

Cathedral Floor Plans Statement

The crosses or cruciform images are actually the architectural floor plans of various cathedrals. The artist's first venture incorporating the floor plan as a primary visual symbol began with a series of etchings around the year 2000. This was the period when he was beginning to experiment with the color viscosity printing process. The effects of this printing process can produce stunning colorful combinations, but the technique has typically been used in the creation of more abstract forms because of the way the copper plates are developed. The cathedral floor plans provided a form that could be greatly manipulated without losing a recognizable image.

Once the basics of the process were understood the artist moved on to experiments with portrait images made from text. However, while in the midst of creating those plates he felt that the cathedrals—as a form—had not yet been exhausted and started bringing textual elements into a new set of cathedral images. Those plates were proofed and then set aside for several years, yet he later returned to them to create a new series over the past few years.

The cathedral plans were specifically chosen because the images bring to mind multiple concepts simultaneously. The image is at once a cross, a map, a guide. As a building, a cathedral is essentially a church. Yet the word *church* has multiple meanings, too. It can be a building or the people who make up an individual congregation, specific denomination, or all Christians over time. It was the multiple definitions that could be assigned to these words that caused the artist to begin including text within these images.

The texts are all Judeo-Christian scriptural passages. They appear in Hebrew, Latin, and English. The primacy of the Word in these two religions—two of the *Peoples of the Book*—was an impetus for adding text to the works. The texts refer often to “plans” and “foundations.” Interwoven with the cathedral images, the words are inseparable from the plans themselves. They serve as the foundations of the churches depicted or the Church corporate.

The physical layers of the plates also relate to these “foundations.” The cruciform is an obvious reference to Jesus, the foundation of the Christian Church. The texts, as well, function in a similar way. Together, this interweaving of text and imagery leads viewers to consider the complexity of the allusions disclosed.

Color Viscosity Etching

Originally developed at Atelier 17, the famed printmaking workshop of Stanley William Hayter, color viscosity printing arose during the middle of the twentieth century as a way to create a color etching with only one pass through the printing press. Previous methods of printing etchings in colors were laborious and required that separate plates be created, inked, and printed for each of the colors. Since etchings are printed on dampened paper, aligning the colors correctly throughout an edition of prints was both tedious and technically challenging. Hayter and his associates (specifically the Indian-born Krishna Reddy) evolved a process that utilized ink rollers of differing densities, plates with varying levels, and inks of alternating consistencies.

The color etchings in this exhibit are formed essentially in the same way. Getting the image onto the plate is the main variation. The artist first works in black and white in Photoshop, layering scanned pages of text over the cathedral floor plan images. This black and white image is then printed through a laser printer and transferred to a copper plate.

The prepared etching plate is then developed in an acid bath, as a traditional etching would be. However, in preparation for the viscosity method, the copper plate must be developed with a minimum of three distinct levels. This allows for the color separation and mixing to take place during the printing process.

The deepest level of the plate is inked as any etching would be. Ink is forced into the crevices of the plate and then the surface area is wiped clean. Another color of ink is then mixed with oil until it maintains a runny consistency. This ink is applied to a large, hard density, rubber roller. When the ink is rolled off onto the plate it only hits the top surface areas. Next, yet another color or ink is mixed with an inert powdery substance to make it tacky. This ink is applied to another roller that has a soft density. When the tacky ink is rolled over the surface of the plate, the oily ink rejects it, yet lower levels of the plate receive the ink. The three colors visually mix in various ways throughout the plate, creating additional colors than just the original three. The plate can then be sent through the press with the colors offsetting onto a dampened sheet of paper.

Some of the etchings exhibited are developed exactly as stated above. Others utilize an additional medium density roller and one more color. Color combinations can produce highly vibrant hues or more neutralized colors, or a combination of both. While this is still a highly technical process, the printing of the plates is more consistent than printing methods from earlier periods. The varying levels of the plates, combined with the use of text, aligns with the concept of the *palimpsest* in the artist's work. Often "lost" texts reemerge during the printing process, commingling with more obvious texts, in a similar fashion as the original, ancient palimpsests.