

April 30 to May 23, 2009

Opening Reception
Thursday, April 30 | 7-9 pm

Artists' Talks at Open Studio
Thursday, April 30 | 6 pm. Free admission

Suzanne Nacha

Origin



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

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 subterranean iconography of the works revisits Nacha's 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 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, *limbo fraternal* 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, swellings, 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 the larger series. While the images are contained in their forms, their relation to page and each other is vital to the workings of the prints. The images in *limbo fraternal* 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 ele-

ments 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 stratifications 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 indifferent are 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/UTM and York University, and for the past fifteen 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 always 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.

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.

Open Studio, Canada's leading printmaking centre, is dedicated to the production, preservation and promotion of contemporary fine art prints.

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Gallery Hours
Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 5 pm

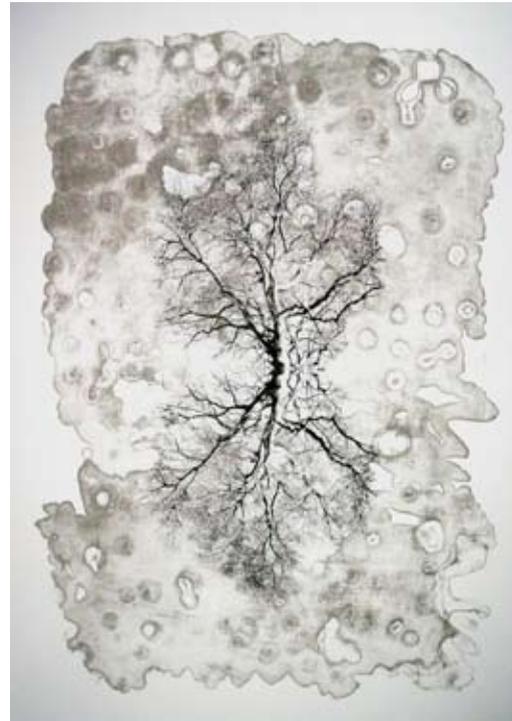
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Tine Bech

Water trees



Tine Bech, *Water trees I*, lithograph, 100 x 76 cm, 2008



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Watery Looks

by Tracey Warr

Everything is secretly alive in Tine Bech's work: shoes, bridges, streetlights, 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. *Echidna* is a black wiry 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 on the bridge beneath in *Tracing Light*. A large red blob accompanies the artist on a bicycle tour of Toronto Island in *Red Blob bobs around Toronto Island*. And in *Mememe*, visitors move around in flamboyant sculptural shoes creating sound compositions in a gallery space. Bech's sculptures and installations are full of bright colours, evoking sunlight and playgrounds. Her drawings, on the other hand, employ the black, white and sepia end of the colour range. In the *Water trees* series, created for this exhibition at Open Studio, Bech is concerned with the other end of the weather range too - with the rain that falls incessantly against your windowpane some days.

She has created the *Water trees* drawings by taking an image of a tree out into the rain. "Big fat drops of rain," she says, are best to create "watery looks." The image of the tree is mirrored by its upside down double, like a tree reflected in the surface of still water. The alchemies of printmaking and lithography have allowed Bech to extend the range of her visual language so that the process she uses is mimicking her subject. Lithography relies on the porosity of stone to attract water and on a film of water repelling printing ink from a greasy drawing. Between the stone, the grease and the water, Bech's images of drowned or floating trees emerge with their fragile limbs and roots like capillaries. 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 and around. Trees contribute to the continuous movement of water by drawing it up from the ground and then transpiring it out through their leaves. There is no beginning or end to the water cycle and no new water. There is only water recycling endlessly through liquid, vaporous and solid ice 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*, *Fnug*, *Felt 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

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

Tine Bech (Master of Fine Art, Sculpture) is a visual artist who works with installation, sound, sculpture and drawing. Born in Denmark, she currently lives and works in London, England. She has exhibited her work in venues including: Aarhus Kunstbygning (Centre for Contemporary Art, Denmark), The Fort Collins Museum of Contemporary Art (USA), L Gallery (Moscow), Trøndelag Centre of Contemporary Arts (Norway), Bankside Gallery and The Royal British Sculptors Gallery (UK). Her work is included in the book *Dansk Kunst 2003* (Danish Art of the Year). Bech was awarded a Royal British Society of Sculpture Bursary in 2004. Subsequently, she was mentioned in the article *The UK's Sculptural Newcomers* in the New York Magazine, NY Arts in 2005. Tine has collaborated with different electronics and sound artists in creating interactive artwork. At the International Conference on Artificial Life (2002) a collaborative project was published in conjunction with Dr. Sam Woolf (Sussex University, Interact Lab) and in 2006 an interactive sound installation was created for the Danish Digital Arts Festival, which gained wide press coverage. Bech was commissioned to create a permanent interactive light installation by Farnham Creates in 2007/08; the project was funded by Arts Council England South East. For the 2008/09 academic year, Tine Bech was awarded a Research Sabbatical from the University for the Creative Arts allowing her to work on upcoming projects.

Tracey Warr is a writer who lives in Wales. She is Lecturer in Contemporary Art Theory at Oxford Brookes University in the UK.