

# Curatorial ESSAY

Johannes Gutenberg's discovery in the mid-fifteenth century of a means to produce books on a printing press using movable type launched what is now frequently referred to as the Printing Revolution, ushering in a new age of mass communication. The development of digital technology that has its origins in the 1980s marks yet a new threshold. Even as traditional print is still the dominant medium for the circulation of information, in the second decade of the twenty-first century a variety of electronic screens can also be relied on to deliver and mediate a broad range of content. At the New York Public Library, for example, patrons are often able to make choices about how to access materials, determining whether to read texts in traditional print formats or to consult electronic books, journals, and other special collections on computers and other devices.

In the process of whittling down 3000 submissions to around 50 prints for *New Prints 2014/Winter*, it became clear to the Selections Committee that artists making prints today face similar decisions. While many accept the implications of producing printed works of art in the computer age, others are committed to drawing and mark-making without digital aid, relying exclusively on time-honored methods for making their impressions. Whatever the artist's preference, the jury sought out images that it considered powerful and that made use of their chosen mediums to the best possible advantage. In the spirit of the technical innovations that characterize the history of the printed image, the jury also favored works that seemed to re-examine what prints are and how they can be made.

Not surprisingly, a large number of the prints selected for the exhibition demonstrate a combination of digital and analog means. Fascinated with daily averages of minimum/maximum temperature, visibility, wind speed and direction, for example, Lauren Thorson translates digitally generated data from the National Weather Service into analog methods of production, using a plotter to draft *Weather Data 03/01/2013*. Steven Millar's *Marriage*, which pictures an embroidered floral arrangement against a planar timber backdrop, harkens back to the sort of trompe l'oeil effects in seventeenth-century European and later American paintings, while simultaneously making reference to the digital age in which it was produced. Mimicking the look of modern-day pixilation, Millar's needlepoint bouquet is printed digitally, while the background paneling is intaglio-wiped and then relief-rolled from an actual piece of wood.

Similarly, engaged with what he describes as "the intersection of old and new forms of media," Saul Chernick is drawn to the appearance of Northern European fifteenth and sixteenth-century woodcuts and engravings. Appropriating aspects of the imagery, but not the attendant meanings of these prints, his re-creations are manipulated digitally but are executed as screenprints. Tellingly, they include examples of empty tablets or escutcheons and repeatable ornaments that are reminiscent either of blank modern-day screens or patterned computer screen savers.

By contrast, David Avery, who is likewise in thrall to the Old Masters, prefers to make his prints using traditional intaglio means. His etching *Too Close to the Sun* reproduces Hendrick Goltzius's engraving of Icarus (1588), which shows the mythical son of Daedalus who dropped from the sky after the wings he manufactured from feathers and wax melted when he flew too close to the sun. Updating Goltzius's design, Avery's plummeting figure, now wearing headphones, clothed, and suspended over a landscape that includes high-rise buildings, is surrounded by an inscription that reads "Knowing everything we know nothing." This latter-day Icarus, the artist suggests, falls because he has not acquired wisdom from the oversaturated (read digital) media environment in which he exists. Jenny Robinson is committed to incising her lines into a plate and with the vagaries of inking and printing the matrix. Created in drypoint and chine collé, her *World's Fair #1* depicts the sublime qualities of man's colossal ambition. Surrounded by massive wooden scaffolding and on the verge of falling into ruin, an immense domed structure reflects the ravages of time and neglect. One cannot help but wonder whether Avery and Robinson are also offering their veiled thoughts on what they see to be the future of pure analog printmaking.

Examples of artists inventing new methods for creating printed works of art include D.M. Witman and Sebastiano Garcia Huidobro. The former's "nature print" is made with the help of common garden slugs that crawl around and leave their slimy trails on light sensitive photographic paper which is then developed and printed. The latter uses blue tape to mask out words, which are then "etched" onto vinyl supports using solvent.

Holding three juried exhibitions per year, IPCNY offers a rare chance to gauge how contemporary artists are engaging with the medium of prints, and it was exhilarating and humbling to be involved in this season's selection. Still, in the process of writing this essay, I could not help but review the archive of previous *New Prints* presentations to get a sense of past shows (<http://www.ipcny.org/node/1738>). As a curator of a historical collection of prints and illustrated books, it is as intriguing to study the profiles of earlier exhibitions as it is exciting to await and anticipate future ones. IPCNY, thrillingly, makes both these avenues possible. I offer my profuse thanks to my fellow jurors Noah Breuer, Terry A. Fassburg, Richard Lloyd, Mary Newman and Andre Ribuoli for their invaluable input, insights, and contributions. Together we arrived at the final checklist for the exhibition.

*Madeleine Viljoen, Curator of Prints, The New York Public Library, 2014*



Bundlith Plunsumbalet, *Art Within One Mile: The Route from Central Park to Brooklyn Bridge* (Aslor Place Se-ras), 2013. Glitter prints on aluminum street signs. Printed by Shirk Ink Fine Art Printing. Published by the artist.



Tom Burkhardt, *Ex Libris*, 2012.  
Etching with aquatint. Printed and  
published by Jennifer Melty.

International Print Center New York is a non-profit institution dedicated to the appreciation and understanding of the fine art print. Through exhibitions, information services and public programs, IPCNY contributes to the expansion of audiences for the visual arts. Since the inauguration of the New Prints Program in 2000, works by over fifteen hundred artists and two hundred presses have been brought to public attention in a series of seasonal exhibitions in IPCNY's Chelsea gallery. *New Prints 2014/Winter* is the forty-seventh presentation of IPCNY's New Prints Program, a series of juried exhibitions organized by IPCNY several times each year, featuring prints made within the past twelve months.

The New Prints Program is funded in part with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. IPCNY is grateful to the Areté Foundation for its generous New Prints Program support. Support for the organization's activities and programming in 2014 comes from the Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation, the Lily Auchincloss Foundation, Deborah Loeb Brice Foundation, Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation, Hess Foundation, The Jockey Hollow Foundation, The Ronald and JoCarole Lauder Foundation, The New York Community Trust, the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, PECO Foundation, Porter Family Charitable Foundation, Robert Rauschenberg Foundation in honor of Sidney Felsen, Shapiro-Silverberg Foundation, Thompson Family Foundation, and numerous artists, publishers and generous individuals.

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Cover Image: Hannah Skoonberg, *Corridor*,  
2013. Cyanotype and sandblasted woodcut.  
Printed and published by the artist.

Gallery Hours: 11-6, Tues - Sat.

**IPCNY**



# *New Prints 2014/Winter*

January 22 - March 12, 2014



Selections Committee: Noah Breuer (Artist, Professor, Master Printer), Terry Fassburg (Collector), Richard Lloyd (Head of Print Department, Christie's), Mary Newman (IPCNY Board Member, Collector), Andre Ribuoli (Ribuoli Digital), and Madeleine Viljoen (Curator of Prints, New York Public Library).

Artists: BJ Alumbaugh, Frances B. Ashforth, David Avery, Trevor Banthorpe, Jeff Beekman, Brent Bond, Nicholas Brown, Tom Burckhardt, Saul Chernick, Tamar Cohen, Michael Dal Cerro, Tim Dooley, Stella Ebner, Deborah Farnault, Henry Ferreira, Laura Figueiras, Sebastian Garcia Huidobro, Beka Goedde, Brett Groves, John Hankiewicz, Christina Healy, Ben Hilario-Caguiat, Robbin Juris, John Knuth, Jessica Lagunas, J. Myszka Lewis, Kristie MacDonald, Steven Millar, Suzanne Nacha, Elvia Perrin, Bundith Phunsombatlert, Liliana Porter, Jenny Robinson, Mia Westerlund Roosen, Stacy Rosende, Rob Swainston, Julia Samuels, David Sandlin, Sara Sanders, Hannah Skoonberg, Ann Stewart, Lauren Thorson, Matt Van Asselt, DM Witman, Alison Whitworth.

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