
PROPOSAL

Thank you for considering this proposal for your upcoming panel discussion, *Finding Printmaking's Place in an Interdisciplinary and Post-Digital World* in conjunction with the 2014 Mid America Print Council conference. My illustrated talk (1) explains how using computer-numerically-controlled technology as a professional artist led me to bring new technologies to the classroom and (2) showcases student projects that incorporate post-digital approaches to printmaking. In addition to CNC routing, techniques such as waterjet, vinyl and laser cutting complement and expand upon the traditional approaches that I teach in my printmaking courses, from beginning-level to advanced undergraduate and graduate.

The first section of my talk explains my interdisciplinary approach to research, beginning with my professional collaborations with environmentalists and biologists. These partnerships enabled me to take international field expeditions and study artifacts at natural history collections, developing a repository of drawings and photographs that are the source material for my work. By alternating between traditional, industrial, commercial and digital processes in the studio, I create installation components and matrices for intaglio, relief and letterpress printing. This multi-technology approach allows me to transform diverse source materials into distinctive meditations on the natural environment.

This collaborative, multi-technology approach to research has enabled me to work on several new initiatives in the classroom, including a letterpress restoration project that incorporated a CNC router. In order to bring the presses back to working condition my students collaborated with people in several disciplines, including metalsmithing, sculpture and physics. Once the presses were restored we used a CNC router to carve matrices that we could print. The success of the project led to an annual exchange among my relief printmaking students, and 2013 marks our third annual publication. In addition, two students from the project have since founded their own letterpress businesses.

I have since incorporated laser-cutting to my printmaking courses and internship program at P.R.I.N.T, the professional shop at the University of North Texas. One current highlight includes the *Dear Denton* portfolio, an exchange project among my advanced- and graduate-level printmaking students in which we used a laser cutter. A second example includes our work for Gamblin Artist's Colors in which we tested a new line of relief inks for production. Using a laser cutter we created stencils that could be applied to a variety of printing surfaces — plexi, wood, paper, etc, enabling us to test a variety of materials and approaches in a limited period of time.

Having used post-digital processes and interdisciplinary approaches both in my research and classroom for the past four years, I am eager to share my experiences, including successful projects and lessons I learned along the way. Along with this summary I am submitting sample images and my resume. Thank you for this opportunity and for your consideration.

2014 MAPC Conference

Panel Presentation: Post Digital

Chair: Jonathan McFadden

Panelist:

Erik Waterkotte, Assistant Professor of Print Media, Department of Art and Art History, University of North Carolina Charlotte

Abstract for Erik Waterkotte's Panel Contribution

Working Title:

“Cyborgs and the Thresholds of Digital Processes”

-From large format, inkjet printers with water-fast, archival pigments, to laser cutters, to 3-D printers, Digital Processes continue to be developed and incorporated as exciting, progressive tools in the Studio Arts. The potential and variety that these digital tools offer an artist is clear and offers “real-world,” vocational applications in Studio Arts Pedagogy. However, as we approach a Post Digital Age I believe that an investigation of these digital tools and their limitations in terms of time and application can illuminate the significance of the hand-made, the traditional, and the analog. For my part of this panel presentation I will discuss the thresholds of digital processes in the Studio Arts by and how working and teaching with them can reveal the significance of the Traditional and the Analog. By comparing and contrasting Digital and Analog applications I hope to show that the interstices between these processes in the Studio Arts is analogous to a larger cultural phenomenon of the Cyborg (that is, being intentionally part digital and part analog). Thus, I will begin presenting this Digital/Analog comparison in Popular Culture referencing the concepts of the Cyborg and Steampunk. From there I will present the Digital/Analog comparison in Folklore and Postmodern Theory, as well as Fine Art and Commercial Printmaking, all while providing relevant visual examples of this in the work of historical and contemporary artists.

I am an Assistant Professor of painting and drawing at Wayne State University. Since around 2006, I have been using a vinyl cutter and vinyl installation work to conflate painting with the gallery wall.

Working in vinyl has allowed me to increase the scale of my work. In these vinyl pieces, that are high contrast designs, the wall plays an active role in the piece because of the perceptual shifts between positive and negative imagery. Working in vinyl is allows me to explore unusual placement of my work such as on the floor or the windows of a gallery. The increased scale gives more presence to the work even if the pieces are transitory, like theater. The work exists first as a digital image which can be sent to a cutter rather than a printer. The vinyl is then weeded (the negative space pulled off) and the image is translated into a direct vinyl-on-wall installation. The pieces use a peel and stick technology similar to the word text used in museum displays that allows them to be easily shipped in a few pieces and assembled on the wall of the destination. The size of this image is variable. Each realization of the piece is unique to each venue. Each installation is similar to an artist's proof from a digital "plate", however, they do not survive de-installation.

It is the digital "plate" and serial "edition" aspect of working with vinyl that is increasingly being embraced by the printmaking community. My vinyl installation pieces have been included in the following specifically printmaking competitions: *Boston Printmaker's 2013 North American Print Biennial*, *The 34th Bradley International Print and Drawing Exhibition* in Iowa, and *Pushing Print* in Margate England juried by Gill Saunders, Senior Curator of prints at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

I have plans, and hope to execute them as soon as this summer, that will add some 3-D printing into the mix.

I developed a studio course at Wayne State titled Introduction to Alternative Painting Media, in response to my students questioning about materials and techniques that they were seeing being used in galleries. It is meant to cover acrylic paint and encaustic but also covers mixed media, and under that umbrella, I have introduced a little bit of vinyl to the class. The students are interested in learning about new possibilities, but I lack the access to equipment to do more than the briefest of introductions to what you call “post-digital” processes.

I've attached a pdf of images of my work and a CV to this email. I look forward to hearing from you if you think I'm a good fit for your session.

Best

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