

Re-imagining the Classic Print—From Digital to Handmade

Wendy Currie + Silvi Glattauer + Karena Goldfinch + Kara Rasmanis

Wendy Currie, Silvi Glattauer, Karena Goldfinch and Kara Rasmanis are Victorian artists who love the unique qualities of prints made by hand using alternative processes. Of course, some of the 'alternative' processes they use were standard processes not all that long ago.

Re-imagining the Classic Print—From Digital to Handmade was first shown in Melbourne, at St Kilda's Obscura Gallery, in 2009. This HUW DAVIES GALLERY showing is their first exhibition together in Canberra and our most comprehensive exhibition of alternative process work.

The four artists have diverse areas of interest. While many of the processes they use have roots in the nineteenth century, the Cyanotype for example dates from the 1840s, they have adapted some digital processes to their ends. The photogravure prints of Silvi Glattauer and Kara Rasmanis combine 19th century photographic processes with 21st century technological innovations, bringing digital media and photosensitive photopolymer printing plates together with traditional etching techniques. One result of this marriage of the old and the new is a technique that—because it avoids the hazardous acids, asphalt and copper of the traditional photogravure process—helps create a safer working process for artists.

From the mid 1880s the Pictorialists strived to create images that were more than straight photographs. They believed fine art photographers needed to create more painterly images, and their images were carefully crafted impressions using filters or lens coatings, or heavily manipulated darkroom prints. Their dreamy interpretations of subjects paralleled the Impressionists and genre painters whose work was fashionable at the time. Many artists working with alternative processes today seem to share these beliefs and their hand crafted images have a strong affinity with images created more than a century ago. One difference is in their subject choices: the found and discarded objects in Silvi Glattauer and Karena Goldfinch's work would not have found a place in the Pictorialist catalogue.

The images in *Re-imagining the Classic Print—From Digital to Handmade* are beautifully made, carefully composed, full of mood and nuance. They could encourage more widespread take up of alternative processes in Canberra. To that end we are delighted that Wendy Currie has agreed to present two one-day workshops at PhotoAccess in conjunction with the exhibition. The first is a Cyanotype workshop on 7 May and the second, on the Van Dyke process, is on 8 May. Bookings can be made online at www.photoaccess.org.au

PhotoAccess is pleased to present *Re-imagining the Classic Print—From Digital to Handmade* in the HUW DAVIES GALLERY at the Manuka Arts Centre.

David Chalker



Wendy Currie, *La place du marché Buis Les Baronnies*



Silvi Glattauer, *Silent*



Karena Goldfinch, *The snow diptych*



Kara Rasmanis, *Seed Wings*

Artist statements and notes on processes

Wendy Currie

I specialise in nineteenth century photographic print processes, from the graphic impact of cyanotype to the subtler tones of Van Dyke and gum bichromate. At times I look for the best of both worlds by overlaying one process on another. My subject matter ranges widely, from the heath lands and forests of Australia to streets that are quintessentially European. The link is my delight in the photograph's capacity to emphasise distinctive form, whether man-made or naturally occurring.

Cyanotype is one of the oldest photographic printing processes, invented by Sir John Herschel in 1842. The essence of Herschel's discovery was that paper impregnated with iron salts was light sensitive and a Prussian Blue image would emerge when exposed to light. Anna Atkins used it for botanical studies in the 1850s. Engineers and architects used the process to reproduce technical drawings and continued to use 'blueprints' until quite recently. It is a contact printing process and prints can be made on a variety of acid free watercolour papers, some rice papers and fabrics. Images can be further enhanced by toning, hand colouring or superimposing over or under other printing processes, including gum bichromate.

Van Dyke is a 19th century process. An iron salt solution is brushed onto watercolour paper, rice paper or fabric, then dried and placed in contact with a large negative. It is exposed to the sun or UV light box and processed in further chemicals. Each image is hand-coated and therefore unique. This is a more complex printing method than cyanotype and has a greater tonal range. Landscapes, portraits, still life studies and images with softened contours between light and shade are well suited to the Van Dyke process.

Silvi Glattauer

My images capture the narratives implicit in found objects, some of which were 'reclaimed' in the wake of Victoria's devastating bushfires. Long after the fires had passed it occurred to me that these mere objects had been reclaimed by nature, not quite consumed by fire—each had a personal story and a place in history, but when they had been 'cleaned up' the slate was wiped clean, and we are ready to start again...

The photogravure process allows me to show fine gradations of texture, tone, light and shadow. A photogravure is hand printed from an etched printing plate. The original photograph becomes a beautifully textured and individual Intaglio etching resulting from the combination of fine art papers, archival inks and the etching press.

My photogravure prints and Kara Rasmanis' combine 19th century photographic processes with 21st century technological innovations, combining digital media and photo sensitive photopolymer printing plates with traditional etching techniques. While photogravure once required hazardous acids, asphalt and environmentally unfriendly copper, contemporary photogravure is a non toxic, friendly technique allowing safe work practices.

The photogravure process encourages textures, tones, forms, light and shadows. There are also the intrinsic, tactile qualities of the subject matter. Attributed to the raised ink lines, relief qualities and embossing trademark of this etching technique, the two dimensional representation of the subject evolves to become three-dimensional and takes on a unique power that persists in memory. The image draws strength from the hands-on craft.

Karena Goldfinch

I first approached photography as a reference point for my drawing, but soon found that it became a passion. Gumoil has a wonderful painterly quality that to me is reminiscent of the Pictorialists. I love the hands on involvement with the image that a handmade process can give. The application of emulsions, the quality of the papers and the actual process of making an image come to life are for me always a joy.



Wendy Currie, *Le passage voûté—Vaison La Romaine*



Silvi Glattauer, *Etching Liquids*



Karena Goldfinch, *Private*



Karena Goldfinch, *Front row*

Gumoi entails contact printing a positive transparency onto sensitised paper using ultraviolet light. The exposed areas harden according to the amount of light received. The image is washed and the unexposed emulsion floats away leaving hardened areas of emulsion on the surface paper. After the paper has dried oil paint is rubbed into the surface of the print. The hardened gum acts as a resist in accordance with how much is on the paper. Excess paint is wiped away. The image can be left as it is, more paint can be applied or it can be etched to expose areas that can absorb more paint. Gumoi is unpredictable and so each image is unique.

The images in this exhibition were produced in a number of different locations, both here and in New Zealand. Although disparate in subject matter their commonality lies in their personal connection with events that were occurring at the time.

Kara Rasmanis

Unlocking the secrets of flight is a series of photogravure prints visually exploring the idea of fallen or discarded wings as artefacts.

I have always been a collector. From rocks and seedpods to old buttons and pins. Like a bowerbird I have brought them home and lovingly cherished them as new objects. My wing collection started with a single moth wing kept in my journal so long I don't even remember where it came from. From this object my collection grew to include bees, butterflies and was lucky enough to have my collecting fall in the three year cycle of the cicada. Even though the wings can no longer move their owners through the air I hope in my images to make the viewer soar with the beauty of the fallen.

My photogravure prints are the combination of traditional photographic and printmaking process and contemporary digital media that give a feel, which would be unachievable using photography alone.

Biographies

Wendy Currie

Wendy Currie has been working with alternative photographic processes for over 18 years and has taught at RMIT University, Photography Studies College and Australian Academy of Design, as well as schools, clubs and Gold Street Studios. She also runs tailor made courses, including professional development for teachers, VCE Art students, tertiary students, artists and photographers. She has participated many group exhibitions and sells works through suburban, regional and interstate galleries. Wendy has work published in *Blueprints to Cyanotypes* by Malin Fabbri and the first edition of *Alternative Photography: Art and Artists, Edition 1* (2006) by Malin Fabbri.

Wendy completed a Diploma of Arts (Art) in 1989 and a Graduate Diploma of Arts (Art—Photography) in 1990, concentrating on early 19th Century printing processes such as Cyanotype, Gum bichromate and Van Dyke printing. Her passion for these early processes is stimulated by the direct tactile involvement with all stages of the image, from making the negative, exposing and developing the image, to toning and/or hand colouring the final print. The creative freedom to work with beautiful watercolour and handmade papers or fabrics complements her delight in the photographic image.

Silvi Glattauer

Silvi Glattauer is a photographer and printmaker living and working in Melbourne. Her photographic practice extends from commercial and editorial to fine art photography. She graduated from RMIT University with a BA (Photography) in 2005 and from Photography Studies College with an Advanced Diploma of Illustrative Photography in 2002. Silvi has been included in many group exhibitions and has had solo exhibitions and artist residences in Australia and New Zealand.

Silvi has a particular interest in the hybridisation of digital technologies with the hand made 'fine print'. She works and teaches the photogravure process at The Baldessin Press, a unique bluestone etching studio in the bush setting of St Andrews, Victoria.



Kara Rasmanis, *The Key to Flight*



Wendy Currie, *L'oustau de Santoun*



Karena Goldsmith, *The great wattle*

Karena Goldfinch

Karena Goldfinch graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Scientific Photography) (Honours) degree from RMIT in 2009. Her work has been shown in group exhibitions in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Kara Rasmanis

I was born and raised 100km west of Melbourne in Ballarat, a 19th century gold rush town, and grew up in a household full of arts and crafts (padded tissue boxes that gave way to elegant and sophisticated embroidery from my mother and functional and solid woodwork from my father).

A passion for all things creative guided me through childhood. In high school I explored the worlds of art and drama where, with the help of my father's camera, I discovered photography. I received a Bachelor of Illustrative Photography from Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 2000 and as the world of photography changed from analogue to digital I decided to continue my education and in 2003 received a Masters of Multi-Media Design from Monash University. My work has always been a combination of elements. Beginning with photographs as the base and adding many layers of texture and text, all to create something I find beautiful

More information about the artists and their work is at: www.curriephotography.com.au ; www.silvi.com.au ; www.kararasmanis.com



Wendy Currie, *Going Home—Amsterdam*



Karena Goldfinch, *Trentham*



Silvi Glattauer, *Etching Liquids*



Kara Rasmanis, *The Key to Flight*