

ARTS

Everything old is new again

CONTEMPORARY PRINTS AT BOISE STATE

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Technology can be a tool or a crutch.

Unfortunately many Americans have let themselves fall into the second category. This doesn't refer only

Re-Imaging the Multiple
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to things like cellular phones and air conditioners. This even infiltrates art.

Printmaking, like most art forms, has gone through radical changes in the last hundred years. Digital technology is now making it possible for artists to create images in ways they'd never considered before. *Re-Imaging the Multiple*, an exhibition at the Boise State Liberal Arts Building, seeks to investigate them.

Some of the featured prints are created through more traditional methods but utilize contemporary images. Deborah Mae Broad has produced some stunning and intricate wood engravings. The technique is centuries old but her imagery figures in the present. Broad is not simply a technician. Though quite proficient with her medium, her images are stirring.

The British artist Magnus Irvin is another example of a technician in the old tradition. His large color woodcuts are both intricate and roughly cut at times. This process is also ancient but the images are relevant. One enormous piece reveals a large male figure covered from head to toe in tattoos. The image is reminiscent of a scene from Pink Floyd's *The Wall*. The size, color and detail here make this a highlight of the show.

Other pieces in the exhibition prove more troubling. Completely digital works or others, largely developed with digital processes, abound here. Results are mixed. Gregory Page is represented by two ink jet prints. In one way, it's encouraging to see pieces like these included—as many curators turn their

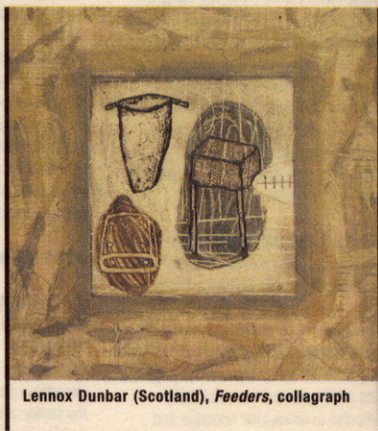
noses up at such pieces. In another way, one can understand why. The dull, smooth surface of the ink jet image simply can't compare with the intense, tactile surface that's a hallmark of traditional print media.

Other artists, like Jean Maddison and Maritza Davila use photo-based images prominently in their works. Some pieces are a mix of photo-etching and other traditional techniques. The question arises as to why a print artist would choose to work exclusively with photo-etching. Maddison's pieces, for instance, are really only collages—reproduced in another medium. Since photography is a process that also works with multiples of the same image, photo-etching a plate and printing it, seems a waste of technique.

Keith Howard, widely known for his innovative

non-toxic intaglios, proves that the tool of photo-etching can be used effectively, however. His prints are quite experimental in their visual forms and do not have a cookie-cutter, Photoshop-scanned appearance.

Exhibition curator, Boise State's George Roberts, should be commended on the cross-section of work he has included. The work represents current trends and presents some of the philosophical problems that printmakers—practitioners of an ancient art—will face in the future. **EW**



Lennox Dunbar (Scotland), *Feeders*, collagraph



Magnus Irvin (England), *Tattoo*, woodcut