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IFPDA Print Fair Review: Jumping Off the Page

From the vintage to the freshly pressed, the prints on view at this show in New York reveal a lively, multidimensional art form.

By Brian P. Kelly



Andy Warhol's 'Shoe' (c. 1950s) PHOTO: LONG-SHARP GALLERY

New York

In the stratified caste system of the art market, where paintings reign, prints belong to the underclass. Or so those too snobbish or disconnected from history might have you believe. While most prints lack the rarity of paintings since they're released as multiples, they've long played indispensable roles in the art ecosystem: teaching tools in the pre-internet age; affordable entry points for collectors who can't afford one-of-a-kind works; products of processes by which artists can further expand their practice.

A much-needed corrective to the lingering view of prints' place in the art hierarchy can be found at the IFPDA Print Fair. The 30th edition of this international exhibition gathers more than 90 exhibitors from seven countries to celebrate the very diverse form—and what a diverse form it is. The best displays here explore the nuts and bolts of printmaking, serving as a sort of contextual primer for the fair at large, or

help expand our understanding of what a print is by highlighting unconventional techniques, materials and approaches.

Unlike many fairs—which focus specifically on contemporary art, occasionally incorporating modernist works—IFPDA features prints spanning five centuries, and one of the best presentations here is among the oldest. Master Drawings New York, a group of Upper East Side spaces that stages an annual weeklong series of programming dedicated to works on paper, has mounted a mini-exhibition at its booth titled “Drawings for Prints: Process and Influence.” Looking at the way draftsmanship influenced printmaking and vice versa, the six galleries here let us jump back and forth between firsts and faithful reproductions. It’s captivating to see how the soft red chalk, for example, of “An Allegory of Sowing” (c. 1703), created by the studio of Carlo Maratta, is rendered in the deft black strokes of Girolamo Frezza’s etching of the same scene (1704), which has a more serious air than its warm, clay-colored counterpart. We marvel at the precision Gilles de Marteau captured in his engraving of Jean Baptiste le Prince’s “Woman in Fantasy Costume,” the only noticeable difference between the two works the mirroring that has taken place in the image’s transposition.



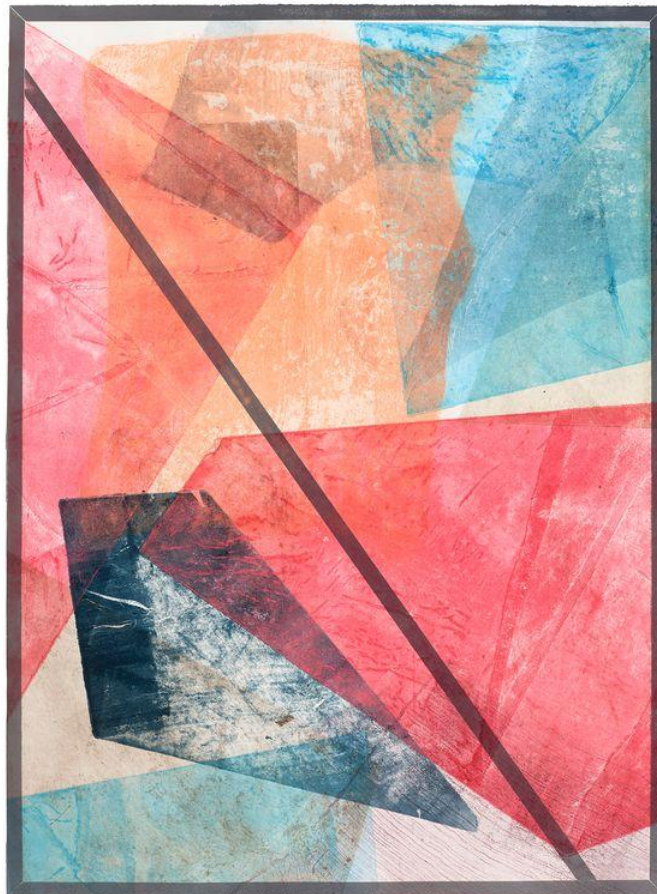
Jean Baptiste le Prince's 'Woman in Fantasy Costume' (c. 1765) PHOTO: CHRISTOPHER BISHOP FINE ART

Around the corner, and a couple centuries ahead, Long-Sharp Gallery’s presentation “Andy Warhol: Focus on Fashion” looks at the Pop icon’s enduring sartorial engagement, from early depictions of shoes and legs from his advertising days to later photographs of clothing and designers like Halston. Most

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enlightening is an ink-blot print from the 1950s, in which Warhol drew a shoe in three-quarters profile, then folded it onto another sheet of paper to create a ghostly double. Here we can see his later love affair with screenprinting and replication played out in miniature—a brief, kitten-heeled glimpse into the future.

There are delightful examples of what most of us call to mind when we think of prints—like a 1514 Dürer engraving of “St. Jerome in His Study” at Hill-Stone and the selection of designs for the cover of the Paris Review by artists including Donald Baechler, Alex Katz and Sam McKinniss. But the most surprising works here are those that challenge the very idea of what a print is. Many will have heard of monotypes (a printing process that yields a unique image) and there are strong examples here by Martha Tuttle at Josh Pazda Hiram Butler and Eddie Martinez at ULAE—the transparencies in Ms. Tuttle’s works preserve those that make the layers of her large canvases simultaneously ethereal and magnetic; the stacked forms in Mr. Martinez’s pieces lean delightfully off balance. But where should we place the pop-up sculptural works in Tauba Auerbach’s artist’s book “[2, 3]” in our conception of the form? Her two-toned ziggurat (shown by Ursus Books & Gallery) rises high, a knowingly idolatrous new creed on printed matter.



Martha Tuttle's 'Semiconscious, or like fragments of light through a fractured lens V' (2023) PHOTO: JOSH PAZDA HIRAM BUTLER

Elsewhere, Louise Bourgeois's works on cloth at Harlan & Weaver remind us that prints don't need to be made on paper, and two monumental Julie Mehretu at Gemini G.E.L. at Joni Moisant Weyl—eight-by-14-foot pieces comprising 10 panels each—prove that, while seen as a diminutive form, printing is anything but. And if you think prints need exist only in two dimensions, you'd be wrong: The embossed, monochromatic Ed Ruscha at Mixografia makes us see his iconic gas station in a more stoic light, and the shockingly 3-D handmade papers of Alison Saar's work—who knew paper could bend like that?—have bottles, frying pans and bodies jutting toward the viewer. Duke Riley's laser etching on museum board, at the booth of the LeRoy Neiman Center for Print Studies, is a labor-intensive, multilayered relief. Drawing from traditional nautical aesthetics and using of-the-moment technology, it tells the story of Newtown Creek—a central artery for New York's economy and one of its most polluted bodies of water. Finally, at Pace Verso, Maya Lin has created a series of prints as part of an NFT project. These tangible works help calm the nerves of collectors wary of terms like Web3 and blockchain, easing them into these cutting-edge realms. Once again, prints have emerged as teaching tools, more proof of their lasting, irreplicable appeal.

IFPDA Print Fair

Javits Center, through Oct. 29

Mr. Kelly is the Journal's associate Arts in Review editor. Follow him on Twitter [@bpkelly89](https://twitter.com/bpkelly89).