

PROCESSUAL ABSTRACTION

A Print Portfolio

Abstract works in this portfolio showcase how printmaking allows for materiality and invention. Some works are self-reflexive, while others have an external subject, material, or philosophical force. The ways of working in print, with its limitation and potential, are catalytic in the works. The artists represented here have various approaches within their own framework of abstraction, yet have a commonality in that they explore rich possibilities within the boundaries of contemporary print arts. With active imagery ranging from the geometric to the autographic, this portfolio of prints aims to offer a range of optical and sensorial experience.

Participants include Susan Belau, Virginia Hungate-Hawk, Travis Janssen, Kamla Kakaria, Janet Marcavage, Kathleen Schroeder, Sarah Smelser, Mike Sonnichsen, Jon Swindler, Takizawa Taro, Jon Vogt, Erin Wheary, and John Willis.

Kathleen Schroeder

Artist Statement

My work centers around the concept of liminality. A liminal space is a transition, or threshold, between two points in time or space. These boundaries can be further extracted into descriptions of cultural rites of passage, physical transitions such as hallways or doorways, or psychological states such as adolescence or mid-life crisis. My lithographs are greatly influenced by my study of the stages of embryonic development, completed for my graduate school dissertation, in which I was able to observe in real time the cellular changes that occur as a fertilized egg progresses from a single cell to a fully formed organism. This constant state of flux is present in every aspect of our lives and is reflected in my own inner journey and life experience as I toggle between my respect and understanding of both art and science.

Bio

After completing a PhD in Developmental Biology at the University of Minnesota and an MBA at Duke University, Kathleen worked in the field of Health Economics before turning to the study of printmaking at the University of Hartford, Hartford Art School, where she now teaches. In addition to teaching she has also been active in the planning and building of a new art center, Five Points Center for the Visual Arts, in Torrington, CT where she now manages the day-to-day operations of the Bob Dente Print Lab.

Travis Janssen

Artist Statement

“Spell it out.” connects to a larger ongoing body of my work derived from typefaces, duplicating and affixing each character’s structures upon itself. The resulting images are complex, featuring hundreds of perceived values from varying densities of line-work. Ghostly shapes, volumes, and moirés appear while multiple characters are superimposed upon one another. This body of work connects to Op, geometric, and generative art, and viewers may also form associations with Spirographs and guilloche. The use of type structures reinvents the notion of individual “marks” of text (a letter “A” for example), forging the everyday into images wholly new and foreign. For *“Spell it out.”* I considered the notion of my aforementioned process, using fragments of the letters used to spell the word “process”, aiming for a composition focusing on movement, color, line, and pattern that mix of harmony and dissonance.

Bio

Travis Janssen received an MFA degree in Printmaking from Arizona State University and a BFA from the University of Wisconsin- Madison. He has mounted solo exhibitions at venues such as Seed Space (Nashville, TN), DEMO Project (Springfield, IL), the University of Notre Dame (South Bend, IN), Arteles Creative Center (Finland), and Elsewhere Living Art Museum (Greensboro, NC). Over the last fifteen years he has shown work in over 175 juried or invitational exhibitions across the United States and international locales including China, Finland, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Sweden, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. Janssen is currently an Associate Professor and Head of the Printmaking Program at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

John Willis

Artist Statement

For a number of years, I have been investigating the contradictions between our understanding of space in the physical world and our visual perceptions. How is it that sometimes forms, and space seem three-dimensional and at other times the space appears flat? In everyday life, we rapidly organize space based on our experience and knowledge. Yet at times, our perceptions confuse and challenge us.

Inspiration for the structures of my work comes from architectural forms. Originally, my source material was bridges, tobacco barns, corncribs, horse farm fences, shipping crates, and wooden forms for pouring concrete. Now, while the forms in my work remain suggestive of those structures, I am less directly engaged with them. Instead, I am involved with a more direct investigation of shapes in space. The compositional strategy I use is an over-all-ness of the picture plane, with small intimate moments punctuating the design and breaking up the surface. These specific accents are juxtaposed with large iconic forms. The duality between the central iconic form and the complexity of the ground is pivotal to my work.

The process I use to create the prints is a combination of relief and monotype. The relief gives me stability and the monotype allows the possibility of endless variations, which I create through multiple monotype techniques, including wiping, splattering, brushing, daubing, and layering color. The addition of “assemblage” shapes is a new element in my work. These are made with identical printed materials and added to the final print to create a new state of the print.

The imagery and the spatial complexity in my work are based on my sense of the fragility and precariousness of contemporary life: edges seem to contain the large central mass at the same time the dominant shape appears to be expanding. The principal form presents a sense of power, but one small shape added to the composition can destabilize the picture plane. Sometimes the central form is split and contains internal tensions as well. I see the work as representing our lives and struggles. Daily routines can be derailed by a slight or sometimes violent event. Even the smallest thing—a phone conversation, maybe—can cause tension, which in turns creates instability and ambiguity.

Bio

John Willis recently retired after 30 years at the Hartford Art School where he taught relief, monotype, and lithography. Willis has exhibited nationally including most recently in New York, Seattle, Boston, and Portland Maine. Willis's work was included in *Singular and Serial: Contemporary Monotype and Monoprint*, 2019, a national survey of 70 printmakers working in the tradition of monotype and monoprint.

Janet Marcavage

Artist Statement

I make unique and limited-edition hand-pulled prints. In my work, I consider the contingency of visual elements and how they correspond with perception. Play, as an approach and subject, is an integral aspect of my prints. I work with the innate qualities of the stencil-based medium of screenprint to interrupt, transition, and juxtapose shapes and lines. I use transparent, gradated ink with value and temperature shifts to subtly suggest planes and folds. Working with the balance and relationship of parts, I hope to suggest that which is open, momentary, and subject to reconfiguration.

Bio

Janet Marcavage is a Distinguished Professor of Art, and Chair of the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Puget Sound. Specializing in printmaking, she holds a BFA from the University of The Arts in Philadelphia, PA and an MFA from The University of Wisconsin-Madison. Play and perception are integral to Marcavage's hand-pulled screenprints, which suggest folding, bending, and turning of two-dimensional planes. Her prints have been collected by the City of Portland RACC Portable Works Collection, the King County Public Art Collection, and ArtsWA. Her work has been exhibited at Augen Gallery in Portland, OR, Zhiguan Gallery in Wuhan, China, the Tacoma Art Museum, International Print Center New York, Lisa Harris Gallery in Seattle, the Museum of Modern Art in Wales, and The Wuhan Art Museum in China.

Sarah Smelser

Artist Statement

I work without a plan, employing a mixture of intuition and intention, starting with a field of color and then punctuating it with passages, lines, and forms. From one color run to the next, I respond to associations and suggestions that emerge. A title finishes a piece with a comment about the image or perhaps a judgement about how it turned out.

Little High, Little Low describes a sky-like space dissected by a bold, silver form. This central form is strong, undeniable, and it sits on top of a soft space so, to title it, I wanted to allude to contrast. The palette and airy quality suggests the drama of weather and climate. It brought to mind some lyrics from Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody*: "caught in a landslide" ... "look up to the skies" ... "anywhere the wind blows" ... "thunder and lightning, very very frightening." Not wanting to refer directly to a storm or lightening in the sky, I chose part of another lyric in the song: "because I'm easy come, easy go, little high, little low."

Bio

Sarah Smelser received her BA from University of California at Santa Cruz, her MA and MFA from the University of Iowa. She has been an artist in residence at Vermont Studio Center; Franz Masereel Center, Artica Bilbao, Kala Art Institute, Jentel Artist Residency, Skopelos Foundation for the Arts, Anchor Graphics, Ballinglen Arts Foundation, and Tamarind Institute. Her work is in such collections as Readers' Digest Association, New York Public Library, Library of Congress, Hallmark Corporate Collection, and Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

Smelser's work has been reviewed in *Art on Paper: The Journal of Prints, Drawings and Photography*, *Abstract Art Online*, *Monotype*, *Monoprint*, & *Strappo Ezine* and reproduced in *New American Paintings*.

A co-founder of Manneken Press with Master Printer Jonathan Higgins, Sarah is a Professor of Art and Interim Director of the Wonsook Kim School of Art at Illinois State University, Normal, IL

Kamla Kakaria

Bio and Artist Statement

I am a first-generation American from East Indian descent and spent my formative years between the US and New Delhi. I attended college part-time for many years as a single working mother and received a BFA in painting and an MFA in printmaking. I work in painting, printmaking, collage as well as installation work. Being an American growing up in an Indian household I attempt to understand my place in between through making.

Mike Sonnichsen

Artist Statement

I am interested in often overlooked aspects of material culture. Postal business reply cards, despite newer visual format requirements, have historically displayed a wide range of scale, form, and number to their scannable “bars”. While documenting these nearly obsolete forms of communication, I tried to celebrate the anonymous designs that persons at one time may have toiled over. With these re-sized bars as units along a central channel, I printed each set twice on the sheet with a 180° paper rotation. Brilliant and unexpected color combinations and UV-reactive inks displace these bars from their original black & white state and may remind some of highlighter markers, again, a nod to the potential richness in the ordinary. Similarity to the I-Ching hexagram #1 (six solid bars), sometimes known as “force”, “the creative”, and “strong action” could be another oddly meaningful association.

Bio

Mike Sonnichsen is an artist and printmaker whose work explores systems and patterns, often driven by familiar found objects. He employs light, color, and the mechanics of print and photographic processes to reveal poetic, formal, and previously unseen qualities in the ordinary. While often dazzling to the eye, his work reflects some of the ideals found in Tantric art, cymatics, and sacred geometry. As such, particular works may be seen both as symbolic reiterations of the structures of the universe and as objects for contemplation.

After a childhood in Puerto Rico and architecture studies at Virginia Tech, Mike trained at the Tamarind Institute and received an MFA from the University of New Mexico. He now resides in Moscow, Idaho teaching printmaking in the Art & Design Program in the College of Art & Architecture at University of Idaho.

Susan Belau

Artist Statement

Park Gate is part of an ongoing collection of works which consider elements in the built environment that reflect practices of privacy, barriers, and navigating shared space. Looking at both the general and specific elements of public lands, suburban streetscapes, and city squares, my process begins with visiting a site and documenting structures through photography and drawing. The elements in *Park Gate* come from the San Francisco Botanical Garden in Golden Gate Park – an important public resource for San Francisco that is just one block from my apartment.

This print – like most of my work – is rooted in the materials and processes of print. Here, my field studies were brought back to the studio and developed through isolating elements, re-drawing, adjusting gestures, and transferring to copper plates for multiple-plate printing. The resulting print captures this process of distillation and re-creation, with an interplay between flatness and depth, color, scale, and space.

Bio

Susan Belau is a San Francisco-based artist who has worked with printmaking and drawing for 30 years. She received her B.A. in Studio Art from University of California, Santa Cruz, and M.F.A. in Printmaking from University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Belau received the Phelan Award for Excellence in Printmaking and been awarded fellowships at Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, California and Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, New York. Her work has been included in numerous exhibitions, including at Kala Gallery (Berkeley, California), The Print Center, Philadelphia, International Print Center New York (IPCNY), the Janet Turner Print Museum at California State University, Chico, and is in the collections of the Library of Congress and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

Susan Belau trained as a professional printer at Paulson Press (now Paulson Fontaine Press) in Berkeley, California and is now Associate Professor of Art at San Francisco State University.

Virginia Hungate-Hawk

Artist Statement

How do the indeterminate spaces around us become known? Does a line on a map exist only if it is travelled or defended? In order to investigate these invisible systems, I employ methods and techniques from the two fields in which I am trained, geography and printmaking.

Using both the language and abstract space of the map, printing has become my method of navigating the blurry terrain between what is there and what is not, what is visible and what is imagined. In my etchings, I make marks that accumulate and coalesce to become larger configurations. This process of making etchings involves a contemplative process of gathering lines, in a steadily increasing quantity that come together and group. In this work the marks assemble and can be considered as a whole, but would not be without each fragment, each delicate line. Creating and collecting these marks, these insignificant parts swell up and unite, making us notice them. Although we attempt to categorize and delineate the world we live in, at times it is difficult to grasp and understand.

My etchings are metaphors for indicating the known and unknown. Through investigating marks and patterns, employing scale and movement, I am creating my own interpretation of the imaginary boundaries and spaces we exist in.

Bio

Virginia Hungate-Hawk is a visual artist and educator, working in traditional and contemporary printmaking. Her work references cartography and the invisible systems around us. In her etchings, she makes marks that accumulate and coalesce to become larger configurations.

Virginia earned her MFA in Printmaking from the University of Notre Dame and a BA in Studio Art and Geography from Macalester College. Her prints have been exhibited nationally and internationally and are held in several private and public collections including the University of Iowa, Southern Graphics Council International Archive, and Syracuse University.

Virginia has taught at the University of Notre Dame, Kirkland Art Center, Gage Academy of Art, Seattle Art Museum, Sitka Center for Art and Ecology, and she currently teaches at Pratt Fine Arts Center and Stadium High School. Virginia is represented by Davidson Gallery in Seattle, WA.

Jon Vogt

Artist Statement

One aim of my practice is to generate complexity through simple measures. The process for this specific piece involved toying with the limitations and expectations of a hand-printed edition for a portfolio exchange. Starting with a piece of plywood and paper, I relief printed a gradient of warm to cool, light to dark, muted colors. Next, after backing each print with a dry adhesive, I created a simple vector file of a grid, and then cut out the windows in which you see with a laser cutter. The removed windows were then systematically sorted and reintroduced on top of the remaining lattice structure. Finally, a piece of glassine, which we were asked to include as protection for our work, was adhered behind the print, and the piece was then laser cut once more to remove half of each window at a diagonal.

Bio

Jon Vogt is an artist / musician based in Athens, Georgia. He teaches art at the University of Georgia.

Jon Swindler & Sara Hess

Artist Statement

Sara Hess and Jon Swindler began collaborating in the summer of 2019. As co-collaborators they are constantly documenting, collecting, and drawing from an array of visual and physical ephemera. If it catches their eye, it becomes fodder for prints, drawings, collages and sculptural objects. They have adopted an open-ended, unfiltered approach to their shared practice. By widening their periphery and including all manner of material and imagery, they are seeking to elicit and construct meaning from the simple act of paying attention. Taking a walk or a drive provides both the content and the supplies for their work.

If the work is about anything, it is about recognizing artistic opportunities in the everyday and locating visual novelty in overlooked materials and spaces.

Bio

Jon Swindler is an Associate Professor of Art and acting Associate Director of Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia in Athens. Over the last several years he has exhibited his work in dozens of solo, competitive and invitational exhibitions both nationally and internationally and has performed visiting artist workshops and lectures at various institutions, including: The Kansas City Art Institute in Kansas City, Missouri, HDK School of Design and Craft in Dals Långed Sweden and the Society of Northern Alberta Print Artists.

Sara Hess is an MFA Candidate at Ohio State University's Department of Art where she is a research fellow. Her work has been included in multiple competitive and invitational exhibitions over the past few years, including the International Print Center New York's "New Prints" Spring 2021 exhibition. She also recently completed an Artist in Residence at Athens Institute for Contemporary Art followed by a Solo Exhibition titled "Court Side".

Taro Takizawa

Artist Statement

My work is an intuitive process of making patterns by drawing, painting, carving, cutting, and printing. I am constantly mentally engaged with how I want to move. I look for formal reactions, ideas between the contemporary and personal history, perspective, thought, Japanese heritage, and permanent memory.

My work is about my fascination with water, its ripples, and its reflections. I am recreating my emotional reactions to how water seems to flow freely and continuously, by using recursive printmaking processes and mark-making techniques to imitate that movement.

The patterns on the installation works and prints are forever repeating patterns in my head. And the process of creating these images is also a forever-repeating process of drawing, cutting, carving, and printing.

The work is a tool to rediscover my Japanese history and culture. I realized that I didn't pay great attention to my surroundings and, after moving to the United States, everyone asked me questions about where I came from, which I didn't have a straight answer for. I had to research my own country, its culture, and its history to answer common questions from both historical and cultural viewpoints. What I became fascinated by studying history is patterns from architecture, metal works, prints, and fabric designs. The patterns used in my work show the ripple, steam, and flow of water, which is important because of the Japanese relationship with water. I am influenced by Japanese art, especially the Japanese block prints (Ukiyo-e) from the 17th century through the 19th century; waves and rivers, how these waters are rendered, fascinates me. These flow patterns show up in my work constantly.

I create my work by transmitting energy and emotion on to the surface—whether on a paper or a wall—by reacting and responding to the previous marks I've made on the surface, which usually consists of cuts or carvings. I relate to the Zen priests' practices to enhance their concentration by raking the gravel of Zen gardens, and there are similarities between my work and our mindsets. Thus, I focus on the present by making work, with the therapeutic process of repeating.

Bio

Taro Takizawa is an artist who focuses on printmaking, wall vinyl installations, drawings and 2D designs. Born in Japan, he has been making images connecting what he has experienced in Japan where he grew up and, in the U.S. since he moved here in 2002 and currently resides. His works contains both western and eastern aesthetics with appreciation of traditional printmaking processes and mark making. He is fascinated with blending the boundaries of contemporary studio practice and traditional processes, printmaking and installations, influenced by traditional Japanese patterns from textile designs, architecture and crafts.

He received with his BFA with a printmaking emphasis from Central Michigan University in 2011, and MFA in printmaking from Syracuse University College of Visual and Performing Arts in 2017. Recent awards includes, Gamblin Emerging Artist Award, ArtPrize Artist Seed Grant from Frey Foundation, Awagami Paper Award from Awagami Factory, Living Arts of Tulsa Fellowship from Andy Warhol Foundation, and Saltonstall Fellowship. Takizawa has recently participated in Syracuse University Turner Semester in LA, Los Angeles, CA, Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts in Ithaca, NY, and Morgan Conservatory AIR in Cleveland OH.