

Jen Coon

Printmaker

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Artist Biography

Jen Coon creates original prints and works on paper using traditional (hand-pulled) printmaking methods and often combining Eastern and Western (water- and oil-based) processes. She brings an open-ended, exploratory approach and a strong command of inking and layering to her work. She has studied moku-hanga, a water-based technique, with master Keiji Shinohara. Jen's work showcases tonal subtlety, responsiveness to materials, and curiosity about the ways in which prints can reflect human presence, action, and residual notations.

Having grown up in rural Western New York State, surrounded by small farms, lakes, gorges, and rolling hills, Jen's keen appreciation of nature comes through in her work as organic shapes, colors, and relationships. The environments she grew up in fostered an awareness of farm and homesteading tools, with their beautifully distressed surfaces of metal and wood. Her experimental use of mark-making implements (tire, crochet, pastry blender), and her appropriation of wood from used furniture (table, crib, clock), can be understood as references to domestic cohabitation and haptic (touch-related) experience.

Jen studied at the School of Fine Arts at State University of New York at Purchase, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in painting and drawing. Her experiences at art school established lifelong work habits of meditative attention, self-reflection, and aesthetic rigor. She also credits Purchase with fostering an understanding of the expansive potential in self-expression by questioning identity norms - at a time, during the '80's, when manifestations of queerness were stigmatized and marginalized.

She moved to Raleigh in 1987, where instruction at UNC-Chapel Hill, Penland School of Craft, and self-education nudged her imagery away from the figure and toward

abstraction and conceptual interests. She is always exploring the intersection of painting and printmaking and playfully welcomes the unexpected in her work. As a member of the NC Printmakers Guild from 2001 to 2009, she exhibited at colleges and art venues across the state, and recently has shown her work at the Village District Library and the North Carolina Museum of Art. She holds a studio at Blam! on Kinsey St. and makes her home in Raleigh with her partner, Sophie, and their two cats.

Artist Statement

I am constantly challenged to find meaning in the act of inking a surface to generate marks and images; this may simply be a sensuous, graphic conjuring of 3-dimensional surface (a tabletop marked with fingerprints or cup rings -- and whatever emotional associations that may carry) or a more complex evocation of identity through pattern, language, family photographs, or articles of clothing.

I want to find out what can happen in this moment of recording a surface, and what idea, presence or action can be implied or postulated. The forces of preparing and printing an object bring ideas in and of themselves. These forces can also cause physical change, which creates the possibility of a documentary approach. I keep the process methodical enough to support the opposing goals of repetition and exploration, which typically results in serial, related monoprints. I find the work to be an absorbing feedback loop that demands not only skill and ingenuity, but courage and poetic imagination.

Online portfolio available at: jencooprints.com