The Quintessence of Essence

Painter Benjamin Edwards has spent the last several years exploring what he calls “the architecture of suburbia”—the structural and design forms found in strip malls, fast-food joints, gas stations, motels and other familiar citadels of consumerism. Accompanying the architecture is what Edwards refers to as “the iconography of the roadway”—those commercial signs, symbols, colors and artificial elements juxtaposed with the natural scene or environment.

In order to gather material for his work, Edwards has taken a number of cross-country automobile trips, searching out the “roadside life that almost exists in a separate channel.” Along the way, he takes photos with his digital camera and keeps detailed logs and diaries containing “location notes,” recording where he stops, where he stays, and what he buys.

The digital photos are loaded into his computer. He subsequently selects various elements in the photos, isolates them, and reduces them to the basic geometry found in the subject. Once he makes his selections, he projects the design elements onto a canvas, incorporating as many as three hundred separate photos into a single painting. The result is a conflated composition which becomes emblematic of what he refers to as the “American consumerist utopia.”

Edwards explained the purpose of his quest to Loch Adamson in a August 2001 item that appeared in the New York Times Magazine. “Basically, I’m choosing the essence. When you’re driving by, you register these places in your peripheral vision, and yet you know what you’ve seen.” The working over of the material he gathers becomes a graphic quintessence of essences. The result is a distinctively intriguing visual cryptogram where the sum of the parts creates the overall image.

He takes great care in creating the proper surface for his paintings. Colors and textures are employed to capture the faux look which Edwards characterizes as the fake esthetic businesses use to establish a distinctive product and corporate identity.

In September 2001 Edwards held his first solo exhibition at the Artemis Greenberg Van Doren Gallery in New York. The show included examples of his paintings, digital photos, computer prints, drawings, and the maps he uses to record the places he has visited in his travels.

The centerpiece of his solo exhibition was an 8 by 12 foot painting entitled Convergence, a word which succinctly describes what happens in the act of creating his images. Other paintings, sometimes incorporating recycled design elements, reflect the same idea: Decoherence, Edge, Dump (Edge Refuse), and Fill (Dump Retrieval).

Benjamin Edwards shows no immediate apprehension about the prospect of running out of material for his work. Believing that consumerism is a defining American impulse, he observes that “whatever infrastructure exists in our society, consumerism is going to fill it.” (A.H.)
THE TENTH ANNUAL WINE AUCTION

The Tenth Annual Tandem Press Wine Auction will be held on Thursday, June 19 at the home of Cindy Kahn and Steve Marker. This annual event will include a live and silent auction, hors d’oeuvres and a gourmet dinner complemented by a stunning selection of wines that will be poured throughout the evening. An exhibit of Tandem Press prints will be on view.

Numerous private collectors, wine retailers, and Madison-area restaurants have donated wines to be auctioned. These include high-end selections from local and California vineyards, as well as a number of moderately priced wines and champagnes of outstanding quality. Attendees will also have the opportunity to bid on several outstanding packages, among them a trip to the Napa Valley where the lucky bidder will visit many extraordinary vineyards. For the first 100 pairs of tickets sold, recipients will receive the limited edition digital photograph, Painted Mushrooms by Madison artist Nancy Mladenoff.

TANDEM

Tandem Press is a self-supporting printmaking studio affiliated with the Department of Art in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Tandem Press is open Monday to Friday 9am-5pm, or by appointment.

Tandem Press is located at 201 South Dickinson Street, Madison, WI 53705
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Timothy Rooney—Curator
Amy Newell—Associate Curator
Andrew Rubin—Master Printer
Brace Crownover—Joseph Beiney—Associate Master Printers

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Newsletter Editor: Art House
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University Communications
All photography by Jim Wildeman unless otherwise noted.

TANDEM STAFF NEWS

Last fall, Paula Panczenko, Tim Rooney and Amy Newell traveled to New York for the International Fine Print Dealers Association Annual Print Fair. Over 6,000 visitors attended the Fair including curators, collectors, artists, former students, and alumni.

In January, Tim and Paula traveled to San Francisco for the San Francisco International Art Exposition. Over 16,000 visitors attended the Exposition, including many alumni from the University of Wisconsin. Paula and Tim were invited by Thomas Blackman & Associates, the Fair organizers, to give special talks on Tandem Press to groups from Microsoft and the Achenbach Graphic Arts Council, which supports the Prints and Drawings Department of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

In March, Brace Crownover was invited to give a lecture on Tandem Press at the Art Department at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. While he was there he visited colleagues at the Tamarind Institute. Later in the month, Tim gave a talk on Tandem Press visiting artist Sam Gilliam to students at the Evansville High School to celebrate Black History month.

Also in March, Master Printers Andrew Rubin and Bruce Crownover exhibited their work in the UW Quadrennial Faculty Show at the Elvehjem Museum of Art. Andy and Bruce were also invited to participate in an exhibit entitled 3 Aces, which was curated by Michael Connors. UW-Madison; Tim High, University of Texas, Austin; and Kimberly Arp, Louisiana State University. The show included prints by sixty-three faculty and graduate students from all three institutions. Later that month, Andy and Bruce participated in a show curated by John Hitchcock, UW-Madison that was on display at the UW-Marsfield. In addition, Associate Curator Amy Newell participated in a three-person exhibit with Andy and Bruce at the Meriter Retirement Center in Madison.

In April, curator Tim Rooney traveled to the Mark Ruschman Gallery in Indianapolis for the opening of an exhibition of Tandem Press Prints.

In May, Paula, Tim, and Amy represented Tandem Press at the Eleventh Annual Chicago International Art Exposition at Navy Pier.

Over the past six months many visitors and groups have come to tour Tandem Press. If you would like to set up a tour for groups of more than five people, please call (608) 263-3457. Appointments are not necessary for individuals.
Al Held: Painter of Synthetic Constructs

Al Held says he does not like to make public speeches. He claims he hasn’t given one for nearly twenty years. Fortunately, he agreed to do so as part of his residency at Tandem. The result was an intriguing articulation of the course of his career and his artistic philosophy.

Held identifies himself as a “painter of synthetic constructs.” At the beginning of his career in the late 1950s he was very involved in the New York-based abstract expressionist movement. He started out with what he identifies as a natural tendency to “structure the brush stroke, to have some order to it.” His initial explorations in this context have been characterized as “pigment paintings,” works constructed with impasto bands of color, done by painting wet into wet.

After his early experiments with the form, he found the need to “get rid of abstractionist ambiguities.” The resulting evolution of his work led to the creation of “cleaner and cleaner” geometric shapes, beginning with a series of letterform paintings, each with a specific identity. He found himself creating works that were reflective of what he characterized as “increasingly reductive thinking.”

He found the idea of reductivism to be “fatiguing” and decided that he needed to “rethink my whole world view.” While the geometry in his compositions remained, the impetus now was “to develop a language about multiplicity and complexity, to find a way of expressing how I feel about things that can’t be seen, tasted, heard, etc.”

The initial explorations in this regard comprised a fairly extended period of using black and white lines to create geometric forms. They were what he identifies as a mental trip in space. At this stage, his paintings began to dramatically increase in size, with one of his murals measuring 10 x 90 feet. He explained that “big paintings excite me and I found easily on that I was good at it.”

He began to use color as the mental trips continued. It proved to be “a way of coding the forms to make them more complex.” His inspiration in this regard came out of the fact that “all my life I’ve been absolutely fascinated with the Flemish painters.” His study of their works gave his paintings a more “physical” dimension, providing the opportunity to break the picture plane down into multiple sections of color which he likened to a color-coded wiring system. These are “synthetic images, artificial rather than naturalistic.”

Speaking of his creative method, Held said he feels that much of the last fifty years in art “has placed too much emphasis on process rather than a result.” For him, “painting is an evolutionary process. None of these things I put on canvas are images in my mind. Art is an act of teaching myself—something which leads you someplace rather than something which comes from you.”

He uses the language of geometry to create found images which combine random and multiple perspectives in a single composition. The result is often a dazzling, sometimes hallucinatory variation of points of view that intersect, divide, and overlap. But it is not a simple mechanistic approach. “I use perspective as another formal tool, not as a system.”

As he paints, layers of images emerge. When he is not happy with a particular image he paints over it as he searches for a new point of attack or perspective. Meanwhile, he keeps the surface of the painting free of pigment by using an industrial strength disc sander to remove the offending layers of acrylic paint. This technique ultimately provides the completed painting with a smooth, seamless integration of his generally multiple revisions that have been joined to form the final design. (A.H.)
Cameron Martin: 
Nature as pop culture

Cameron Martin's visual vocabulary primarily deals in rocks, trees and water. These elements form the basis of the images he created during his January 2003 visit to Tandem Press. They are derived in part from the landscape he experienced while growing up in Seattle.

"I was surrounded by the imagery of nature," Martin noted. "There was an element of grandeur, of the sublime. It was something you couldn't overcome, something which contained awe, beauty, and terror."

He carried these impressions with him as he moved east at the beginning of the 1990s to study at Brown University. He progressively transformed his perspective, adopting "a pop cultural way of looking at nature." The pop culture connection was an integral part of his growing up in Seattle during the 1980s when he was a competitive skateboarder and a member of a rock band.

His focus on art came when he started painting in the mid-1990s when he settled in Brooklyn, New York, and was chosen to participate in the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program. At this point, the source for his paintings was not the nature of the Seattle environment but the photographs of Carleton Watkins, Edward Weston, and Roger Fenton. He also borrowed images from popular advertisements promoting products such as beer, clothing, tobacco, timepieces, and movies, and took his own photographs to provide an additional source of reference. Martin later augmented his point of view during the summer of 2001 when he was awarded a residency at Monet's home and studio in Giverney, France. On that occasion he concentrated not on Monet's gardens, but on his collection of Japanese ukiyo-e prints.

The influence of the prints caused him to begin "taking things out of pictures to see how reductive I could be." He wanted to eliminate the notion of the picture being entirely constructed. This involved what he describes as a continual push and pull between abstraction and representation. He wanted to make a copy of something for which there was no original. In the process, he allowed his pictures to get "weird and weird-er" in terms of the internal space of the composition. He consequently found himself "creating images of places you possibly have never been."

To accentuate his reductive approach, Martin uses different kinds of paint to achieve the distinctive effects that characterize his images. The paints include: oil, alkyd, acrylic, and interference paint used in automobile detailing work. The latter has a metallic sheen. When it is applied in layers it becomes opaque and creates a luminous surface that lends a sense of volume to what is being portrayed. The rocks become lumpy masses. The trunks and limbs of trees are skeleton bones reaching for the sky, and the surface of the water reads like a shimmering film over a fathomless deep.

Throughout his creative explorations, Cameron Martin sees his function as developing a quiver from which he can extract those arrows of ideas and technique that are appropriate to the subject at hand.

Last year, Steadfast, Martin's solo exhibition at the Artemis Greenberg Van Doren Gallery in New York attracted considerable favorable response. In the catalog for the exhibit, writer Dike Blair summarized the nature and dimension of Martin's work to this point. He observed that Cameron Martin "revitalizes the landscape genre and makes a convincing argument for a highly sophisticated, attractive, formalist painting that engages both emotion and the intellect." (A.H.)
Cameron Martin
*Location Tone*
Lithograph
24 x 29 inches
Edition 30

Cameron Martin
*Dragnalus*
Lithograph
29 x 36 inches
Edition 30
This Garden Was Enchanted by Judy Pfaff

We have been inspired and stimulated by observing the creative process of Judy Pfaff since she first came to Tandem Press in 1996. Last year she undertook one of her most complex prints entitled *This Garden Was Enchanted*. This dramatic and luscious landscape has a batik-like quality, with a rich palette of colors created with hand-applied dyes and oil paints.

To create this work, Master Printer Bruce Crownover traveled to Pfaff’s home in upstate New York to assist her with this extraordinary print.

To make the print, the artist took eleven sheets of paper each measuring 47 x 91 1/4 inches. Each sheet of paper was folded into an accordion fold. It was then dyed with a series of very light colors, including very pale yellows, ochres, and greens. Both dry pigments and wet pigments were applied to the wet paper. In some instances the pigment was applied through stencils. This method enabled the artist to get varying levels of saturation, creating a very organic affect.

The prints at this stage of the creation were folded and ironed, enabling the colors to be transferred to other areas of the paper. A horizon line was also created across the center of the image. The artist then painted with oil stick through the stencils. Some paint crept through to the reverse side of the stencil. This created a residue—or ghost—which added to the overall texture and layering in the piece. While some of the stencils were abstract, many contained imagery of plants, including vines, leaves, and trees.
The prints then came back to Tandem Press where they were adhered to another sheet of paper. In the upper left hand corner, kodaliths depicting French formal gardens were attached. These kodaliths were colored with a golden dye and were hand-painted with acrylic on the reverse side of the image so that the colors shine through, creating a glowing effect.

This print is part of a series of prints Pfaff created last spring where abstraction and spatial explorations are apparent. Some titles from that series were taken from what is considered to be one of Jorge Luis Borges's most important fiction works, and has intrigued Judy Pfaff for some time. The Argentinean's book, entitled: *The Garden of the Forking Paths*, was published in 1941. According to the Web site ModernWord.com, "it contains eight stories that fully explore the labyrinthine nature of reality and the impact of language on literature, philosophy, metaphysics, and theology. Many of them are concerned with imaginary books penned by fantastical authors, and more than a few engage in flights of symbolism and meta-reality." Judy Pfaff is particularly intrigued by his explorations into abstraction and "things that don't really exist, but at the same time, do exist." She is fascinated by the ambiguity, the layering, and the inventions that take place, which is what she has explored in her own creations.

Judy Pfaff also designed the frame, which is integral to the print. It is hand painted with lush colors that echo the imagery in the print. (P.P.)

*This Garden was Enchanted*
2002
Acrylic dye, encaustic, stencil, Kodalith
Varied Edition 9
47 x 91 ¼ inches
Tandem Press Publishes a Catalogue on the Prints of Suzanne Caporael

Tandem Press will publish a full-color catalogue this May entitled *The Prints of Suzanne Caporael*. Suzanne Caporael first came to Tandem Press in 1992. It has been a privilege to observe the development of her work over the past several years. Her work is in many prestigious collections and major museums throughout the United States, including the Art Institute of Chicago; The Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; the High Museum, Atlanta; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

In addition to Caporael's beautiful images, Ed Leffingwell has written a very insightful essay where he charts the artistic journey Caporael has taken during this period. Leffingwell is a New York-based writer, curator, and critic, who has written extensively on contemporary art. He is currently working on *The Keeper's Memory*, a social history about the formation of a Brazilian art collection.

In 2002, Caporael began a new body of paintings and prints called *Littoral Drift*, based on estuaries around the world. As she has done in the past with her work on the periodic table of elements and ice, Caporael investigated the physical world and transformed the intellectual and methodical data she collected into sublime and resonate images. These new prints, including the *Hudson River Estuary* and the *Humber River Estuary*, were initially inspired by *The Shallow Water Dictionary* by Professor John Stilgoe of Harvard University, though Suzanne's research into estuarine science and water forms continues as of this writing.

At Tandem Press, we have had the opportunity to observe Suzanne Caporael's explorations firsthand, and we are most grateful to her for returning to Tandem on a regular basis. I would like to thank the members of the Anonymous Committee and the Trustees of the Brittingham Fund for sponsoring Suzanne Caporael's many visits to Tandem Press. I would also like to thank them for their most generous funding of this catalogue.

Copies of the catalogue, which sell for $30, can be obtained from Tandem Press. (P.P.)

*Hudson River Estuary, 2001*
Etching, 28 1/2 x 42 1/2 inches, Ed. 30
The Weekly Volunteers

I joined the staff of Tandem Press in the fall of 1989, and when I am asked what is the best part of my job, I immediately reply that I learn something new every day and that I have gotten to know the most wonderful volunteers through my position at the Press.

Tandem is a place where the creative juices are constantly flowing from the artists who are in residence to the staff, the graduate students, the volunteers, and the advisory board and committee members. There are only six full-time staff at Tandem Press but we are able to undertake many projects and travel extensively because of our "weekly volunteers."

The volunteers are at the center of the organization. In subsequent issues of the newsletter I will describe the work of our board of advisors, our wine auction committee members, and our students, but in this issue I am focusing on the "weekly volunteers."

Ten years ago Eric Rude retired as associate dean of the Graduate School and became a volunteer at Tandem Press. He then encouraged his wife, Nancy, to volunteer. They can be found at Tandem every Thursday, where they carry out a myriad of tasks—from stuffing envelopes to labeling slides. They are both members of the Wine Auction Committee and volunteer many hours towards the Auction's success. They also provide the staff and students with treats every week; so Thursday is a very popular day to work at Tandem Press.

On Tuesdays, Ann Dailey is our main volunteer. She is a computer whiz, and provides major back up to our curators who manage the extensive print inventory. I must confess that on a beautiful summer day I am humbled by Ann's commitment to Tandem, knowing that she is an avid golfer and that she forges her avocation to spend every Tuesday working with us.

Art Hove, who was a special assistant to the chancellor at the UW Madison, is the editor of this newsletter. It would be fair to say that this newsletter could not happen without his considerable work on each issue. Art has also had a distinguished career as an author. He has written The University of Wisconsin: A Pictorial History and co-authored Progressive Printmakers: Wisconsin Artists and the Print Renaissance with the artist Warrington Colescott.

What would we do without an art historian in residence? Professor Emeritus Frank Horlbeck, a medievalist, works with us on an occasional basis. When he is not working with us, he is travelling extensively around the globe adding to his immense art history slide collection. Frank has worked on the most mundane tasks that every organization must undertake, and has also assisted us with our publications.

These volunteers are amazing and we can never thank them enough for their commitment to the goals of Tandem Press.

Paula Panczenko
Spring 2003

Art Hove, our newsletter editor

Ann Dailey, our computer whiz!

Nancy Rude (left), Frank Horlbeck (center), and Eric Rude (right) work on a huge mail-out.
Press Notes

Tandem Press produces top-quality prints by nationally recognized artists, and was created to foster research, collaboration, experimentation, and innovation in the field of printmaking.


Tandem Press Programs

- Lectures and Demonstrations in conjunction with Visiting Artists
- Faculty Visiting Artist Program
- Courses in Printmaking
- Student Master Printer Program
- Tours and Open Houses
- Exhibitions
- The William Weege Endowment Fund
- Annual Tandem Press Wine Auction
- Subscription Program
- The Joseph Wilfer Visiting Artist Endowment Fund

This newsletter is made possible with a grant from the Anonymous Fund and the Brittingham Fund

Cottingham, Robert
Rolling Stock Series No. 7 for Jim, 1991
Collograph, etching, and monoprint on Arches Cover white paper
83 x 37 3/4 inches, Edition of 40
Jaune Quick To See Smith
Alien Nation, 1996, Lithograph, collograph
41 1/4 x 29 1/4 inches, Edition 16

Jaune Quick To See Smith
All American, 1996, Lithograph, woodcut
29 1/2 x 29 inches, Edition 30

Jaune Quick To See Smith
Our Communities, 1996, Lithograph, collograph
41 1/2 x 29 1/4 inches, Edition 16

Jaune Quick To See Smith
Not Out of the Woods, 1996, Lithograph, collograph
60 x 39 1/2 inches, Edition 10
**Spring Showcase**

David Nash  
*Charred Cross Egg, 1995, Woodblock*  
43 x 30", Edition 30

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**Subscription Program**

Tandem Press depends for its support on a variety of sources, both individual and corporate. To that end, Tandem offers an attractive subscription program. For a fee of $12,000, subscribers will have the opportunity to select a unique portfolio of prints with a retail value of $20,000 from editions published by the Press. Subscribers also will receive the following:

- complete descriptions and full documentation for all print selections and periodic listings (including price increases) for all editions;
- opportunities to participate in organized and informal activities at the Press, including meetings with guest artists and visiting dealers and attendance at special events and programs;
- priority notification of print publications;
- eligibility to choose selected monoprints at specially reduced prices; and
- an opportunity to renew at the end of the subscription.

If you want to discuss the program in greater detail or have questions regarding the program, please contact Paula McCarthy Panczenko, Executive Director, Tandem Press, who can be reached by email at panczenko@education.wisc.edu, by phone at (608) 263-3437 or by mail at 201 South Dickinson Street, Madison, WI 53703.

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**Bosman, Richard**  
*Night Lace, 1992*  
Carbon paint etching on Arches Cover white paper  
26 3/4 by 19", Edition of 40

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**Art Spiegelman**  
*Crosstoads, 1997, Lithograph*  
30 1/2 x 23, Edition 100