

Panel Proposal: Superstitions and Rituals in the Print Shop

Abstract: Printmaking, a medium that utilizes rational knowledge and a concrete understanding of scientific processes and chemistry, seems like a rather unlikely field for superstitions to abound. However, it is surprising to note that this is generally not the case, as the field is chock full of ritualistic behaviors, superstitions, and “good luck” objects. Printmakers, much like athletes, tend to be a very superstitious lot. This may be due to the fact that the act of printmaking with its emphasis on process, is performance based, much like athleticism. The types of superstitious behavior and ritual associated with printmaking are wide ranging, from the ritualistic, seemingly irrational behaviors of individual printmakers to the creation of objects, such as print altars and deities, set up in different shops throughout the country.

This light-hearted panel will take a closer look at some of these superstitious behaviors associated with printmaking, examine the factors that cause superstitious behaviors to arise, and discuss the value that superstition and ritual holds for the success of the printmaker.