

STEPHANIE CORMIER

Toolbox in the Head

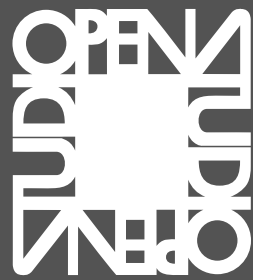
Visiting Artist Exhibition



MAY 13 - JUNE 11, 2016

Artist Talk: Friday, May 13, 6:00-7:00 pm

Opening Reception: Friday, May 13, 7:00-9:00 pm



OPEN STUDIO

Contemporary
Printmaking Centre

IMAGE: *Tool To Taste The Tears Of The Moon*, 2016, screenprint, 38" x 48". Printed by Nicholas Shick under the auspices of Open Studio's Visiting Artist Residency.

Material Girls, Material World: Stephanie Cormier's *Toolbox In The Head*

By Tara Bursey

In the book *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement*, author and researcher Lambros Malafouris challenges the Cartesian mind-body split by claiming that when we encounter pieces of material culture, we engage in a "synergistic process by which, out of brains, bodies and things, [the] mind emerges."¹

A parallel could be drawn between the Cartesian approach and the brain-bound conceptual art of the latter half of the 20th century, known for its dematerialization of the art object in favour of language and performative gestures. While the influence of Conceptualism and early feminist art on her is obvious at times, Stephanie Cormier's work eschews the monochromatic hallmarks of the conceptual canon in favour of revelling in materials. Using shocks of colour in mid-century melamine hues and the staccato textures of terrazzo and chipboard, Cormier samples fragments of daily life in prints that evoke mysterious hybrids of body and brain, tool and toy, monument and machine. Her recent work—similarly hybrid in its combining of photography, drawing and sculpture—presents an archaeology of an imagined future, and a distillation of our present cultural and economic epoch characterized by an unlikely combination of scarcity and visual barrage.

Archaeological processes are at the heart of many of Cormier's projects, past and present. In the *Christine Maila Foundation* (2009), a second-hand blanket with a sewn-in nametag provided the foundation for a series of multiples made out of the old textile (any archaeologist will tell you that "old textiles" are among the most challenging artifacts to conserve). In *The Reconceptualized Universe of the Anti-Logo League Girls* (2009-10), Cormier salvaged fragments of paper packaging over a period of months to create a visual lexicon of an imaginary tribe of women from an alternate sphere.² With these works, the artist introduces us to an emerging theme—the creation of quasi-artifacts from remains of our consumer culture so pervasive that they have been inscribed on the bodies and iconography of a distant future.

Transitional Reassurance 02 (detail), 2016, recycled plastic bags



Where the *Anti-Logo League Girls* had the marks of our consumerism adorn them like corporate brands or tattoos, Cormier's more recent work presents future-relics into which the essence of mass production has seeped into their DNA. Her latest work has transitioned from wall-hung paper assemblages to works of pure sculpture. In her *Anthropocentric*

Specimens, recognizable materials such as sea sponges melt together with baby pink and bile-coloured splashes, futuristic equivalents of the abject masses that emerge after a spring thaw. Cormier describes these forms as "a new type of fossil carrying human traces" originating from a "prequel to [a] post-human speculative world."³ In *Tool To Plant Flowers in Your Uterus*, Cormier recalls Yoko Ono's series *Instructions for Painting* (1962),⁴ but instead of focusing on the written word to suggest a vignette in the viewer/reader's mind, she presents us with an otherworldly object that volleys viewers between imaginary and corporeal realms. In the case of these tools, a far cry from the Stone Age tools we find in our museums, their off-kilter colours, forms and function suggest a magical, prophetic narrative.

In her latest work, Cormier gives the conceptual canon her Electric Kool-Aid Acid treatment again, this time engaging her six year-old daughter in a collaborative process. She describes her latest series, *Toolbox In The Head*, as mirroring Dennis Oppenheim's video *Two Stage Transfer Drawing (Returning to a Past State)* (1971), where he is shown attempting to draw a linear path on a wall that his son is simultaneously drawing on his back in an act of artistic filtering from one person to another.⁵ For *Toolbox*, Cormier draws from her inventory of tool descriptions, reading them to her young daughter and instructing her to draw them as she imagines them. These drawings served as prototypes that Cormier used to produce this series of

screenprints. The materiality of these "tools" takes centre stage—their plastic qualities and awkward shapes evoke crude machines, mushrooms and flora. Out of a magpie collection of materials, a single logic and set of forms from two brains and bodies emerges.

Shadows of the present loom heavily over the world these tools inhabit; their use of fragments from our materialscape reflect the convulsive mix of excess and precarity that many city dwellers face today. We live in an era where *bricolage*, sharing and sampling are all part of the economy of images in a Western post-industrial reality largely divorced from manufacturing and economic stability. The constructed images of *Toolbox in the Head* give form to environmental and economic insecurities that cause many of us—artist-precariats especially—to rely on the imagination to help us transform what is close at hand as a way of making do. Cormier confides that *Toolbox* is "a way of providing for myself and my daughter [and] also realizing that we may be growing into a world where, with limitations in resources and space, we may have to inhabit [an] 'imagined space.'"⁶ May these prototypes serve as tools to shape a world of autonomy, empowerment and transcendence out of all that has, and will continue, to be left behind.

¹ Malafouris, Lambros. *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013.

² Marshall, Tara. "The Reconceptualized Universe of the Anti-Logo League Girls." Toronto: Open Studio, 2010.

³ Cormier, Stephanie. "Collaborating with Objects, Stardust and Billion Year Old Carbon." Thesis. University of Guelph, 2014.

⁴ Munroe, Alexandra and Jon Hendricks. "Instructions for Paintings (1962)." Yes: Yoko Ono. New York: Japan Society/Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2000.

⁵ Cormier, Stephanie. "Toolbox in the Head" Artist's Statement. 2015

⁶ Cormier, Stephanie. "OS Exhibition." E-mail message to the author. 24 Jan. 2016.

Open Studio acknowledges the generous support of its government funders, members, individual donors and volunteers. For a full list of supporters, visit openstudio.on.ca

2015-2016 Corporate & Foundation Donors:

Beau's All Natural Brewing Company
The Emerald Foundation
The Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation
Flash Reproductions
The Japanese Paper Place
The Ontario Arts Council Foundation: Arts Endowment Fund Program

Open Studio receives matching funds through artsVest Toronto, run by Business for the Arts with the support of Canadian Heritage and the Toronto Arts Council.

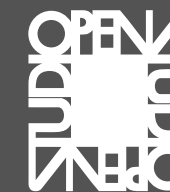


Charitable Registration No. 11906 8823 RR0001

Open Studio is an active member of ARCCO, the Association of Artist Run Centres and Collectives of Ontario, and OAAG, the Ontario Association of Art Galleries.

© Open Studio, the artists, the authors, 2016
EDITING & TYPESETTING: Sara Kelly

Printed by our friends at



401 Richmond Street West, Suite 104
Toronto ON Canada M5V 3A8
416 504 8238
office@openstudio.on.ca
openstudio.on.ca
Gallery Hours: Tue - Sat, 12-5 pm



JACOB ROBERT WHIBLEY

imperfective aspect

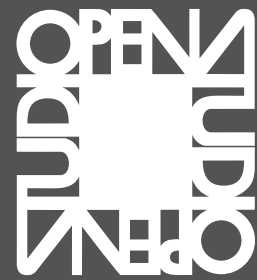
Visiting Artist Exhibition



MAY 13 - JUNE 11, 2016

Artist Talk: Friday, May 13, 6:00-7:00 pm

Opening Reception: Friday, May 13, 7:00-9:00 pm



OPEN STUDIO

Contemporary
Printmaking Centre

IMAGE: *up-to-date and out of time*, 2016, relief print on found paper, 14.5" x 14.5". Printed by Pamela Dodds under the auspices of Open Studio's Visiting Artist Residency.

Jacob Robert Whibley: *imperfective aspect*

By Alex Bowron

It is not space that houses things, but things, by their deletion, that delineate space.¹

We all leave our mark on the walls and floors.²

The imperfective is a tool used in language to identify and describe the interior composition and meaning of words as constructed through their habitual use. It takes into account not only the original meaning of words, but the effects that time, context and usage have on them. The imperfective has a unique relationship to past, present and future because it does not actively distinguish between them. Instead of pairing words with static or standard meanings, the imperfective affords them the same fluidity as the inner workings of an organism. The traces left on words as they pass through history form collected clusters of meaning that contribute to a cumulative, and ever-changing, architecture of time.

In the malleability and visibility of their material and metaphysical properties, objects also contain the imperfective. They are able to perform as visual stand-ins for information and experiences, acting out a balance between the singularity of their forms and the multiplicity of their imprinted meanings. Found objects are particularly capable of revealing the changing nature of their interior composition. Each particular characteristic of a reclaimed object can be isolated and put to use toward the formation of new meanings. This is especially true when the object is translated from one medium to another—it becomes vitally important to identify its individual elements and symbols so that they can be recombined and recontextualized into a new, and newly revealing, format. This translation of one material to another, or from the metaphysical realm to the physical one, is the moment where we arrive at art. For the purposes of this text, it is the moment where we arrive at the studio practice and current Open Studio residency of Toronto artist Jacob Robert Whibley.

Whibley's practice employs the above-mentioned traces of an object's physical and conceptual histories to construct formal reflections on modern and contemporary culture. As a whole,



things we are for, 2016, relief print, 26" x 16"

his work ranges from abstract to representational, always maintaining a consistently clean, graphic aesthetic that makes equal use of positive and negative space. Materially speaking, Whibley is adept at seamlessly combining the found and the fabricated, able to adapt his concepts to a wide range of media and processes. Previous bodies of work have utilized everything from paper, steel, wood, text and sound, to photography, digital drawing, laser-cutting and 3D printing. For his source material, Whibley mines not only the content by the mood of culture, from the fetishization of labour and technology, to concepts of atemporality and the blending of histories, to the architecture of intertextual databases. Whatever their physical makeup, Whibley's compositions all contain an inherent order and interconnectedness permeated by tiny, reoccurring moments of disarray. By structuring itself around an equal combination of concept and materiality, Whibley's practice lends itself well to a translation into print media. The mechanical and methodical nature of the printing process, its connection to the history of the copy, the archive and information distribution, and the way that it guarantees a balance between negative and positive space, all connect fittingly to Whibley's overarching conceptual exploitation of the found original.

Generated out of a personal archive of found paper ephemera and graphic forms sourced from existing interstitial spaces, Whibley utilized his time at Open Studio to create three distinct bodies of block-printed multiples. The first is a series of prints that intrinsically translate his long-standing collage practice into the format of printmaking. After scanning a selection of

paper shapes into his computer, Whibley developed blueprints for a laser-cut plywood jig. Before being passed through the press, the jig was etched and inked, producing works with shapes and traces composed out of both the absence and presence of ink. In the second series, Whibley printed directly on sheets of found paper, so as to orchestrate an overlap between the original found compositions and the freshly fabricated ones. In this case, printmaking was adopted as a method for merging histories; pulling previous markings, folds and faded edges into the present as vital elements to the new. For the third series, Whibley ran water-soaked paper through the press over a raw plywood jig, resulting in smaller embossed works composed of the subtle ghosting from the burnt edges of the initial laser cuts. This unintentional but pleasing happening points towards the history of *something*, indicating traces of what came before with the strong non-specificity that feeds directly into our sense of the atemporal.

As if to further confirm the appropriate nature of their setting, the first and second series are constructed from a range of Van Son oil-based inks, some of which are actually several decades old. The base material itself has a history, as does the ritual of its application, so that any new work created in this format today will naturally and unavoidably contain traces of its past. In this way, the work can be read as an encounter with time (the act of printmaking; the logic of reproduction; history as a non-linear and undefinable nostalgia) and space (as the product of countless concrete moments and imaginary architectures), where space is subject to time. Within the context of Whibley's practice, the connection between printmaking and reproduction does not reinforce the rhetoric of the endless copy, but serves instead to confirm the constant flux of an object's internal make-up. Although he is producing multiples, each piece functions not as a repetition of the one before, but as a unique monument to the copy, echoing the multiplicity of ambiguous time. It is as though each final print contains within it a chorus of historic voices, competing for continued relevancy at a point in history when the aura of the art-object has long been dubbed fluid.

¹ Lévinas, Emmanuel. *Outside the Subject*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1994. 52.

² Crawford, Jane. "Gordon Matta-Clark: In Context". *Gordon Matta-Clark Moment to Moment: Space*. Ed. Hubertus von Amelnunx et al. Nürnberg, Germany: Verlag für Moderne Kunst. 2012. 161.

Through the [Visiting Artist Program](#), Open Studio is accessible to all professional artists, with or without printmaking experience, to explore and develop new bodies of work through print media. Each year, four artists produce their work in the Open Studio facilities followed by two-person exhibitions in the Open Studio Gallery. See openstudio.on.ca/visiting-artist-residencies.

Artists' Biographies

Stephanie Cormier was born in Montreal, has lived in Barbados, England and currently resides in Toronto with her six-year-old daughter. She completed her BFA at OCADU and her MFA at the University of Guelph. Stephanie would like to thank Nick Shick and all at Open Studio.

Jacob Robert Whibley is graduate of the Ontario College of Art and Design and a former member (2005-2011) of Toronto collective Team Macho. He has exhibited in Canada (Narwhal Contemporary, Oakville Galleries, Harbourfront Centre, Art Toronto), in the US (White Walls Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Pulse, New York, NY; Pulse, Miami, FL; Expo Chicago, IL), and in Europe (Bourouina Gallery, Berlin; l'Espace de l'Art Concret, Mouans-Sartoux, FR; Art Brussels, BE). His work is in the collections of RBC, BMO and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Jacob would like to thank Pamela Dodds for her knowledge and patience.

Authors' Biographies

Alex Bowron is an artist and freelance art-writer based in Toronto. She holds a BFA in sculpture/installation and an MA in critical cultural theory. Bowron's writing ranges from academic to experimental and has appeared in publications, galleries, and collaborative projects with other artists.

Tara Bursey is an interdisciplinary artist, curator and arts worker. She has worked as Curatorial Assistant at the Textile Museum of Canada, and in a curatorial capacity for the City of Hamilton Tourism and Culture Division, the Ontario Crafts Council, Culture for Kids in the Arts, Gallery 1313, Centre3 for Print and Media Art and the Art Gallery of Hamilton Design Annex. She sits on the Curatorial Committee of Hamilton Supercrawl and her artwork has been exhibited across Canada as well as in Copenhagen, Berlin, and Eye, Suffolk, UK. Tara lives and works in Hamilton, Ontario where she coordinates programs and exhibitions at the Workers Arts & Heritage Centre, Canada's only labour history museum and multidisciplinary art centre.