Suzanne Nacha, the indifferent: double articulation (black), 2008. 1/1 screenprint, 22" x 30" , 2008

As with any screenprint, the images are built up from the accumulation of the images' composition. Which Nacha has painted, in a series of quick, fluid gestures, the elements of the images emerge not from an inability to make choices but from a careful positioning of the works in relation to a threshold which they continually invoke us to cross over. The works create a productive tension and oscillation between an interiority that recedes from us and an image that looks out at us, between the evocation of space and the assertion of a surface, between masks that can be seen and faces that can be engaged; a tension, in other words, that asks viewers to aesthetically commit to the images. In this regard, Nacha's prints, despite their subject, work against indifference.

Suzanne Nacha

Against Indifference: Suzanne Nacha’s Origin at Open Studio
by Matthew Brower

Suzanne Nacha’s Origin presents a selection of prints from three series of monoprint screenprints printed at Open Studio by Daryl Vocat. These series share a common format of paired laterally reversed circular forms. The forms for each series are images that have been abstracted from Nacha’s paintings of underground spaces (catacombs and tunnels). The subtleties of the images are the stipples of the earlier series of mining images but reframes her engagement with the technocultural underworld as an allegorical examination of excavation and interiority. The titles for the series are drawn from an engagement with the beginnings of Dante’s Inferno – the story of a descent into the earth that becomes a descent through the soul. The images in the first two series, Inferno and the indifferent: double articulation, have the same overarching title with a distinguishing phrase appended in brackets. The third series, against oneself, is divided into two sub-series with the related sub-titles double bind and double blind. The difference hinges on the sense of the image’s engagement with the viewer: whether or not the tunnel imagery can look back at us.

The paired circular forms variously suggest holes in the surface, swallowing, eyes, faces, targets, and masks. The diptych format creates a sense of narrative or implied action – in which viewers read the two circles against each other. Despite the stillness of the source images there is a dynamism to the images, particularly as we read them in relation to their frames. The images and the frames are contained in their forms, their relation to page and each other is vital to the workings of the prints. The images in Inferno are confined by the edge of the circles which circumscribe the limits of the images’ composition. The indifferent and against oneself are constructed differently; the elements of the images work to allow the forms to find an edge that articulates itself according to the requirements of the images rather than constructing them in relation to their frames.

As with any screenprint, the images are built up from the accumulation of printed layers of colour that combine to form a representation of the source paintings. Each of the colour layers is a separate screen on which Nacha has painted, in a series of quick, fluid gestures, the elements of the images. However, rather than producing a series of reproductions of her paintings, Nacha instead explores the possibilities opened up by the decomposition of the images into strata and proportions of shape and colour. These layers, or strata, then function as building blocks in the articulation of the series as Nacha removes layers from the images and reconfigures the colour choices. In doing so, she detaches the prints from a logic of reproduction and representation and re-articulates their operation as a space of investigation.

In Dante’s reading, limbo is the space on the outskirts of hell for good people who are excluded from heaven based on an accident of birth; the souls who made no choices in life, thus sinning against themselves, the result of which is that there is not enough moral weight to their lives to be judged. For this reason, the indifferent remain on the near shore of the river Styx unable to commit to crossing over. The title’s reference to a failure of choice could be interpreted as underlying the need to create permutations of the series rather than settling on a fixed image. However, the aesthetic operating in these images emerges not from an inability to make choices but from a careful positioning of the works in relation to a threshold which they continually invite us to cross over. The works create a productive tension and oscillation between an interiority that recedes from us and an image that looks out at us, between the evocation of space and the assertion of a surface, between masks that can be seen and faces that can be engaged; a tension, in other words, that asks viewers to aesthetically commit to the images. In this regard, Nacha’s prints, despite their subject, work against indifference.

Suzanne Nacha is a visual artist working in and against painting. Her practice at times incorporates sculpture and installation and seeks to make connections between a human experience of the landscape that surrounds us and the earth as a physical body, endlessly evolving. Born in Hamilton, Ontario, she holds undergraduate degrees in both Geology and Fine Art from McMaster University and the University of Guelph respectively, as well as an MFA from York University in Toronto. She has taught in the Fine Art departments of OCAD, Sheridan-GTM and York University, and for the past five years has worked in the mining industry mapping geographies of fortune and need.

The artist would like to thank Daryl Vocat for his amazing work and creative moves, Jill Graham for her invaluable help in making things make sense and Matt Brower for his great insight and ideas. Thanks also, to all the wonderful folks at Open Studio for making this residency such a pleasure.

Matthew Brower is the Curator of the University of Toronto Art Centre and a Lecturer in Museum Studies in the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto.
Tine Bech
Water trees

Everything is secretly alive in Tine Bech’s work: shoes, bridges, street-lights, balloons and coloured blobs. They hum and react with a playful anthropomorphic life that is liable to take you by surprise. Boundless in Space is a pink blob looking a little like a cushion on wheels that moves and clicks when you come close to it. Echoch is a black wire sculpture, emitting sounds in response to your touch, which was inspired by the Australian hedgehog of the same name. Coloured lights are activated as people pass below the basilisk. Sitting on its eggs, the basilisk is a sculpture of lasting time. Light and heat coexist in the image of the tree is mirrored by its upside down reflection. The self-reflection of these delicate traceries of branches and roots suggests the water cycle moving through the circle of life in rain, rivers, sea, trees and all living organisms. Water keeps going around the stone, the grease and the water, Bech’s images of water trees drawings by taking an image of a tree and then transpiring it out through their leaves. There is no beginning or end to the water cycle and no new water is created. Bech’s work demonstrates a fascination with water recycling endlessly through liquid, vaporous states since the beginning of time.

Weather and water are recurring motifs in Bech’s work. In Rain Balloons, large black balloons float through the gallery and their movement activates the sound of rain. In Purple Membrane, swimmers pass slowly through a purple mist hovering above the surface of a public swimming pool. “Drawing is a way of thinking,” Bech writes, and her thinking is concerned with the body moving through the environment. In other drawings she created her images by jumping on charcoal sandwiched between paper.

In The Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard muses on roundness: “We live in the roundness of life, like a walnut that becomes round in its shell … being is round, “ (234). Bech’s work demonstrates a fascination with roundness and circles. Many of her drawings look like holes, openings and non-specific round and oval forms. These echo the balls and blobs in many of her sculptural works (such as Tumbleweed, Frug, Flat Sphere and Everything Round). Her work draws on a tradition of organic female forms in the work of women artists such as Georgia O’Keefe, Lygia Clark and Eva Hesse. “Life is probably round,” said Van Gogh (as cited in Bachelard, 232). In all of Bech’s work, including Water trees, there is a quiet joy in the cycle of life.

Works Cited


Visitors move around in a film of water repelling printing ink from a greasy drawing. Between the stone, the grease and the water, Bech’s images of water trees drawings by taking an image of a tree and then transpiring it out through their leaves. There is no beginning or end to the water cycle and no new water is created. Bech’s work demonstrates a fascination with water recycling endlessly through liquid, vaporous and solid ice states since the beginning of time. 

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