

Shining a Light on the Art of the Printmaker

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by Nancy Zastudil April 4, 2022



Ron Adams (artist), Michael Costello and David Panosh (printers), "Profile in Blue" (1989), six-color lithograph on Arches white cover paper, lent by Michael Costello (courtesy the 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.



Terry Allen and Douglas Kent Hall (artists) and Bill Lagattuta (printer), "Nuestra Señora De La Golondrinas (Amen)" (1991), four-color lithograph with metallic pigment dusting and collage, BAT (photo Nancy Zastudil/Hyperallergic)

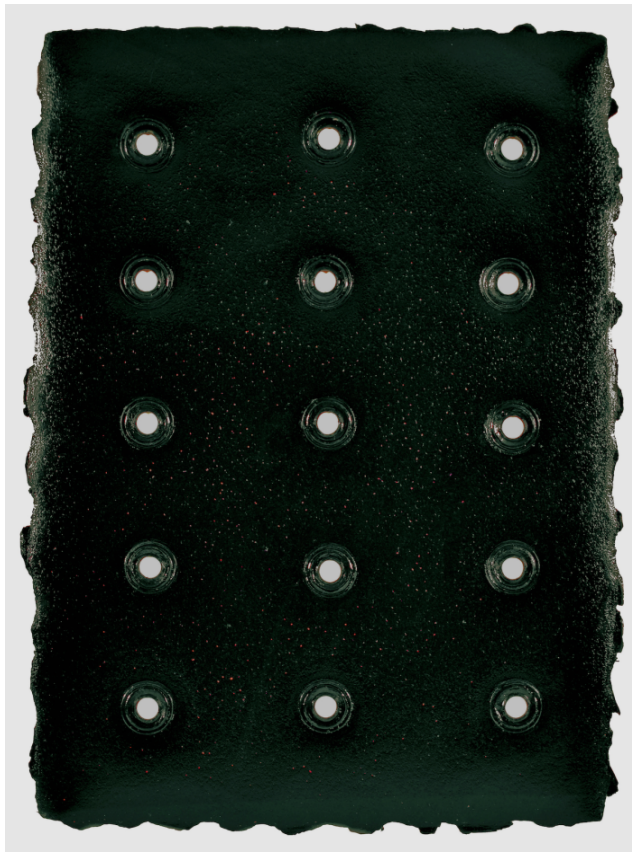
The exhibition title refers to the proofs of each edition that printers receive, similar to how artists receive artist proofs, color trial proofs, and the like. A printer can amass an admirable portfolio over the years. *The Printer's Proof* borrows from those personal collections, representing more 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.

One of the first prints visitors see as they enter the show is "Sisters in Arms I" (2003) by Hung Lui (1948–2021), who printed numerous editions at Tamarind and was known, in part, for her love of printing processes. The lithograph features her signature washes, layers of color, and figurative imagery based on historical Chinese photographs.

Tamarind paved the way for collaborative printmaking: In 1960, June Wayne essentially brought the "lost world" of printmaking back from the brink of extinction when she opened Tamarind Workshop in Los Angeles with funding from the Ford Foundation. Relocating to Albuquerque and the University of New Mexico in 1970 as Tamarind Institute, the publisher has led the way in print education, research, documentation, and experimentation, all with a focus on lithography. (Full disclosure, I was once gallery director of Tamarind Institute, so my bias is showing.) Takach Press, which has set the standard of quality for etching and litho printmaking presses for more than 30 years, is also located in Albuquerque.



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)

Stephen Britko trained at Tamarind in the early 1970s, then pursued his education in Chicago, opening Normal Editions at Illinois State University. In the late '70s he returned to Tamarind as shop manager and went on to open another shop, Naravisa Press, in Albuquerque, which he later moved to Santa Fe. *The Printer's Proof* features, among other pieces printed by Britko, a multicolor lithograph by David Bradley (Minnesota Chippawa) titled "Holiday" (1986), a humorous but poignant drawing that plays on narratives arising from stereotypical and pop culture figures gathered around a dinner table.



Hung Liu (artist) and Bill Lagattuta (printer), "Sisters in Arms I" (2003), six-color lithograph with chine collé of Chinese designs, 30 x 36 inches, Albuquerque Museum, gift of Marjorie Devon (© 2000 Hung Liu, courtesy Albuquerque Museum)



Installation view of *The Printer's Proof: Artist and Printer Collaborations* at the Albuquerque Museum. Pictured Donald Judd (artist) and Robert Arber (printer), untitled prints (1992-93/2020) (photo by Nancy Zastudil/Hyperallergic)

Robert Arber, who also trained at Tamarind, set up his print shop Arber & Son Editions in Marfa, Texas, in 1988 in an old movie theater. In 2003, he established the 30 x 30 cm project through which Chinati Foundation artists-in-residence have the opportunity to create an edition. *The Printer's Proof* presents the first few public installations of Donald Judd's 20 untitled woodcuts proofed in 1992 and 1993 and printed in 2020. Another impressive work is the visually stunning (and somewhat mind-boggling) "12 Hours: Heartbeat Drawing" (2004) by Makoto Sasaki, for which the artist listened to his own heartbeat for 12 hours, making one red mark for each beat.

The Printer's Proof emphasizes the influence of printers Ron Adams and Robert Blackburn as well. For example, soon after Michael Costello came to New Mexico by way of New Hampshire and San Francisco in 1981, he met Ron Adams, who founded Hand Graphics in Santa Fe in 1974, after working at Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles; Costello bought Hand Graphics from Adams after working for him for five years.

Included in *The Printer's Proof* is *The Resounding Heart Portfolio* (1996), which features prints from eight invited artists — Ron Adams, Tarleton Blackwell, John Biggers, Robert Colescott, Artis Lane, Lionel Lofton, John Scott, and Renee Stout — who used the medium of print to portray their lived experiences as Black Americans.



Installation view of *The Printer's Proof: Artist and Printer Collaborations* at the Albuquerque Museum. Pictured Charles Strong (artist) and Jennifer Lynch (printer), *White Rose Suite* (2010) (photo by Nancy Zastudil/Hyperallergic)

After working at Robert Blackburn's legendary Printmaking Workshop in New York and for the Estate of Diane Arbus, educator, artist, and printer Jennifer Lynch opened Lynch Pin Press in Santa Fe. Installed as part of *The Printer's Proof*, *White Rose Suite* (2010) refers to the White Rose anti-Nazi resistance group of the 1940s. Two of its members, siblings Sophie and Hans Scholl, were found guilty of treason for distributing antiwar leaflets and condemned to death by guillotine. In honor of the victims, Taos-based artist Charles Strong collaborated with Lynch on the series of large-scale etchings that incorporate photographs and documents in haunting colors and compositions.

Additional prints on view include works by influential historical figures such as Deborah Remington and Elaine de Kooning alongside those of contemporary artists like Richard Tuttle and Bruce Nauman and more recent works by today's frontrunners of representation, including Toyin Ojih Odotula and Nicole Eisenman.

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.