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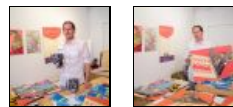
An unheralded art gets its own space

Screen print show highlights diversity
 By Amy Griffin
 Published 2:24 pm, Wednesday, September 10, 2014

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Nathan Meltz ()



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To the casual observer, screen printing might be associated with posters or T-shirts, and though it's true those are common applications, the process has practically endless potential for artists.

Nathan Meltz, Troy artist and lecturer in the Art

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layers of both digital and analog processes. He sat down in his Troy studio to talk about how he brought about his vision of a biennial.

Q: What was your inspiration?

A: Last August, I was in Scotland for the Impact 8 Print Conference. One of the speakers was art historian Richard Noyce, and he talked about this experimental etching biennial in the '70s — very obscure. But it made me wonder if there are any screen print biennials. I searched and found a Japanese screen print biennial, but none reoccurring in the United States. So I thought, "We should have one." I don't want to make this the one and only screen print biennial, but for now it's the East Coast Biennial, and I'd love it if there were more.

Q: Was it open call or invitational?

A: It was purely invitational. I wanted a really tight show for this first show, so I contacted people. Most are pretty well established within the printmaking world. There might be one person who is straight out of grad school. For the 2016 biennial, I do plan on having an open call.

Q: So, you just started asking around for support and artists?

A: I started off with emails with the people I knew I wanted in the show, and I asked other people in the field whose opinions I really respect for names and found a few people that way. And I started searching for venues. I wanted to keep it near Troy for the first one, to make it easier because I had no budget. The Arts Center was really supportive, right off the bat.

Probably the biggest thing that changed things was when I hosted a meeting here for volunteers and about half a dozen people showed up. Some people were really passionate about prints, and some just passionate about art and the local art scene. Based on the support of those few volunteers, it started to expand.

Q: So you have no funding?

A: It's all shoestring. One of my volunteers, Ira Marcks, a Troy artist who's really efficient at running Kickstarters, suggested I run one. I did and raised enough money to publish a catalog with a page for each artist. Then a few corporate sponsors happened. So, we did end up having a budget but it happened very organically, and I'm very lucky to have it.

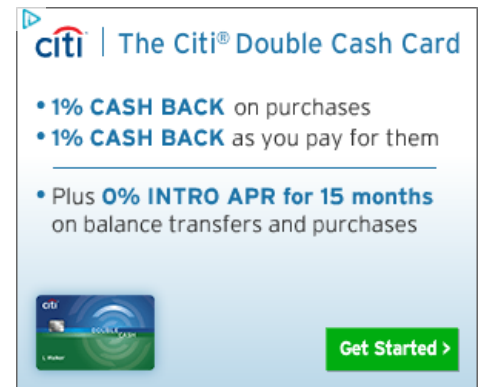
Q: Who are the panelists on the symposium?

A: We have Tonja Torgerson, an artist-in-residence at the Lawrence Art Center (in Kansas). She's doing some site-specific work around downtown Troy. Erin Philaja, the head of the Downtown BID, was very helpful in finding city-owned locations and privately owned buildings so we can put public art projects on the exteriors. We also have Eric Waterkotte, assistant professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Rebekah Tolley, instructor at the

Department at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, wants to expand our ideas about screen printing. He is spearheading the East Coast National Screenprint Biennial, opening this weekend at the Arts Center of the Capital Region with a reception and a symposium.

On Friday, Sept. 26, there will also be satellite shows for Troy Night Out to showcase student work from area colleges.


Meltz himself uses screen printing as just one part of his studio practice. His videos incorporate it with collage and animation in



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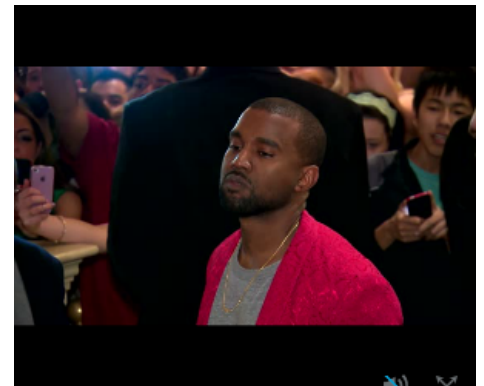
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Q: Do you feel that screen printing needs more exposure?

A: Yeah, a big part of the idea is that, especially in NYC, printmaking has been kind of relegated to being the workhorse for the rock star artist — just another way to make money. I wanted raise the profile to show that there's a huge, very creatively rich population of artists that are creating original prints and innovative, interesting art that's worth taking a look at.

I'm also hoping to broaden the definition so it isn't just collectible edition prints that go in portfolios. They can be everything from sculpture to installation to video. Within the print world ,there's this conversation about what print can be, so I'm trying to continue that.

Q: There's no unifying theme to the show?

A: I just thought, "What would be my dream screen print show?" And that's what it is. ... There's a whole range from the quiet piece to the in-your-face piece.

If you go

East Coast National Screenprint Biennial

Where: Arts Center of the Capital Region, 265 River St., Troy

When: reception, 5-8 p.m. Friday; symposium, 12:30-1:30 Saturday. Hours: 9 a.m.-7:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, noon-4 p.m. Sunday.

Admission: Free

Info: www.screenprint.biennial.com and www.artscenonline.org

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