

Roxanne Sexauer

ARTIST'S STATEMENT & BIOGRAPHY

“...the heart has two helpers: nature and fate.”
(Michele Mattelart – “Women and Cultural Industries”)

My chief area of concern is the woodcut print. Prefaced by a strong drawing background, I have explored this autographic medium for many years.

While I am no longer interested in making human forms through traditional figuration, I still search to suggest them. There is a fetishism of the organic in my prints. Among my influences are earlier prints made to depict various branches of both the animal and plant kingdoms, especially the early woodcuts of Conrad Gessner (Sea Monsters, Crabs and Porcupines from his *Icones Animalium*, 1560), and Ernst Haeckel's lithographic prints of medusae from 1887, and other early graphics of microscopic animals. Being a Luddite by nature, (who else would choose willingly to spend hundreds of hours tediously carving wood?) I have long resisted the pull of twenty-first century technologies. The use primarily of woodcuts to forward this theme is particularly apt, as there is a chain that links the earth, the tree, the timber and finally, the paper the image is printed upon.

I have always looked to Albrecht Dürer, and I feel that his Northern Renaissance mind-set is apparent. In this ironic, post-postmodern era, I still romantically believe in the aura of the original, artist-made print. Prints are my way to communicate and express what I hope are important ideas.

My unrelenting and over-riding progression is towards devotion and long, serious work on a woodcut matrix. The major evolutionary change has been in my method of both drawing on and cutting the blocks. If anything, that has become more obsessively complex and compulsive with the passage of time. In a strange way, the technical limitations of using simple gouges and veiners have actually enriched the medium for me.

As the Athenian lawgiver Solon stated: “I grow old ever learning new things.” Recently, my print work has become more of a pictorial blend, and I currently mix different and newly acquired printmaking methodologies into the same image, also utilizing drawing into the finished combination. I am excited by the notion of creating cross-media and cross-cultural connections into my own work, and would like to attempt in future work to bring papermaking, via mixing color into the paper pulp. Very small editions or unique prints have come to be of greater interest to me, as has hand coloring, and utilizing the monotype as a color substrate for my woodcuts.

Previously, I had eschewed the seductive effects of color in my prints, preferring the no-nonsense rigors of the more graphic black and white. In recent years,

color has begun to insinuate itself as a visual solution, and I have been introducing it into my work to create a greater sense of compositional harmony. Imagistic and conceptual concerns must come first and foremost. An image should be both an intellectual and a visual challenge.

Italo Calvino, wrote a wonderful comparison, regarding artists who are akin to Hermes or Mercury (quick witted, wings on their shoes) & those more like myself...Saturnine. He wrote: "Saturn is the slow worker, the one who can build a coin collection & label all the envelopes in a neat script, the one who will rewrite a paragraph eleven times to get the rhythm right. Saturn can finish a 400 hundred pg. book. But he tends to get depressed if that is all he does: he needs regular Mercurial insight to give him something delicious to work on."

Biographical Background

Ever the "shoe made for the city," I was born in the Bronx, New York, in an era when father knew best, and grew up largely in the neighboring borough of Queens. I have both my BFA and MFA degrees in Printmaking, studying first with intaglio printmaker Mauricio Lasansky at the University of Iowa and later at the State University of New York at Purchase, with woodcut artist Antonio Frasconi.

I can distinctly recall the fourteen years I lived in Iowa - cutting my woodblocks while wearing fingerless gloves in a Quonset hut studio I shared with two fellow printmakers in what was then entirely a farming community. In the winter, (and through the haze of memory – it seems perpetually that season) the water bath for soaking printmaking papers would completely freeze over. We shared a large American French Tool Press and had but a tiny ceiling mounted heater, which would only vaguely warm the tops of our heads. What I recall the most about working in that raw space was the bitter, howling cold that was trapped inside of my bones and, necessarily, became an element in my woodcuts, perhaps even through to this day.

Since that time, I've been hunkered down, residing in a bedroom community of Long Beach, California, surrounded by my dogs, palm trees, earthquakes, and Santa Ana wind conditions. As an artist, I have exhibited my work nationally and internationally. I've been part of the film "Midwest Matrix," and was awarded residencies at Palenville Interarts, New York; Lily Press, Rockville, Maryland; The Hambidge Center for the Creative Arts and Sciences, Georgia; and Dorland Mountain in Temecula, California. I participated in the faculty arts exchange program "Summer Arts" at Humboldt University in Arcata, California, and was an Artist-in-Residence at The Plains Museum of Art, in Fargo, North Dakota. Internationally, I have had residencies at Black Church Printmaking Studio, Temple Bar, Dublin, Ireland; Beisinghoff Printmaking Residency, Atelier Beisinghoff, Diemelstadt-Rhoden, Germany; Skafthell Cultural Center and the Technical Museum of the Austurlands, Printing Matter International Residency, Seydisfjörður, Iceland.

My work (including illustrated books) can be found in a number of public and private collections including those of the Gardiner Art Gallery, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma; Huntington Library Collection, San Marino, California; AIGA Design Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, New York; McNeese State University, Permanent Collection, Lake Charles, Louisiana; and the Plains Museum of Art, Fargo, North Dakota, among others. I have presented workshops, and been on panels and lectures through such venues as Frogman's Press, Beresford and Vermillion, South Dakota; Arizona State University, Tempe Arizona, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan; Hiram College, Hiram, Ohio; The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio; *Midwest Matrix: Grounding the American Fine Print Movement of the Post-War Period to Present*, presented at "Points, Plots, and Ploys," the conference of the Southern Graphics Council, in Kansas City, Missouri, along with giving lectures at various other institutions. Notable solo exhibitions include Pete and Susan Barrett Art Gallery, Santa Monica College, Santa Monica, California; *Midwest Matrix*, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana; and *Print City: Detroit, Feel the "D,"* Riverview Gallery, Detroit, Michigan.

Currently a Professor Emerita, I was on the faculty at California State University, Long Beach for thirty-four years, teaching Printmaking, Drawing and the History of Prints and Drawings. In 2019, I was honored to be celebrated at LACMA as one of the Women of the Los Angeles Print World (L.A. Print: Edition 9).