printmaking

SS: Tell us about the BIG INK portfolio and the recent Seoul exhibit?

LC: BIG INK isn't just an event, it's also a collaborative body of work that's meant to be seen and appreciated. We request ownership of one print from each participant to archive in the BIG INK portfolio, which travels to exhibitions across the US and internationally. Most recently, we were approached by the Print Art Research Center based in Seoul to be part of *The Korean Contemporary Printmakers Association Annual Exhibition* at the Seoul Museum of Art in September 2015. Twenty BIG INK artists were featured alongside artists from both India and Korea.

SS: Can you tell us a little about your movable press?

LC: Conrad Machine Co. is currently building us a 48" x 96" etching press. They have one model that is relatively lightweight and easy to transport. The center portion of the press, which holds the rollers, is being mounted to a specially fabricated table. This table has the ability to raise and lower via a hydraulic piston so we can collapse the unit for easy transport. With this new mobile press we're able to host events at a wide range of venues including: museums, schools, art centers, and festivals.

SS: What's on the horizon?

LC: We have upcoming events at Whiteaker Printmakers in Eugene, OR, The Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk, CT and the Noho Print & Book Fair in Northampton, MA. Venues are added to bigink.org on a rolling basis, so check back often. We have a few more events in the works for this year being posted shortly. Our next exhibit will be at the Wilson Center for the Arts at Florida State College Jacksonville's south campus from late October through mid-November 2016.

SS: Is there anything else you would like to share with members of the Boston Printmakers?

LC: If any BP members would like to exhibit the portfolio and/or host a printing event we'd love to hear from you! Our email is contact@bigink.org. Also, we'd like to thank the individuals and organizations that help further BIG INK's mission.

Woodcut Extraordinaire
Director of BIG INK
East Hampton, MA
www.lyellcastonguay.com
www.bigink.org

Report from Scuola Internazionale di Grafica in Venice, by Liz Shepherd

I was fortunate to be invited to the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica in Venice as a visiting artist for six weeks. I traveled from Boston, where I own a print shop, which is rented by artists and where I also teach printmaking classes. I have an intimate knowledge of what it takes to set up and operate a print shop. It is because I have had this experience that I appreciate the thought and

hard work that went into designing and equipping the Scuola's print shop and the continuing work that is required to keep it beautifully organized.



The shop has a whopping 8 etching presses, a litho press and an array of litho stones as well as other equipment, including a giant dinosaur of an automated paper cutter that can make quick work of slicing up stacks of paper. I don't know if I would ever need to use it, but the printmaking geek in me wants one!

I so admire the vast selection of brayers, neatly arranged by size, gorgeously clean, hanging on the wall at one's fingertips. Perhaps I am among the few who delight in the boxes of cut up phone book pages (in a selection of sizes!) sitting alongside one of the plate inking areas. Also, why didn't I think of a box for lightly used gloves sitting next to the new gloves?

There are too many small but beautiful touches in the studio to mention here. To be honest, I will be taking home (stealing?) some ideas for my own shop. I am definitely going to imitate the lending library of gouges: you write your name on a piece of paper and slip it into the lovely handmade gouge holder. Sigh. It is a thing of beauty to a nerdy printmaker like myself.



Above: Matilde Dolcetti, Director of Art Programs, on left, Roberta Feoli, Printshop and Studios Manager, on top right.

But most important, of course are the people who designed and who run the shop. It is Matilde's brainchild and her hand is in everything. She is in the big ideas and in the details that have gone into making everything perfect. I have been listening in on her printmaking classes. It is clear that she has a devoted following; she is an exemplary instructor. All of her materials are neatly arrayed for the students before they arrive. Her demo is clear and flawless. Matilda's staff talk

about her creative work in reverential tones.

No studio could be as beautifully maintained as this one without an extraordinary shop manager. Roberta provides expert printmaking instruction and makes sure that the studio runs flawlessly. Generous in all things, she is full of information and wonderfully helpful.

My family and the folks that I abandoned at my own studio at home are thinking that I am having a little too much fun between working in this amazing space and running around Venice. I had better produce some great prints while I am here!

Note to Boston Printmaker members: The Scuola has offered a 10% discount on fees to members in good standing! Contact Lorenzo de Castro at: l.decastro@scuolagrafica.it for more information. Also, I am happy to answer questions, email liz@lizshepherd.com
Best wishes from Venice.

Liz Shepherd
18 March, 2016

The Boston Printmakers Annual Meeting, by Bob Tomolillo

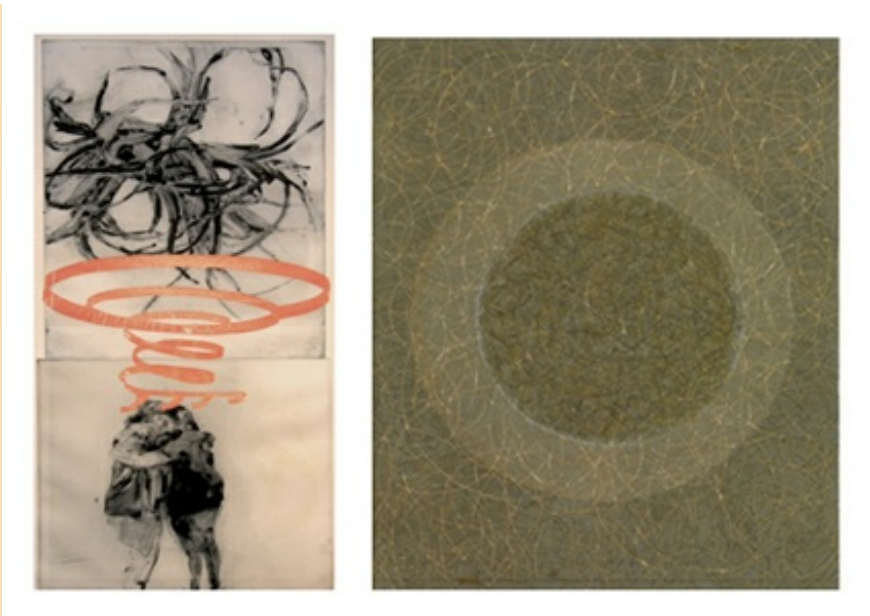
On May 1, 2016 the Boston Printmakers held the unofficial 69th annual meeting at the studio of Liz Shepherd in Boston's historic South End. The meeting was attended by fourteen regular members of the board as well as sixteen members from the Boston Printmakers community. Before getting down to business, members were treated to a brunch buffet consisting of food items specially prepared by members of the board. The casual atmosphere shifted after the group convened to the meeting area and began the important function of electing new board members as well as reelecting current board members to a new term. Officers of the board reported on the organization's financial status and presented an explanation of current and future projects. The final event and highlight of every annual meeting is a display of artwork by printmakers in attendance. Presenters share their latest print imagery as members move around the room listening and marveling at the array of new techniques on display.



Newest board member Ariel Szabo (right) explains her relief technique to artist Betsy Gould.

Cambridge resident and frequent participant in the Boston Printmakers board meetings, Susan Schmidt, displayed her multi process print imagery that begins as a fluid watercolor drawing on Duralar. The image is transferred to a photo polymer plate, printed and completed by rolling color over both images using a paper stencil. The connective symbol completes a dialog between the two images.

Below, left: print by Susan Schmidt, right: print by Betsy Gould

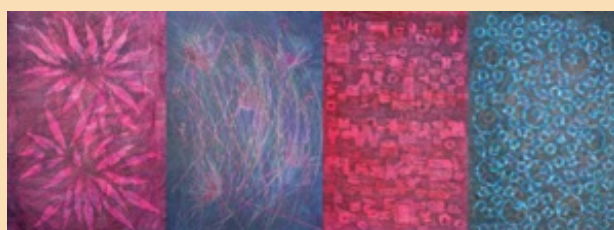


Boston Printmaker Betsy Gould displayed her latest series of prints, aptly named the Celestial series. The images speak about remembered atmospheres and intuition, brought to life with precise overlays and subdued colors onto a printed surface. She typically begins with two wood blocks, layering multiple colors, often employing the use of stencils, furthering the image with trace monotype technique and light pencil drawing. Her austere imagery contrasts with her delicate, obsessive hand-work, sparking glints of line and color within the form.

Below, top: PD Packard, (left) at Liz Shepherd's Studio discussing her technique with board member

Mary Taylor.

Below, bottom: Paper designed and printed by PD Packard.



PD Packard, a printmaker from Brooklyn NY, captivated the group with her lushly printed decorative papers inspired by her interest in patterns that possess an underlying mathematical structure. She explains, "the use of Akua natural pigments allow the printing of limitless layers of

sheer color." A minimum of 4-5 Plexiglas plates are inked and printed on Kozu paper using an etching press. Since 2011, she has been teaching workshops on Printed Decorative Papers, Bookbinding, and Scientific Insect Illustration in NYC Public Schools, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia.

Below, left to right: Board members Lois Tarlow, Renee Covalucci and Stephanie Stigliano inspect a portfolio by board member artist, Julia Talcott.



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