From Lace to Chains. The Making of a Print

Edited by Alison G. Stewart
An Exhibition at Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, Nebraska
January 18—March 17, 2019

How have printed works of art changed over time? Do printmakers today work with the same materials and techniques that printmakers used centuries ago? And does printmaking involve the same motivations, concerns, or methods of distribution today as it did in the past?

These were questions asked by University of Nebraska–Lincoln students in a history of prints class in the School of Art, Art History & Design taught by Hixson-Lied Professor of Art History Alison Stewart during fall semester 2018.

For this curatorial project, students selected one set of old master prints (pre-1850) and one modern (post-1850) print from Sheldon’s collection, each created with different techniques and for different purposes but with a shared focus on fashion trends of the day. Thinking about the cultural significance of dress and style—be it the prominence of lace in the seventeenth century prints by Wenceslaus Hollar or the gold chain that wraps around the figure in Rozeal’s contemporary print—helped students situate these prints within the contexts of their production and reception.

The work El Oso Me Preguntó (2016), an archival pigment print with gold leaf overlay by the American artist Rozeal, is compared with four prints etched and engraved by Wenceslas Hollar around 1640 and published in Ornatus Muliebris Anglicanus, or, The Several Habits of English Women, from the Nobilitie to the Contry Woman, as they are in these times.

Student curators
Nadria Beale
Stella Bernadt
Mariah Livingston
Megan Loughran
Hannah Maakestad
Ashley Owens
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Natalie Platel
Ali Syafie
Emma Vinchur

The role of Sheldon as an academic art museum is to foster the acts of thinking, learning, experiencing, and creating. We aim to deliver on this by engaging all aspects of academic life on campus, from research to curriculum to scholarship to co-curricular engagement to the student experience.

Zea Books
Lincoln, Nebraska

doi: 10.32873/unl.dc.zea.1072
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Academic Programs at Sheldon Museum of Art
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Rozeal
born Washington, DC 1966

El Oso Me Preguntó

Archival pigment print with gold leaf overlay, 2016
40 x 30 inches
University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 2017–2018 Sheldon Student Advisory Board
acquisition purchased with funds from the Olga N. Sheldon Acquisition Trust, U-6768.2018
RECENT ACQUISITION
From

*Ornatus Muliebris Anglicanus, or, The Several Habits of English Women, from the Nobilitie to the Contry [sic] Woman, as they are in these times*

clockwise from upper left:
Plate 13
Plate 16
Plate 4
Plate 24
Etching and engraving, 1639–1640
5.25 x 2.75 inches each
Iona Rozeal Brown, known as simply Rozeal, is an African-American painter and hip-hop DJ. When Rozeal was young, her mother took her to see kabuki, traditional Japanese theater where both male and female roles are played by men.

Later Rozeal encountered ganguro, a fashion trend of the 1990s among young Japanese women who defied traditional Japanese beauty standards by tanning their skin to a darker tone, wearing brightly colored makeup, dying their hair, and adopting hip-hop fashion.

By mixing kabuki and ganguro, as well as common DJ practices of sampling and assuming a stage persona, Rozeal explores how identity is performed.

Rozeal uses the term “Afro-Asiatic allegory” to describe her merging of Japanese and African-American hip-hop cultural elements.
Wenceslaus (Wenzel) Hollar (1607–1677), a native of Prague (now Czech Republic), trained as draughtsman and etcher with prominent printmakers in Germany and worked for much of his life in England.

Hollar was a prolific printmaker who made both independent prints and book illustrations of a wide range of subjects, including maps, religious scenes, portraits, and natural history, among others. He is known as a chronicler of his times.

Hollar worked during the Baroque period, a transitional time for how art was made and sold. An emerging open art market and increasing demand for secular subjects provided Hollar and his contemporaries with multiple ways to make a living in the seventeenth century.

One of these ways was to work on contract for a wealthy patron, perhaps even in exchange for living arrangements. Hollar’s primary patron was art collector Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel.


**PROCESS**

Rozeal’s archival pigment print likely began as a painting that was then digitally reproduced. The dripping effects at the top of the print, shown below, suggest that the original work was painted, reflecting the artist’s training as a painter.

To create the print, the painting would have been photographed and then converted to digital media. The digital file would then be printed with an inkjet printer that uses archival pigments.

As a transfer process, prints can be made in multiple iterations. *El Oso Me Preguntó* was printed in two editions of different sizes. Sheldon’s print is number six of an edition of eight prints. The other edition, of twenty-five, was scaled to and printed on a smaller paper size.

Limited edition printmaking is a modern practice (from the twentieth century onward) that predetermines the number of prints produced, contrasting with the pre-modern practice of print-on-demand.
Hollar used the techniques of etching and engraving for these prints. Both techniques involve the transfer of a design onto a metal plate that produces a printed image in reverse. The plate was printed repeatedly, according to demand, onto paper and hung to dry, as shown below.

Etching is a chemical process that uses acid to “bite” into a metal plate while engraving is a manual process whereby grooves are physically cut into a metal plate with a graver or burin instrument held in the hand.

Abraham Bosse (1604-c. 1676), Pouring acid to etch a plate on a slanted board (On the Manner of Etching with Acid and with a Burin, and of Dark-Manner Engraving), etching, drypoint, and roulette, 1645. Rhode Island School of Design, Gift of Mrs. Herbert N. Straus, 51.004
What makes Rozeal’s print more distinctive than a typical editioned print is that gold leaf has been applied to emphasize the chain that wraps across the female figure’s forehead and torso, as well as her front teeth.

It is unknown whether Rozeal herself or Adamson Editions, the fine art printmaker and publisher of this work, applied the gold leaf directly on the print.
A draughtsman at heart, Hollar excelled at etching because it was closest to drawing. Etchings generally produce even and sometimes sketchy lines that can produce a range of textures, as seen in the petticoat, the muff’s individual strands of fur, and lace accents in Plate 13 (on p. 6).

Engraving produces crisper lines that taper and swell. Engravers and etchers use hatching and cross-hatching to achieve tonal variation. Can you find engraved lines in Hollar’s prints? The workshop illustrated below shows a copper plate engraved and printed (at lower right and at left).

Hollar’s plates could be printed repeatedly to meet the demand for his prints, which must have been great because the plates were published with revisions nine times over the next century.

At some point in time (perhaps the eighteenth century), some of Hollar’s prints—likely these four owned by Sheldon—were cut down to their borders and placed in private collections, subsequently moving into museum collections. They were thereby removed from their original series or book context and seen as individual works of art.

Jan van der Straet, called Stradanus (1593-1605), Invention of Copper Engraving [Sculptura in Aes], plate 19 from New Inventions of Modern Times [Nova Reperta], engraving, c. 1600. Metropolitan Museum of Art. The bench on the right shows engraving tools.
**SOURCES**

The overall composition, decorative patterning, and flat coloring of this print by Rozeal draw on the aesthetics of *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints of the Edo period in Japan (from the seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth century).

Rozeal’s single female figure artfully posed, adorned with various cultural markers, and placed close to the picture plane is also typical of the *ukiyo-e* tradition, which focused on common people and scenes of pleasure.

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**Rozeal**  
*Divine selektah ... big up* [after Yoshitoshi’s Moon of the Filial Son], 2006. The University of Arizona Museum of Art

**Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839–92)**  
*One Hundred Aspects of the Moon: Moon of the Filial Son - Ono no Takamura*, 1889. National Diet Library, Japan
Costume books arose as a type of visual imagery in the sixteenth century and continued in popularity during the seventeenth century.

Left:
Hans Weigel, woodcut, 1577, from Habitus Praecipuorum Populorum ... das ist Trachtenbuch
British Museum

Right:
Jacques Callot, La Noblesse series, plate 8, etching, c. 1620
British Museum

Left:
Sebastiaan Vranckx, Germanicus Habitus, from Variarum Gentium Ornatus series, engraving, c.1600-1634
British Museum

Right:
Jan van de Velde II, Costumes, plate 8. etching, c. 1615-1641
British Museum
The late eighteenth-century print by Kitagawa Utamaro, *Fancy-free Type*, is but one example of *ukiyo-e* that likely inspired Rozeal.

The serpent tattoo, seen prominently on the upper left arm of Rozeal’s female subject, also references Japanese culture. At different historical moments, tattoos in Japan, called *irezumi*, symbolized warriors and strength, one’s social status, and criminality.
The four works by Hollar on display are part of a book or series of twenty-six costume prints first published in 1640 in London with the title: *Ornatus Muliebris Anglicanus*, or, *The Several Habits of English Women, from the Nobilitie to the Contry [sic] Woman, as they are in these times*.

Sheldon owns six prints from this publication. The multiple dates, 1639 and 1640, suggest that they may have been first issued independent of the book or series.

The four prints exhibited here offer views of English women dressed more or less extravagantly in different fabrics, lace, bows, pearls, fur, and other accessories indicative of their social status.

In Plate 13 Hollar captures the shiny, smooth fabric of this figure’s gown, possibly made of luxury silk, and the contrasting rough texture of the dark fur muff. The muff and decorated underskirt provided insulation for a gentlewoman’s public excursions outdoors. The strange mask concealing her face was a common fashion accessory that enabled women to move about London without being recognized on its bustling urban streets.
In place of the Japanese conventions of beauty and class markers—translucent pale skin, elaborately coiffed hair with ornamental pens and comb, and a brocade kimono—Rozeal substitutes the accessories and personal styling that ganguro youth associated with American hip-hop: a tanned complexion, brightly colored makeup, strands of pearls and oversized gold jewelry, a fur wrap, and an Afro-puff hairstyle.

The f-holes on the female figure’s face resembling those on stringed instruments may be Rozeal referencing her interest in music, thereby inserting her own markers of identity.
By contrast, the woman in Plate 24 is more modestly clothed, her apron and gown likely fashioned from cotton, linen, or wool, and her lace adornments are less flashy. In place of the fur muff, she wears simple gloves, their light color suggesting that she did not work with her hands. Here, Hollar may be capturing the impact of contemporary sumptuary laws that aimed to regulate the consumption of luxury goods and uphold strict social codes.
The small cartoon figure in the text bubble at the center right of the composition is the main character from a 1952 animated short, *Rock-a-Bye Bear*. Rock-a-Bye Bear is ultrasensitive to noise. Repeatedly and comically awakened from hibernation, this bear screams at the other characters to remain silent.

The translation of Rozeal’s Spanish title is “the bear asked me,” which begs the question: what is the bear asking the female figure?

Given that the cartoon character asks all those around him to be quiet, could this be a statement on suppressing one’s identity, or more broadly pointing to the challenges of existing between cultures in an increasingly connected world?
Plate 4 has been linked to a portrait painted by Van Dyck around 1637, which offers a better sense of the materials in which English gentlewomen clothed themselves.

Whether Hollar intended his figures to be recognizable or generic is debated. More certainly, he is recording the costume of the day.