

May 24 - June 22, 2013

Artist Talk
Friday, May 24 | 6-7 pm

Opening Reception
Friday, May 24 | 7-9 pm

Suzie Smith *Lines Not Straight*



Lines Not Straight, lithograph, 15" x 15", 2012. Printed by Pudy Tong under the auspices of the Open Studio Visiting Artist Residency, 2012-13. Photograph by William Eakin.

Open Studio
104 - 401 Richmond St. W.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8
tel/fax 416-504-8238
office@openstudio.on.ca
www.openstudio.on.ca
Gallery Hours: Tues - Sat, 12 - 5pm



Suzie Smith: *Shapes Shifting*

by Jenny Western

I am always trying to make an image without making an image.
Suzie Smith, on her artistic process¹

Go on transforming a square canvas in your head until it becomes a circle. Pick out any shape in the process and pin up or place on the canvas an object, a smell, a sound, or a colour that came to mind in association with the shape.
Yoko Ono, *Painting To Be Constructed In Your Head*²

In the 1960s Yoko Ono presented her instruction paintings, a series of text-based pieces that allowed viewers to construct the image of Ono's words within their own imaginings. Since that time, the conceptual basis for this project has captivated art audiences and inspired countless other artists in their approach to creative production. Winnipeg artist Suzie Smith may be said to be one of those artists who has benefitted from Ono's transformative imagery. Smith, an interdisciplinary artist with a penchant for printmaking, has been amassing her *Shapes Shifting* series as an examination of how a work's title may define its process and subsequent image in an effort to elude the standard practice of image making.

But how does one endeavour to go about making an image while not making one? In an attempt to wrap her head around this conundrum, Smith arranges a riddle for herself to be solved visually. Through titles such as *Square Imitating Circle* or *Lines To Pattern*, Smith plays a game to create such transformations. In the case of the two aforementioned titles, the instructive for Smith is to coax a square into a circle and conjure straight lines into a wavy pattern. The process that follows the directives of these titles usually involves manipulating one form into another by folding paper, a trick that seems simple enough but with an outcome that appears downright complicated when considering that the square we now see was once a circle. To capture what she has accomplished through her process, Smith then takes the folded paper, scans it for documentation of the original's metamorphosis, and creates a lithograph from it. As Smith explains, *Shapes Shifting* is about "documenting the act rather than showing the act."³

However, the artistic sleight of hand does not end there. Smith's use of lithography as the final medium within her artistic process suggests that the outcome of this experiment is the multiplicity of the documented image. While the role of printmaking within this project does allow for several copies of the resultant image to be made, Smith is in fact investigating issues around the high/low relationship inherent in the lithographic process. Her piece *Lines Not Straight*, printed at Open Studio during Smith's recent Visiting Artist Residency, speaks of how trajectories can be broken and thrown off their course by a simple gesture. And in employing lithography for the *Shapes Shifting* series, Smith breaks down the division between this medium's usage for fine art purposes and also for industrial processes such as newspaper and poster printing. Smith is resisting the "perfection" that is often associated with the techniques of printmaking in lieu of a looser approach overall. It is a style which Smith refers to alternately as "DIY Modernism," "Bad Origami," or "Messy Minimalism."⁴

Even Smith's influences, from Ono to Sol LeWitt to Miranda July, demonstrate a certain formal looseness. Smith admits that chance plays a role in the creation of the *Shapes Shifting* series in that it determines the outcome of the initial act. While Smith's goal may be to turn a square into a circle (or vice versa), her folding technique does not produce a precise form but rather something a little more folksy in appearance. Yet the scanning of the image does require a steady hand as it performs the role of being a document of truth and fact. The resulting image reveals the folds and texture created by Smith's hand in the work's initial stages rather than the printing by hand accomplished in the later stages of the work's



creation. States Smith, "I am trying to transcend both material and process to create something poetic or complex yet totally simple."⁵ Viewers may be left to wonder exactly which medium they are apprehending in the finished artwork since, after a cursory glance at least, Smith's exact usage of media is not instantly apparent.

As with Yoko Ono's instruction paintings, such as *Painting To Be Constructed In Your Head*, Smith's *Shapes Shifting* series invites viewers to engage their imaginations by using the visual prompts provided in the finished work. When we look at a piece like *Circles to Grid* we see the final product but are lured into wondering which steps the artist took to get us there. In a sense we become Smith's collaborators as the process continues to unfold, realizing that Smith's creation is not the only thing to have shifted its shape; our perspective has as well.

¹ Smith, Suzie. Personal interview. February 23, 2013.

² Ono, Yoko. *PAINTING TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN YOUR HEAD (1)*. 1962. Accessed from <http://www.a-i-u.net/ono2.html>.

³ Smith, *op. cit.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Smith, Suzie. Artist statement. February 2013

Image: *Lines To Pattern*, lithograph, 35" x 25", 2011. Photograph by Song Yun Kim.

Jenny Western is a curator, writer, and educator who lives and works in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

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.

Open Studio acknowledges the generous support of its government funders, members, individual donors and volunteers.

2012-2013 Supporters:

CUMBA Foundation
Emerald Foundation
The Japanese Paper Place
The McLean Foundation
The Ontario Arts Council Foundation:
Arts Endowment Fund Program

Printing provided by our Friends at:



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 OAAAG, the Ontario Association of Art Galleries.



Kristiina Lahde received her BFA from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (1999). Her work was featured in La Biennale de Montréal (2011) and she has had solo and group exhibitions across Canada and the USA. In September 2013 her work will be included in *More Than Two*, curated by Micah Lexier at The Power Plant (Toronto). In summer 2013 she will be an Artist in Residence at the Anna Leonowens Gallery at NSCAD University (Halifax), and is working toward solo exhibitions at The Koffler Gallery (Toronto) and the Anna Leonowens Gallery. Lahde has received numerous grants, including a recent Canada Council Creation/Production Grant and a Mid-Career grant from the Ontario Arts Council. A feature article on Lahde's work was published in the spring 2013 issue of *C Magazine* and she was recently longlisted for the Sobey Art Award. Lahde's work is in the collection of the Canada Council Art Bank and she is represented by MKG127, Toronto.

Kristiina Lahde would like to thank Laine Groeneweg, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council.

Suzie Smith (www.suzie-smith.com) is an interdisciplinary artist from Winnipeg, Canada. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Concordia University in 2004 and a Master of Fine Arts from The Glasgow School of Art in 2011. With a focus on printmaking, she makes art that looks at issues surrounding transformation, representation and the process of making.

Suzie Smith would like to thank Open Studio, Pudy Tong, the Winnipeg Arts Council and the Manitoba Arts Council.

May 24 - June 22, 2013

Artist Talk
Friday, May 24 | 6-7 pm

Opening Reception
Friday, May 24 | 7-9 pm

Kristiina Lahde *Criss-Cross*



Criss-Cross 1, embossment on paper, 22.5" x 16.5", 2013. Printed by Laine Groeneweg under the auspices of the Open Studio Visiting Artist Residency, 2012-13. Photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.

Open Studio
104 - 401 Richmond St. W.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8
tel/fax 416-504-8238
office@openstudio.on.ca
www.openstudio.on.ca
Gallery Hours: Tues - Sat, 12 - 5pm



Kristiina Lahde: *Criss-Cross* by Bill Clarke

Throughout her art-making career, Toronto-based Kristiina Lahde has used commonplace materials and objects to produce her work, obscuring their original functions through folding, cutting and rearranging. Viewers of her work are encouraged to look beyond the physical properties or use-value of the materials and consider the more complex meanings that lay behind them. Visually, her work challenges and delights the eye as much as the brain. Although her practice is informed by the tenets of Conceptual and Minimal art, Lahde's creations are usually bursting with rhythmic and kaleidoscopic patterns. She also often seems compelled to tease out as many different variations on a theme until she has exhausted it.

Until recently, Lahde was best described as a particularly methodical artist. Early series such as *Zeroes* (2002-03) saw Lahde clipping out hundreds of tiny zeroes from the prices of items pictured in advertising flyers, configuring them into swirls, spirals, loops and ellipses on paper or in large installations thereby creating visual representations of consumer culture spinning out of control. The series *Kaleidoscope* (2008-09) likewise saw Lahde rearranging typographical elements from pages of *The Globe & Mail* into swirling pinwheel patterns; a comment, perhaps, on how disorienting and "abstract" our media-saturated world can feel. Such approaches to collage require plenty of forethought before one starts affixing the cut-outs to the paper.

Over the past few years, however, Lahde has started to experiment with less conventional art-making methods that have intentionally resulted in unpredictable outcomes. "I was starting to feel that my work was perhaps getting a little too orderly," she explained during a visit to her home-studio in the West End earlier this year. "I began to feel like I needed to break away from that; to embrace randomness and take some risks." Her first move in this less-predetermined direction is the series of ink and pencil paper-based works titled *Chance* (2010-11). Here, the mark making depended, literally, on a roll of the dice. For these works, Lahde used board game dice as stamps, inking all six sides before tossing them across sheets of paper. The arbitrary marks made by the dice bouncing across the surface were then meticulously reproduced in graphite as a mirror image on a second sheet of paper. Here, Lahde formally emphasizes the visual tension between the messy and capricious blotches left by the dice, and the accurate and purposeful replication of the marks made by her hand.

For her most recent series, *Criss-Cross*, produced during her Visiting Artist Residency at Open Studio, Lahde removes her hand almost completely from the work, the images emerging from these prints being produced with few interventions on her part. As in her previous work, Lahde started with a commonplace item — in this case a flexible tape measure of the kind most often used by tailors or clothing designers. (Lahde says that she often has one of these draped around her neck as she goes about her workday in the textile department at the Royal Ontario Museum. And, without a doubt, being surrounded by textile designs on a daily basis has influenced the repetition and patterning found in much of her artwork.) Lahde casually dropped the tape measure onto the bed of an etching press, occasionally making a few minor adjustments to its positioning. She then laid down paper and ran the whole thing through the printing press, which left behind the flattened, ghostly imprint of the tape measure once she peeled it from the surface. "When I asked the master printers at Open Studio if I could run the tape measure through one of the



machines, I got some worried looks," she says, laughing.

Lahde's unusual method for producing these prints reflects the practices of another artist whose approach to art making was equally unconventional: Marcel Duchamp. Indeed, Lahde's *Criss-Cross* series was partly inspired by Duchamp's *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-14), in which the iconic French artist dropped three metre-long pieces of thread from a metre's height onto pieces of stretched canvas, and then adhered them to the canvases in whatever shapes they landed. In this work, Duchamp was making "a joke about the meter"¹ illustrating how elements of randomness can be drawn even from something as supposedly fixed as a unit of measure. Lahde goes a step further, however, in that she also emphasizes the primacy of

an object's form over its function; only a trace of the real thing remains embedded in the paper, like a fossil. It is only through close observation that one might be able to identify the source material by the subtle outline of the metallic ends of the tape measures embedded in the paper.

Despite the deceptively simple gestures that resulted in the ten prints in the *Criss-Cross* series, each is remarkably varied and dynamic. The forms recede into the paper or appear to stand out boldly depending on the position from which they are viewed. The eye attempts to trace the meandering lines from one end to the other, but is challenged by "breaks" caused by one section of the tape measure being overlain by another as it travelled through the press. The prints seem to cheekily play with the mathematical and statistical concepts of empirical measurement, in which information is incomplete and whatever conclusion is reached, as a result, will be imprecise. By embracing chance, Lahde makes evident that sometimes the most interesting results are arrived at fortuitously.

Image: 90 45 45 30 x 3, embossment on paper, 31" x 22.5". 2013. Printed by Laine Groeneweg under the auspices of the Open Studio Visiting Artist Residency, 2012-13. Photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.

¹Duchamp, Marcel. *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-14). Museum of Modern Art, NY. <http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=78990>. Gallery label text from *Inventing Abstraction 1910-1925*, (December 23, 2012–April 15, 2013).

Bill Clarke is a Toronto-based arts writer who has published in several Canadian and international publications, including *ARTnews*, *Canadian Art*, *C Magazine*, *Modern Painters* and *Border Crossings*. He is also the editor of *Magenta Magazine*, an online visual arts publication produced three times a year by the Magenta Foundation (www.magentamagazine.com).