

By Carl Little

A Printmaking Anniversary

Reading the history of the Boston Printmakers on its website is to marvel at its development from a small cohort of committed artists to an international showcase for fine printmaking. Open to all comers, the collective has embraced diversity of style and technique and helped nurture generations of printmakers and print collectors. This year marks its 75th anniversary, the occasion for celebrations across New England.

To help make the most of the milestone, Chris Beneman of Peregrine Press in Portland, ME, and Catherine Kernan of Mixit Print Studio in Somerville, MA, have teamed up to organize an exhibition featuring 37 artists from ten open access print studios in the region. *Singular and Serial: Expanding the Circle* is on view at Cove Street Arts in Portland, May 18–July 8, 2023.

Inspired by the 2019 book *Singular and Serial: Contemporary Monotype and Monoprint* written by Kernan and E. Ashley Rooney, the exhibition builds on a 2021 show at Cove Street Arts. The featured studios include Two Rivers Printmaking in Vermont; the Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Connecticut; Mixit, Full Tilt, Zea Mays, and Shepherd & Maudsleigh in Massachusetts; and Peregrine Press, Pickwick Independent Press, Running with Scissors, and Circling the Square in Maine.

Jane Goldman, a co-founder of the Mixit Print Studio, makes art “to wake up, to dream, to understand, to speak to my colleagues, the world.” Her *On the Edge*, a monotype with hand coloring, shows seven uniformed figures trying to balance a wooden structure in a landscape of ice breaking apart. It is a comic-serious image of disaster.

A member of the Zea Mays Printmaking Studio in Florence, MA, Wendy Ketchum, who resides in Tamworth, NH, pays tribute to New England factory workers in *Song of the Weavers*, a woodcut monoprint with collage. She was



Blair Folts, *What the beekeeper didn't say*, 2022–23, paper lithography, monotype, found objects, beeswax, 6 x 8'. Photo: Stewart Clements.

inspired by vintage photos and the history of the young women who left New England family farms to work in urban textile mills.

Gali Katz, from Westport, CT, combines collage and monotype in her prints. In *Transfiguration*, an abstracted figure is superimposed on a page of vintage Paris newsprint featuring a group of cartoons. The image and composition bring to mind the collages of Picasso, Gris, and company—a fine reminder of the golden age of that art form.

Born in Chapel Hill, NC, raised in Ethiopia, and now living in Concord, MA, Molly Paul leans to the abstract in three untitled woodblock monoprints from her “Inward/Outward” series. Printed on kitakata, a semi-translucent paper made from gampi fibers, these colorful 16-inch-square pieces evoke windows and shadowplay. Paul joined the Shepherd & Maudsleigh Studio in Newton in 2019.

While monotypes and monoprints predominate, other printmaking techniques get their due. Mary Hart, who teaches at Bowdoin College, turned to intaglio on silk to create her *Discomforter*. Draped over a platform “bed,” this 7½-by-5½-foot covering consists of 80 squares, each featuring unsettling abstract-organic forms.

The book arts also get their day. One remarkable example: Rebecca Goodale’s *Wildflowers and Juncos Artist’s Book*, a one-of-a-kind banner book with paper birds made from hand-colored reduction block prints. Former director of the Kate Cheney Chappell Center for Book Arts at the University of Southern Maine, Goodale is known for her inventive creations that often respond to the natural world.

Speaking of nature, Blair Folts’s multi-part installation *What the beekeeper didn't say* is a response to bee decline around the world. A self-described environmental activist—and a bee-keeper—Folts, who is part of the Peregrine Press, hopes her piece will inspire viewers to con-

sider whether what they are purchasing “either for their table or their garden” is harming the “smallest of critters,” including honeybees.

In her installation of free-standing sculptural forms mounted with collagraphs and monoprints, Chris Beneman continues her explorations of the built environment. With their exposed beams and cut-out apertures, these 3-D pieces conjure construction sites—and, if enlarged, might serve as the backdrop for a play about the inner city.

Catherine Kernan uses soy-based Akua Intaglio inks in her “Against the Grain” series of woodcut monoprints. Based on direct observation of nature, these images feature a visual vocabulary that reflects, in the artist’s words, “fragmentation, interruption, reflection, and variation.”

Those four words pertain to many of these works. The exhibition covers a vast aesthetic ground and helps expand the anniversary celebration well beyond Beantown.

Carl Little lives and writes on Mount Desert Island.

Boston Printmakers 75th anniversary show at bostonprintmakers.org.