

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

Summer 2001

Review of *Lines of Site: Ideas, Forms, and Materialities* Curated by Desmond Rochfort with Ryoji Ikeda

Gary Olson

Alberta College of Art & Design

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Olson, Gary, "Review of *Lines of Site: Ideas, Forms, and Materialities* Curated by Desmond Rochfort with Ryoji Ikeda" (2001). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 2248.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2248>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

ton: University of Alberta Press, 1999. 132 pp. Illustrations, biographies. \$24.95 paper.

Desmond Rochfort has documented an extraordinary exhibition of printed artworks created in the Canadian West over the past twenty-five years. His perceptive essay in the catalogue, "Printmaking, Technologies and the Culture of the Reproducible Image," discusses the relationship between the tradition of the hand-pulled, limited edition prints of the past five hundred years and the novel technologies of the pixilated, global "Image Culture" employing "multi-reproducible digital imaging" computers.

The exhibition contains the work of a cross section of contemporary artists: twenty-five graduate students, two printmaking technicians, and three printmaking faculty from the University of Alberta. The wide variety of prints, so beautifully documented here, communicate an intense motivation to explore, to examine, to probe, to express the materials and processes of printmaking by combining the mechanical means of production, using photographic processes and computer imaging, with the physical manipulation of materials. Photography and drawing exist in symbiosis with printmaking at the University in Alberta. The formal issues of size and scale in printmaking, foreign to the discipline in the past, are given center stage in these prints. Technical processes are mixed as a matter of course, but craftsmanship is never sacrificed.

The catalogue's second essay, Lawrence Smith's "Printmaking in Three Continents: A Question of Horizons," poses serious questions regarding the relevancy of printmaking as an art form. These the reader can begin answering immediately by examining the exhibition's prints reproduced in the volume. The prejudice printmaking is subject to in the art world is one of the key issues Smith addresses.

The print artists working at the University of Alberta printmaking studios since the early 1970s are led by Walter Jule, who studied with Glen Alps at the University of Washington in Seattle. Together with Lyndal Osborne,

Lines of Site: Ideas, Forms, and Materialities. An Exhibition of Print Works. Curated by Desmond Rochfort with Ryoji Ikeda. Edmon-

a student of Jack Damier at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and Elizabeth Ingram from Toronto, Jule has established an educational and research center of international importance. The level of accomplishment within the printmaking field and the education of printmakers at the University of Alberta are unparalleled. As print artists working in Edmonton have continually pushed boundaries in contemporary printmaking and challenged printmaking traditions, they have enhanced the potential of the medium itself. These significant contributions have gone largely unnoticed in the United States, although widely acknowledged in Europe and Japan.

The overwhelming landscape and immense space of the western Plains directly influence the prints produced in Edmonton, as Smith suggests in his essay. This influence can readily be observed in the use of materials and the formal organization of the artwork: flat, planar compositions within two-dimensional fields; forms and shapes isolated within open spaces; minimal color schemes in specific keys; increased size and scale as the artists relate to their environment; and natural forms employed as catalysts for printmaking processes and printed images.

Contemporary sociological issues do not escape the attention of artists producing prints at the University of Alberta. Marna Bunnell's award-winning offset lithographs, for example, function as posters in a series of four prints with a provocative, socially-driven message regarding the dangers of prostitution, a theme with historical precedence. Her print entitled *The Average Age of Entry into Prostitution is 15* presents a dramatic, close-up view of the underside of human feet suspended in air, conveying an unforgettable feeling of vulnerability and despair.

The intricate linear engravings displaying the painstaking hand-drawing of Koichi Yamamoto compete favorably with the sixteenth-century pioneer of printmaking Albrecht Dürer in precision—there are no unnecessary lines—and craftsmanship, while sur-

passing Dürer in format size and sheer scale of image (six panels measuring 120 x 366 cm). In other prints, photography is used in a “painterly” fashion, such as Karen Dugas's “brush-strokes” of light and dark contrasts dominating the composition, or the opposite in Liz Ingram's etched lines of the human body played against photo-etched images of natural phenomena in a textural tour de force.

Desmond Rochfort has produced a book with thought-provoking essays, high quality reproductions, and eye-catching design from an outstanding exhibition that makes a profound statement about misunderstood forms of art.

GARY OLSON
Printmaking Program
Alberta College of Art & Design