

**Dana Tasic** is a member of Open Studio where she has been printing since 2003. She holds a BFA from Queen's University and is presently in the final stages of her graduate studies in Fine Art at the University of Calgary, expecting to complete her MFA degree in 2011. In 2010 she was selected for the Tim Mara Graduate Student Exchange at the Printmaking Department at the Royal College of Art, London, U.K. Her research interests include explorations into embodied perception and memory as well as the application of emerging manufacturing technology to printmaking, including 3D modelling software and rapid prototyping. She recently presented her research and artwork at the Printopolis International Symposium on Printmaking in Toronto in 2010.

**J. Eric Steenbergen** is a Canadian printmaker currently working at the OCAD University. Eric received his MFA in Printmaking from the University of Alberta in 2009. His work, which explores concepts of scientific measurement and the act of defining, has been exhibited across Canada and internationally.

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

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# Dana Tasic *Everyday Ephemera*



*Everyday Ephemera #3*, screenprint, image size: 20" x 15", paper size: 38" x 50", 2010.

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# Dana Totic: *Everyday Ephemera*

by J. Eric Steenbergen

Dana Totic's *Everyday Ephemera* explores the junction between recent advances in 3D scanning technology and process-oriented printmaking. Her haunting screenprints of 3D scans seem to cling delicately to the paper. It is as though the images cannot be fully seen; part of them is always out of view. This series of distorted and distended bodies—images of too many hands jaggedly imposed over and woven through each other, or portions of limbs that dissolve into nothingness—never quite become grotesque. Despite all the distortions, a balance is maintained by their quiet and sterile presentation. Bodies are represented in a single frame as they move through time, layering successive actions into a single form. Totic's work echoes the explorations of the body in motion captured by Eadweard Muybridge in the late 19th century. Muybridge pushed the boundaries of the technology of the time, using photography in innovative ways to capture imagery that uniquely explored action over time and reflected an interest in classifying and defining subjects. Similarly, Totic is exploring novel uses of new technologies: her work explores movement and action; however, here we see reflected our current unease with surveillance and the ever-expanding realm of digital representations of ourselves.

In past work, Totic has used lithography in an unconventional way: employing the limitations of this medium as strengths. When creating a lithographic image, artists normally draw in a greasy material on stone while carefully protecting the surface from contaminants such as bodily oil. Totic turned this process on its head by drawing on a prepared stone in a non-greasy material while allowing her hand to press on the surface. The impressions of the artist's hands are left behind, but the drawing itself becomes obliterated by the processing of the stone. The traces of her action, as recorded by the transfer of grease from hand to stone, are all that remain. Similarly, *Everyday Ephemera* is a "misuse" of image-making technology. In 3D scanning, errors are caused by motion (e.g. shifting of the subject during the recording process) in much the same way that errors in lithography are caused by contamination of the drawing surface. Totic's forms are rife with digital artifacts—errors caused by these disruptions in the scanning process. The traces of action still reside, but are now layered and integrated in a composite image showing movement and the elapsing of time. We can see the evidence of action recorded not through physical mark making, but through the optic of the scanner. The image has the same hesitancy and tactility we associate with the hand-made, only here it is interpreted through a new medium. Totic's work focuses in on this process of image creation, intentionally misusing it to draw our attention to these traces of action. Marks that are usually seen as errors in the drawing process become the work: the compound recording of error and of action.

The limited palette employed by Totic emphasizes her subject matter and her process: the confluence of screenprinting, 3D scanning and performance. The images shift on the page as if they are comprised of facets: they seem to approach the viewer, reflecting light, only to recede again. The muted tones create a topography of motion suggestive of surveillance, medical imaging, or remote sensing. These screenprints are framed in a detached way, as if a remote eye were



peering into these private moments of contemplation. The body has been segmented and layered upon itself with multiple, discrete moments in time shown in a single frame. This suggests a close examination of these small actions, a form of recording which looks for variance or imperfection.

Through this indirect view with its unnatural cropping, a separation is created, allowing us to see only a portion of the figure and a segment of the action. Such imperfect representation, such partial visibility, questions the role these new technologies play in the representation of ourselves for diagnostic purposes or as a social tool with which we willingly engage. These recorded moments are necessarily incomplete and myopic in their focus. The actions performed in Totic's screenprints are quiet and practical: sewing, peeling an orange, or buttoning a shirt—actions we all perform automatically without reflection. The work is an archive of the actions of daily life, which are themselves taken for granted. By imbuing these small, quotidian moments with unusual importance, Totic prompts us to look for the greater meaning behind these simple actions. Her mode of recording is suggestive of anthropological records: the archiving of movements for study and scrutiny. Totic's current work raises questions about the increasingly important role of digital information and technology in the creation, dissemination and archiving of our culture.

Printmaking has been a contributing force in the history of mass communication, medical imaging and photography. As an artistic practice, printmaking has often been engaged in the exploration of the potential of new imaging and reprographic technologies and print artists utilize emerging technologies for expressive and critical purposes. Recent examples of this exploration include the use of polymer plates, CNC routers, laser cutters, and, as in Totic's work, three-dimensional scanners. Dana Totic's work is part of this ongoing struggle to reconcile a strong traditional, process-oriented perspective with new means of image creation and dissemination. In much the same way that colour printing technology and desktop publishing moved the printed form from the hands of a limited few to the masses, 3D scanning, coupled with rapid prototyping, is at the forefront of a new means of production with the potential to democratize small-scale manufacturing.

Totic's work explores the expressive possibilities of this new technology, but it also raises questions about the role such new modes of observation play in the ways we represent ourselves. As we commit more and more of our personal identity to digital forms, how do we exercise control over these representations? As cultural production moves into a digital space, what impact does this have on future accessibility: if current services, file formats, or storage media become obsolete, what then happens to the culture we have created in these forms?