



Detail of "Advance", Intaglio, chine colle, 60cm x 90cm, 2016

Miriam Rudolph / *disPOSSESSION*

Exhibition: June 02 - July 15, 2017

Artist Talk : June 02, 2017 , 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Opening Reception to follow



Alberta Printmakers Gallery
4025 4 Street SE, Calgary AB

disPOSSESSION – Miriam Rudolph
Essay by Dana Tasic

The setting for Miriam Rudolph's exhibition disPOSSESSION is the Paraguayan Chaco, about one quarter of the Gran Chaco Americano, the second largest forest in South America. This semi-arid, virgin forest features an astounding level of biodiversity but has come under threat in the 21st century by global-scale agricultural development. World-wide food shortages, increased demand for beef and soy, and low cost of land has brought transnational corporations and the development of large-scale soy farming and cattle ranching to the region, resulting in the rapid razing of vast areas of the forest. Scientists fear that the forest, much of which is as yet unexplored, will be wiped out more quickly than species can be researched and documented while conservationists warn of ecological disaster as deforestation and aggressive farming methods lead to widespread desertification and erosion. The last indigenous tribes to call the Chaco home are no longer able to sustain themselves through traditional means of hunting, gathering and fishing and as a result, are being displaced.

Although the context for this exhibition may seem melancholy in tone, there is a dark beauty to the prints, expressed in the lyrical quality of Rudolph's line, the softness of the figures, delicate grass pattern, and painterly dark clouds. Rudolph is rigorous in her approach to printmaking, using a systematic medium to investigate a systemic problem. What distinguishes printmaking from other media is its reproducibility, which Rudolph takes full advantage of in creating multi-layered, narrative images. Using a library of plates, each etched with images that draw upon specific elements relating to themes of deforestation, enclosure, private property, displacement, cattle ranching, soy production, and indigenous land rights, Rudolph takes these individual elements (images of forests, clouds, fences, cattle, and groupings of figures) and prints, overlaps and flips them, working intuitively to construct rich narratives.

Dispossession includes up to 20 printed layers, resulting in strikingly rich tones. In Advance Rudolph contrasts the encroachment of farming with the retreat of the forest by printing

on both sides of the paper, utilizing its translucency to create not only a sense of distance but also to hint at the passage of time, revealing traces of the vegetation that has been lost. In *Displacement* the crisp, hard-edged imagery of farm equipment, juxtaposed against the sensuous quality of rich tones in the cloud, vegetation, and figures carrying jars for seeds mirrors the contrast between farming technologies developed for large-scale industry, and local, traditional farming methods. Hovering in the sky, farming equipment appears as a symbol of capitalism, a global power inflicted from on high and imposed on the land and its people who are losing their traditional way of life.

Working with multiple plates of varying sizes allows Rudolph to bring an additional element to her images, that of containment. The *Enclosure* series of prints uses the repetition of borders, some literal, such as the fence, others metaphorical, as in the visible edges of the etched plates or rectangular form of grass. This repetition of grid lines reveals the many methods by which a populace may be contained, restrained, and controlled. Power relationships are further investigated through the use of scale, as in *Colonization by Cattle*, in which the epic scale of the deforestation caused by cattle ranching is evoked by using just two plates containing drawings of about twenty-five cattle each, and printing them repeatedly across seven sheets of paper. The very density and scale of the cattle, relative to the smallness of the forest, emphasizes just how much vegetation has been lost.

There is an obvious parallel between the encroachment of capitalist industry in Paraguay and its effect on the indigenous population, and similar problems around the world. Common to all countries in the western hemisphere is a history of colonization, environmental destruction, displacement of indigenous peoples and irreversible change to their way of life. Exploitation of the land, whether by governments or private enterprise, serves to enrich the few at the expense of many. But there is hope for the future, and it is presented in *Seeds of Hope*, an installation work featuring a suspended banner consisting of a multitude of layered hands, reaching down toward a set of porcelain jars. Rudolph describes the gesture of the hands

as “blessing from above for the labour of planting and the traditions of saving seeds.” The jars they reach toward depict images of the germination of seeds as they grow into crops. It is here where we may seek solace in the future of the Chaco; as each life cycle dies, a new one begins, continuing on in perpetuity.

Writer Biography

Dana Tosic is a Toronto based artist who works in printmaking, installation and digital media. She holds a BFA from Queen’s University, an MFA from the University of Calgary, and was the 2010 participant in the Tim Mara Graduate Student Exchange at the Royal College of Art, London, U.K. She has participated in exhibitions and artist residencies across Canada and internationally, and presented her research on the applications of digital technology to printmaking at the Printopolis International Symposium on Printmaking in Toronto (2010).

Artist Biography

Miriam Rudolph was born and raised in Paraguay, South America. In 2003 she moved to Winnipeg to study Fine Arts at the University of Manitoba where she graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Honours in 2007 and a Bachelor of Education in 2010. From 2011 – 2014, Miriam lived in Minneapolis where she continued to make prints at the Highpoint Center for Printmaking. She recently completed the Master of Fine Arts in Printmaking at the University of Alberta, Edmonton (2017). She was awarded the University of Alberta Graduate Recruitment Scholarship in 2014 and the Joseph-Armand Bombardier Graduate Scholarship (SSHRC) along with the Walter H. Johns Graduate Fellowship and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Scholarship for Art and Design in 2015. She has shown her work nationally and internationally. In 2016, she won the first prize (Best in Show) at the 5th Biennial International Footprint International Exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk, Connecticut. She has shown her work in Asunción-Paraguay, at Global Print 2013 in Portugal, at the International Print Center New York, at the Highpoint Center for Printmaking - Minneapolis, in Washington D.C., at Martha Street Studio - Winnipeg, Toronto, and Ottawa.

Alberta Printmakers (A/P) is a non-profit, artist-run centre founded in 1989 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. The organization’s goals are to increase public awareness of print media, to engage a diverse audience, to provide resources for the artistic community and production facilities for printmaking.

A/P has an open membership, and is governed by a board of directors. Management and administration of A/P’s activities are the responsibilities of its Directors, who reach out to volunteers in accomplishing A/P’s goals. A/P also hosts residency and summer student programs.

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