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Art Reviews

Shining a Light on the Art of the Printmaker

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Harmony Hammond (artist) and Marina Ancona (printer), "Aperture Series (Green)" (2013), monotype on Twinrocker paper with metal grommets, 12 1/2 x 10 inches, loan from the artist and 10 Grand Press (© 2013 Harmony Hammond, courtesy Albuquerque Museum)

The Printer's Proof: Artist and Printer Collaborations, currently on view at the Albuquerque Museum, delves into the exponentially intriguing world of collaborative printmaking. The exhibition showcases six printers — Marina Ancona, Robert Arber, Stephen Britko, Michael Costello, Bill Lagattuta, and Jennifer Lynch, each of whom has worked in New Mexico — by presenting a selection of the prints they created with and for other artists, peppered with a few of their individual creations, dating from 1970 to today.

Collaborative printmaking is unique in that it fuses “the expertise of the printer with the aesthetic vision of the artist” as the museum’s didactics explain. This intensely creative process (as opposed to, say, placing an order with a commercial print shop for an image to be scanned, copied, or printed) is one that requires deep trust and clear communication between artist and printer. The resulting artwork is heavily determined by the dynamics of the relationship.

The Printer’s Proof bucks the system a bit by rattling conventions. In general, when prints are exhibited, the printer is not credited as co-creator of the work and often the print publisher or workshop is not named. The practice is up for debate, and printers’ opinions and preferences vary, but the Albuquerque Museum has taken a bold step forward by centering the printers’ experiences.

The exhibition title refers to the proofs of each edition that printers receive, similar to how artists receive artist proofs, color trial proofs, and the like. A printer can amass an admirable portfolio over the years. *The Printer’s Proof* borrows from those personal collections, representing more than 120 artists, to survey the range of approaches, techniques, and skills that the printers have used to achieve an artist’s vision.

Marina Ancona started 10 Grand Press in Brooklyn in 1999 and opened a second shop in Santa Fe in 2005. Ancona has become many artist’s go-to collaborator for creating monotypes; for example, Harmony Hammond has entrusted the printer with her distinctive grommetted works for years. Additional evidence of Ancona’s embrace of material is apparent in the letterpress piece “List of Invocations” (2017) by Patty Chang and the woodcut and mylar collage “Steel Embrace (I)” (2009) by Nicola Lopez.

Lopez has also printed at Tamarind Institute over the years, collaborating with Bill Lagattuta during her early residencies. Lagattuta received his master printer certification from Tamarind Institute and served as the workshop’s Master Printer from 1988 to 2015. On view, among other works, is a four-color lithograph with metallic pigment dusting and collage that he printed for Terry Allen and Douglas Kent Hall titled “Nuestra Señora De La Golondrinas (Amen)” (1991). The piece tells stories of the Southwestern landscape informed by its histories and traditions.

Throughout the museum are informative texts — this was a rare time when I found myself reading, even appreciating, the didactics. *The Printer's Proof* encourages and rewards the ongoing pursuit of making meaning through a chosen medium. In other words, the proof is in the print.

The Printer's Proof: Artist and Printer Collaborations continues at the Albuquerque Museum (2000 Mountain Road NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico) through May 15. The exhibition was curated by Josie Lopez, PhD.

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