

*New Prints 2001/Autumn*

Six people sit down to dinner, and enjoy an evening of conviviality, sensory pleasure, and intellectual exchange. After they've gone, an image remains, in the form of spontaneous gestures -- utensils placed, plates moved, doodles drawn -- recorded as impressions on a soft-ground coated copperplate placed beneath the paper tablecloth on which they dined. This is how Not Vital created the etching *Tschaina Per 6* ("Dinner for 6," in Vital's native Romansch; the pun is that the cuisine was take-out Chinese), and it's a good metaphor for the feast of creativity registered in the International Print Center's fourth juried New Prints exhibition.

Vital's work is only one example of the most traditional of print processes being put to decidedly unconventional use. The range of intaglio images here is broad, and includes several works that subvert such basic historical functions as textual illumination. Karin Bos' delicate, trans-historically academic etchings with their wry gag lines, like Donna Evan's fetching image of buffed but hapless-looking *Strong Woman*, could be illustrations for a suite of acutely skewed moral parables. Kathryn Lyness' *Battlefield*, a photogravure of the troops deployed by a mostly unseen figure on the field of a carefully laid dinner table, goes to areas of family politics that even Vital's dinner-party print left untouched. The family relationships traced in Peter Schuyff's *Sounetten* are more strictly art historical, with an old bookplate illustrating a painful-looking tooth extraction pressed into service as background for the candy-striped disks floating across it, themselves indebted to optical experiments of the 1960s. Mel Bochner's first studies of reciprocity between verbal language and visual form also date to the 1960s, and he has, miraculously, kept the two terms fluid as water. The light-drenched puddles of color in his engraving *If the Color Changes* are overlaid with a gentle exhortation (in German and English) to observe carefully, for perceptual phenomena are not simple, or still.

Equally color-drenched and liquid is Santi Moix's evocatively titled *Children's Song II*, while David Shapiro's *Mudra 13* has a disciplined, dancer-like grace that is evident, too in the long, deep-breathed strokes of David Row's *Altered States*. Serenity derived from formal and technical rigor also characterizes Sam Gilliam's untitled monoprint, in which delicate veils of color are laid over wood veneer; Ann Conner's woodblock prints similarly draw on the natural harmonies of plane geometry and ordinary wood grain. Lynne Harlow layers diaphanous squares of color onto organza, in lithographs that pay affectionate homage to Josef Albers' color studies. In Sabra Booth's only slightly less ethereal *Euclid's Jewels*, sheer fabric, subtly endowed with found imagery, is fashioned into gemlike light fixtures. And Wennie Huang's *Heir/Air/Loom*, a photo-portrait in fragments screenprinted onto silk, opens into the form of two traditional, box-shaped Chinese kites, their imagery meant to literally float on air.

Udomsak Krisanamis richly layered lithograph stops short of three dimensions, while alluding to architectural form. Of several other hybrid abstractions represented in this show, Jane Fine's lithograph *Orange Flip* is among the most festive, its looping forms untroubled by gravity or friction. Though Lorraine Walsh's *Superstrings*, an Iris Print, is equally buoyant, it vibrates (as the title suggests) with the microcosmic activity of particles in motion, oscillating between energy and matter. Yasuyuki Shibata uses a traditional technique -- Japanese woodcut -- to set a squadron of forest-green, pie-shaped spacecraft afloat in a tender auroral haze. The landscape of Sean Caulfield's intaglio print *Expectancy: Scene 2* is equally alive with menace, though here of a distinctly earthbound

variety; the worlds destined for collision in Emil Lukas's *Turning Circles into Squares* only start with the opposition between fluid and geometric form. A different kind of exchange takes place in Ray Beldner's *Diminishing Returns*, an Ink Jet print that shows a parade of digitally manipulated currency slipping toward an unseen horizon, in an implicitly infinite progression that may link depleting cash value and increasing abstraction.

Several of the artists represented here use prints the old-fashioned way, to coin symbols, tell stories, and arrest heightened moments. There is the surfacing swimmer's sharp, exultant inspiration in Richard Bosman's ten-color woodcut, *Breath*, and the twilit circle dance of imperiously silly, water-striding, stilt-walking red boots in Louise Bourgeois' lithograph, *The Night*. David Chung's lithograph *Strip Mall* portrays youthful anomie in a language forged from German Expressionism, Japanese Anime, and American consumerism; Sowon Kwon's *untitled (Nadia)* is a lithographic photoportrait that elegantly illuminates its own ambiguity.; Charlie Hewitt's animated *Posada* intaglio prints, on the other hand, are drawn in the broadest of strokes. The narrative strength of Isaac Diggs' screenprint portfolio *Hands On* relies, like any good New Yorker, on the expressive power of hands, while Ana Golici depends instead on teeth to do the talking, in a suite of deep black Ink Jet prints featuring the solarized husks of mysterious objects that are actually partially consumed pine cones; the suite is helpfully titled *24 Ways to Bite a Cone*. But surely no drama here is more explosive than Francis Crisafio's *My Head is Hiroshima*, a sequence of Ink Jet prints in which a digitally manipulated photoportrait is made the grotesquely morphing vessel of a spectacular nuclear explosion.

Bernar Venet's head games are of a completely different order, all math and no mess, though considerable conceptual mayhem obtains. Venet's screenprints illustrate mathematical formulae with which he has been working for decades, and his crisp, clean manner of presentation is as authoritative as it is confounding. So, too is Dan Wood's disposition of urban space: in *Facing Fidas on Valley Street*, he takes a postcard-like view of an unprepossessing Providence streetscape and folds it in on itself as nimbly an origami master. The card trick Jonathan Lewis executes in *Business Art Cards*, a set of ten calling cards presented in metal holder, relies on a different set of cues, these borrowed from the art and wisdom of Andy Warhol

Many of the prints in this show push technical possibilities to their limits, in media both new and old. Michael Krasowitz's *From the Ashes* is a copperplate aquatint of surpassing precision, its sharply delineated forms the more dreamlike for being so convincingly realized. Gary Groves' untitled woodcut is an equal triumph of craft and observation, the surface of a rockface rendered so minutely that its very weight and gravity seems present in the inked paper. Yet even in so seemingly serendipitous an image as Lisa Young's photo-based Iris Print *Canyon of Heroes*, a wealth of formal, conceptual and technical intelligence is marshaled, to capture a moment of celebration that teeters, breathtakingly, on the verge of disappearance. Between the wildly unstable range of associations evoked by Young's print, and the more hearth-bound but equally broad-ranging connections of Not Vital's, lies a splendid spread of visual thought.

Nancy Princenthal, Member, Selections Committee

Selections Committee *New Prints 2001/Autumn*:

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