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### Fine arts printmaking using modern technology

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Rochester Institute of Technology

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the College  
Of Imaging Arts and Sciences in candidacy for the  
Degree of  
Master of Fine Arts.

**Fine Arts Printmaking using Modern Technology**

By  
Priscilla Clay

February 22, 1999

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I give thanks for a gift given from God.

This is a tribute to Mary Clay, my Mother (who died 19 years ago) and my Father who never told me that my imaginary characters were not real, and my Brother who taught me to fight for what I believed.

This work could not have been accomplished without the encouragement, gifts of information and knowledge given freely by so many people. The following are not all the people I wish to thank, but they are a few of the people whose help made this possible. Sun Young Hwang, who shared dreams, hopes, supplies, knowledge and Anna Nenonen who continues to encourage me. To Dr. and Magi Shapiro who have always offered to take me in when I have no place to live. Thanks to the facility at Rochester Institute of Technology. Special thanks to Luvon Sheppard who was the first person I met at RIT and encouraged me to come here. Thanks to Dave Dickinson who has endless patience and taught me a wide variety of subjects, old and new, from the difference between a PC and a Mac to various printing techniques. Thanks to Jeff Weiss who helped me focus and continue to think of new ways of expression. Thanks to Tom Lightfoot whose door is always open and continues to show new directions, to Kathy Vada who taught me Lithography and was always patient and knowledgeable and Warren Phillips who met me at my worst and framed all my work. Special thanks to you for teaching me and giving me your support and friendship to Professors David Freed and Swietlan Kraczyna. Many thanks to everyone especially Devlin.

Fine Arts Printmaking: Using Modern Technology  
Lust for Life  
And  
Under the Felts

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## Preface

The summer prior to attending Rochester Institute of Technology I studied in a medieval village in the Tuscany region of Italy. I studied the ancient intaglio technique of Aquatint.<sup>1</sup> which uses tree rosin, before etching the plates.

Arriving at Rochester Institute of Technology from such an environment illustrated the sharp contrast between the classic methods and modern technology. While learning the old techniques of Aquatint I worked in a studio within the walls of a medieval village. The wind from an open window was our exhaust and ventilation system. The windowsill was the same thickness of the wall giving a three-foot surface for the tray of acid. Electricity and hot water were not always the norm and the gas that controlled the flame for cooking and working the plates came from containers that were purchased and refilled. Telephones were not, they were not in the apartments, nor the studio and the pay phones were often not in service. The local opera festival supplied the music. This festival attracts musicians from all over Europe and takes place every summer in this village.

Several dozen rolls of film from my travels filled my camera bag that gave a wealth of historical background from which to draw. Scanning these images into Adobe PhotoShop and to manipulate the images I was immediately fascinated with the mood they created and symbolic messages they created digitally.

The series, "Lust for Life", was accomplished by pushing the technology. The focus turned back to the handmade, to the need for human control. I was using the most recently acquired technology, along with what I had learned from the techniques, of the Old World masters of etching. I felt the etching and my art lacked something, although, the results were successful.

Until "Under the Felts" brought back the controls that had been relinquishing, and allowed the images to have a will of their own and that will was sensuous.

"Seven" has complete control, even extending to what the viewer can see at a given time.

The ebb and tide of control -- the old methods versus new technology -- play with the white and black issues of Printmaking as an art form.

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<sup>1</sup> Ross, John, Clare Romano. *The Complete Printmaker: The art and technique of the relief print, the intaglio print, the collagraph, the lithograph, the screen print, the dimensional print, photographic prints, children's prints, collecting prints, print workshop* (1<sup>st</sup> Printing, The Free Press, New York Collier-Macmillan Limited, London, 1972), p. 90.

///////"Aquatint. Every printmaker who intends to do serious work in etching should master the process of aquatint. The wide variety of grays, ranging from delicate, light washes to rich, deep blacks are indispensable to any artist who needs tonality in his work. The principle of aquatint is simple. A fine mist of acid-resistant tiny droplets or particles of acid resistant material is dusted...over the zinc or copper plate. When this mist is fixed to the surface" heated "it should cover about 40% of the area. Place the plate in a weak solution of nitric acid. The usual proportions range from 1 part of nitric acid in 8 parts of water to 1 part acid in 12 parts of water." "The acid will attack the unprotected portions of the plate and not the tiny spots that are covered by the droplets. The darkness of the tone is increased by leaving the plate in the acid solution for longer periods".

## Fine Arts Printmaking Using Modern 1990's Technology

Lust for Life -- Under the Felts

Technology, photography, computers, where can the artist achieve his art and where will printmakers find their place in the new golden age of the new millennium? Will the artist become Magician, or Surgeon?

Curator of Prints, Drawing and Photographs at the Yale University Art Gallery, Richard Field, spoke on "Media for the Next Millennium", saying "artists used photographs in the 19th century, first of all, as tools, as a means to an end. It was at first a substitute for the model. And then they began to understand what photography did to the visual world. How for instance, it cut space, how it edited space. How the black and white abstraction of the photographic image changed the world. As photographs began to be more popular, more omnipresent, artists, rather than think that painting was dead, or that imagery would be produced purely by photographic means, knew intuitively that photography was another way of representing the world with its own syntax."

He goes on to say "people who are trained in traditional printmaking are always interested in how the medium affects the message." And that, "I don't see much character in digital printing. ... Remember, printing media is one thing, and digital media is another.... The digital revolution profoundly alters the conceptual and practical framework of printmaking. The traditional print is an analogue representation of variations in tone and line, but the digital print is a discrete image resulting from encoded and uniform subdivision of pixels..."<sup>2</sup>

The same as photography is being incorporated into the artist's tools, so will the computer be an intricate part. In "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility," Walter Benjamin says that a "Magician and surgeon compare to painter and cameraman." He thought of the magician as one who healed through the laying on of hands. While the surgeon was far less connected with the person as he cuts through the layers of flesh with a scalpel and moves the persons actual organs to cure the same problems. "The painter maintains in his work a natural

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<sup>2</sup> "Media for the Next Millennium". A "Think Shop, Work Tank", quoted Richard Field (Curator of Prints, Drawing and Photographs at the Yale University Art Gallery)



distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments, which are assembled under a new law. Thus, for contemporary man the representation of reality by the film is incomparably more significant than that of the painter, since it offers, precisely because of the thoroughgoing permeating of reality with mechanical equipment, an aspect of reality which is free of all equipment. And that is what one is entitled to ask from a work of art."<sup>3</sup> Using this train of thought, is the Artist who uses computers an extension of that cameraman and would he be classified as a modern day surgeon who uses lasers in his surgery? One who distances himself even farther from the patient by not having to actually even lay a hand on anything connected physically to the actual patient.

The "**Lust for Life**", series started with original photographs and slides taken in Italy from Venice to Rome. Scanning the photographs into Adobe PhotoShop allowed total control over the digital images. Manipulating the images caused "Lust for Life" to spring to life with a sensuous air.

One important factor in selecting the printing technology was the desire to create archival-quality work. Using the computer as a tool, rather than solely as a means to view digital images, a variety of steps were done to transfer the digital images to paper. Wide varieties of printers allow for and create an even wider variety of prints. However when one print left in the sun for an afternoon faded and distorted like an ancient poster from times past, the search for something more stable started. But, Archival is a relative term. The prints from the Iris Ink Jet printer and the thermal wax printer prints hold their color (according to their manufacturers) for 30 years, when printed on an acid free watercolor paper. Now onto appearance: the wax ink floats on the surface of the paper. The wax is sensitive to heat and is easily scratched or smudged. The Iris print costs substantially more, and uses inks that do not fade as rapidly when exposed to sunlight. Printing on watercolor paper, the inks soak into the paper and diminish that luminescent quality that only light can project. Light such as a computer screen or a slide projected on a metallic screen, "the silver screen".

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<sup>3</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility," *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, Ed. By Stephen David Ross, 34th Ed. (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994), XI p. 534.



Looking for the depth given only by light took the images back to the photographic process of a slide. The newest photographic processes, **Cibachrome/Ilfochrome**<sup>4</sup> shows vivid colors in minute detail when developed from slides. The Cibachrome prints are more luminescent than the original photographs and show a great deal of depth, yet are still lacking in the light giving influence of the screen. Also, the balance of color for all the mechanical processes often creates a struggle for the artist, versus the technician, even if they are the same person.

**Separating** the colors into four layers in Adobe PhotoShop they are CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow and black). RGB (red, green, and blue) divide color for film and computer screen. The individual colors split the image into separate layers of pixels. Printing the pixels on acetate forms a template or replica of the colors individually. Four individual sheets represent the respective colors. The three colors give the print a rich hue, almost black. The difficulty of accomplishing true black makes it necessary to print a separate layer to achieve the highest contrasts.

**Preparing** the plates started by cutting four exact sized plates for each image. Photo-Emulsion, or Hydro-Coat, covered the zinc plates from Revere Graphic Products. Placing the transparencies on the plates in exactly the same way was crucial for registration purposes. Submitting the Emulsion to the light hardens the film. Light penetrates the transparencies, exposing the Emulsion where the film is clear. Using an arc lamp allowed for control of the intensity of the

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.hollandphoto.com/>

Holland Photo states: We Give You the Ilfochrome Advantage

The process formerly known as Cibachrome...

The Ilfochrome Offerings and Prices at Holland Photo

Making fine prints from slides has been Holland Photo's specialty since 1981. Our choice as a medium is the Ilfochrome Process. (Formerly called Cibachrome)

While other materials generate their dye image during processing, ILFORD's renowned silver dye bleach technology uses pure and highly stable azo dyes which are incorporated during manufacturing of the material. Then, during the processing, the negative image area is selectively bleached away.

There are three distinct advantages to this method of printmaking.

**Sharpness** - Ilfochrome Classic prints are made directly from original slides and transparencies without using an intermediate. This first generation direct printing, and Ilfochrome Classic's ultra-thin emulsion, insure that there is no loss of sharpness.

**Richer Color** - Pure and highly stable azo-metallic dyes are incorporated in Ilfochrome Classic materials during manufacturing. In standard reversal "type R" prints or in prints from color negatives less stable organic dyes are formed during processing. For this reason the colors in an Ilfochrome Classic print are richer, more colorful and more saturated than prints made using any other conventional printmaking process.

**Longer Lasting** - Because the dyes are pure azo-metallic and not organic, Ilfochrome Classic prints have a life expectancy that far exceeds the life of any other conventional process. Under certain conditions Ilford will even warranty Ilfochrome Classic Deluxe prints against fading for 200 years!

light. Hydro-Coat Developer hardens the exposed Emulsion; the unexposed pixels wash away in a water bath.

The **Exposed** layer makes a hardened barrier that resists the acid. The unexposed particles that wash away open the metal plate to the acid. A weak solution of acid allows for a more direct bite of the acid, meaning that instead of making a star burst effect the acid bites straight down, making a deeper well to hold the ink.

**Etching** the plates in a ten to one nitric acid solution achieved the best control of the bite. Each plate was etched 15 minutes. The printmaker decided to relinquish the control of the plates and allow each to etch with spontaneity.

**Printing** the inked plates in the given colors, CMYK, created varying effects. The less detail produced fewer difficulties and therefore greater degrees of perfection.

The actual **print**, "Lust for Life" was the first of the series. Three photographs make up the core of the image. Villa Borghese in Rome is the site where two of these statues are photographed. The themes are from ancient mythology. Bernini's "Apollo and Daphne" (1624) shows a young couple just as the girl turns into a tree with leaves and twigs for fingers. The other shows an older couple illustrating the tug and pull of a relationship. The third is from a large sculpture in the Duomo of Saint Peter in Rome showing the golden skeleton holding the hourglass. Life is fragile and short with many layers. Some of them we can see through to the next phase of our lives, while others, are opaque and our eyes can not penetrate the images to see the future. "Lust for Life" was most successful on the computer screen and as a Cibachrome print. "Time" is several images overlapping to reveal female statues with one resting her head on another's shoulder, achieved through Adobe PhotoShop, while the same golden skeleton holds the hourglass and another statue has her foot on the world underneath a rich blanket of pink marble.

The print "Floating Lady Lotus" printed aesthetically pleasingly in every printing process. The intaglio shows a brilliant depth, achieved through four etching plates. The Iris printer creates prints with surprisingly accurate color. Printed on watercolor paper, the Iris Printer offered the option of any size prints. Rather than creating a positive from a negative image, a Cibachrome is created



creating a positive from a negative image, a Cibachrome is created by making a slide image from the screen and then having it developed from a positive into a positive.

The focal point of "60's" is a pure white stone statue of a woman lying on her stomach, with her back to you, on a stone bed. The depth and layers give the surreal feeling of floating in space. Solarized in Adobe PhotoShop5, the print "60's" printed well as intaglio and is spectacular as Cibachrome print. The curve tools manipulate the colors. They are adjusted by changing the color levels. A single lotus blossom was multiplied by cropping and pasting to create the bed of flowers. The colors are unrealistic colors. The inspiration for "60's" fits the series title "Lust for Life". Watching a Lotus bud became a house ritual almost a religious experience while staying with friends (Dr & Mrs. Jay Shapiro) in Virginia. The bud of the Lotus comes up from under the water over a few hours, one can see the bud emerge from its watery depth and spend days growing and maturing to several feet above the water until the blossom begins to open. The Blossom opens in the middle of summer as the sun rises high in the sky and closes gently as the sun sinks on the horizon. For three days the flower blooms with the sun and closes. At the end of the third day the petals become too heavy for the plant to bring them together to close for the night, back to their bud form. The flower bursts into the air as if they are spontaneously combusting. It tosses the petals into the wind and they eventually land in the water like little boats. Each of the multiple petals is sent in different directions on a new voyage. In essence the beautiful sleeping woman, carved of stone, is made to drift on vibrant floating lotus blossoms.

"Italy" features the Colosseum, the canals of Venice, the main bridge of Venice and along with many statues from all over Italy. Naval battles were waged in this Colosseum and at times, people and animals died. Here the arena turns into a Venetian canal with a gondola carrying fruit and vegetables. Thoughtful statues of Romans watching over reflections of nonexistent bell towers and light reflected in the water replace the Emperor and the Roman citizens. Freshly painted villas line the canals and replace the crumbling facade of the arena, leaving just enough of the Colosseum visible to make it recognizable in the etching and the Cibachrome print.

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5 Barry Haynes, Wendy Crumpler, *Photoshop Artistry: A Master Class for Photographers and Artists*, (San Francisco, Paris, Dusseldorf, Soest, Sybex), 1995), p. 84.

"Self Portrait" of the artist hidden behind a Venetian mask of the Sun and Moon is more playful. The mask itself was never touched, except by the view through the camera lens. The mask was made barely transparent enough to merge the images together and to show just enough detail so that, only the artist might recognize the person behind the mask. "If the sun and moon should doubt, they'd immediately go out", William Blake once said.<sup>6</sup> As an adventure, a search for the "Lust for Life" the Sun is symbolic of the passing of the days and the Moon as the passing of the Months; the mask itself is a symbol life -- as in a life mask, as opposed to a death mask. The life mask has eyes with which to see, and "Lust for Life." The images were becoming more removed. Something from the artist was missing. The formula was too easy. If the cameraman is likened to the surgeon the magician was needed to return the spirit to the prints.

**"Under the Felts"**, came about from too much technology and not enough play.

Bernard Leach, believed, "Fundamentally, human beings, whether Eastern or Western, need belief, free play of imagination and intuition in their homes and workshops or they become starved. All the cogwheels and electronic brains cannot assuage these human needs in the long run. It is for lack of such essentials that we turn to dope of one kind or another, or to Destructiveness. Basically this (the Arts & Crafts Movement) is not so much a revolution against science as a seeking of a means of counterbalance by employing man's first tools, his own hands, for the expression of his inner nature."<sup>7</sup> Our hands are connected directly to our spirit and soul.

"Art" is a form of life in and of itself, a life that is born and dies and is born again in the heart, mind and soul, instant by instant. Exhausting all possible methods of printing, including screen-printing and lithography (which give flat looking results) the life of printmaking would have to take a different route to find its lust. Intaglio shows the warmth of the touch and traces of the human hand.

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<sup>6</sup>Roberta Weir, *Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's Way of Seeing*, "Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's way of seeing." (Celestialarts: Berkeley, California. 1998), P 38.

<sup>7</sup> Roberta Weir, *Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's Way of Seeing*, "Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's way of seeing." (Celestialarts: Berkeley, California. 1998), P 97.



The color separations give it depth and a glow from under the layers. Printing yellow first sets the stage or backdrop with a rich warm hue, a glow from within. The first color printed controls the other colors, to a degree, since it works as a separate layer showing through the other coming layers and continues through consecutive layers of ink. This is true especially in this Intaglio process, where the paper and inks remain wet as each layer is run through the press. Intaglio ink is the most densely pigmented of the printing inks. Charbonelle is the most translucent variety of the name brands of Intaglio ink and always the preferred of this artist. The plates can also become embossing tools when an open bite occurs, making the wet paper conform to the shape of the plate with its indents. In some of the prints a blind person can actually *see* or, rather, feel the image. The handmade print verses Cibachrome where prints achieve such vivid colors and a warm rich depth, closest to the digital images of light as seen on a computer screen. Achieving comparable color saturation by other means is difficult, and moving onto a technique that comes back to the human touch was needed to find the Art's "Lust for Life."

"The Creative works sublime success, furthering through perseverance...  
the beginning of all things lies still in the beyond in the form of ideas that  
have yet to become real...Time is no longer a hindrance but the means  
of making actual what is potential." I Ching 8

"Under the Felts"<sup>9</sup> is where the intaglio plates are placed on an etching press bed. The beginning student will inevitably try to misplace the plate somewhere between the blankets. Rotated under the roller, three blankets cover the plate and press into the wet paper. The term "Under the Felts" portrays a feeling of creation as opposed to destruction. Life is to be lusted after, and why not portray that lust in one's art? Contemporary culture habitually displays death daily in every graphic detail. Personifying mortality, death is the end; exit. Why is it so difficult to find an expression for beginning? the "Lust for Life." -- the passion, the seduction, the sensual origin, the source of life.

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8 Roberta Weir, *Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's Way of Seeing*, "Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's way of seeing." (Celestialarts: Berkeley, California. 1998), P 20.

9 While in Italy working and helping beginning etchers print and learning Italian I was advised that "Under the Blankets" was being misunderstood, and the phrase "Under the Felts," was the replacement that kept the laughter to a chuckle rather than a good hearted laugh.

Why is puritan society so uncomfortable it cannot accept the sensual passions, and the flesh and blood, animation of life, while graphic death and violence can be received with favor and approval? Is it the romance of war that has altered our reality? Why is it not permissible to see two consenting adults of the opposite sex embraced in passionate acts?

What started as an experiment using technology to see how to transfer original images onto a printing plate that was prepared with photo emulsion, became a passion. The images started as private works only to be seen by a select few. Lustrous and expressive, the results demanded to be shared.

First a little background on traditional printmaking methods. The traditional material for making lithographs has been limestone taken from north of Munich. The surface of lithography stones is porous and unique. Tusche is a greasy substance that is used on Lithograph stones to attract the printing inks to the surface. The surface is mildly etched to attract water to the areas where ink is not wanted. The water repels the ink. By using tusche on frosted Mylar,<sup>10</sup> which accepts the painting of the tusche in a manner similar to that of lithographic stones, the tusche produces a richly textured effect that unfailingly creates a flourish of tonal qualities. Even when mere lines define the images, the lines are expressive and lyrical. Bonding the new with the old, Mylar (being a relatively recent medium) and tusche (a traditional medium) work together in the process of transferring original images, with the help of photo emulsion, onto intaglio and lithographic plates. The prints made with these methods often become, indistinguishable from the more traditional methods of achieving the same results. This allows two advantages: One, because of its transparent quality of the layers (while working on the original idea) different colors can be built up, while seeing the previous layer and changes can be made. Two it gives the artist a second chance. When the tusche original is kept intact and undisturbed, it can be used again and again or altered to fill a need. The image can be made as layers for one large lithograph print made from multiple layers. Also, the images can be etched onto different plates, exposing areas differently to make one multicolored image. A Lithographic stone has to be tediously ground down between

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<sup>10</sup> Mylar or acetate is typically used for overhead transparencies.



layers and erasing is not possible. The stone process is unforgiving; making this blend of old and new refreshing.

The works transferred onto intaglio plates give an endless array of possibilities. The tusche gives a similar effect, as though they are painted with white ground. Etching two plates identically gives the artist the opportunity to ink the plates using different colors. Then, by wiping the plates differently and printing them without removing the paper from the press; or by burnishing parts of one plate to express that part in a primary color rather than a blended color the artist gains control. In the "Lust for Life" digital prints that are created from multiple plates; the paper needs to stay stationary while the plates change. The size of the paper changes drastically depending on the water content. (Some general technical background.) This is different from lithography, where the paper remains dry and the inks need to dry between runs. One can work on a multi-layered image in lithography for years where in Intaglio, keeping the paper with the same density of water is best done in one printing marathon. All of the seven original images are printed digitally, in intaglio and lithography.

Scanned into a computer, these images become digitized works, and on the computer screen they can be given any color and layered together much like a collage. When creating the "Under the Felts" series, selecting specific areas and zooming in on them in approximately one-inch squares, created seventeen separate images.

If Albert Einstein was correct in saying "imagination is more important than knowledge,"<sup>11</sup> then, these seventeen images are a wonderful exercise in stretching our imaginations. Symbolism is a universal language, and people can relate to these images from different cultures. There is an earthy quality, a draw to the media used and to the images.

Cropping and pasting these images into files of their own made new images. When the cropped image is enlarged to seven inches x seven inches these cropped body parts become true abstractions. The original image controls the readability of these body parts as body parts, but the

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<sup>11</sup> Roberta Weir, *Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's Way of Seeing*, "Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's way of seeing." (Celestialarts: Berkeley, California. 1998), P 53.

sensuous texture and forms are readable as such without the originals. Edward Bullough would call this method "distancing".

"Distance appears as a fundamental principle to which such antitheses as idealism and realism are reducible.... A similar reconciliation seems to me possible between the opposites sensual and spiritual,...individual and typical....That the appeal of Art is sensuous, even sensual, must be taken as an indispensable fact. Puritanism will never be persuaded, and rightly so, that this is not the case. The sensuousness of Art is a natural implication of the "antinomy of Distance", .... The point of importance here is that the whole sensual side of Art is purified, spiritualized, "filtered" ... by Distance. The most sensual appeal becomes the translucent veil of an underlying spirituality, once the grossly personal and practical elements have been removed from it. And-a matter of special emphasis here-*this spiritual aspect of the appeal is the more penetrating, the more personal and direct its sensual appeal would have been* BUT FOR THE PRESENCE OF DISTANCE. For the artist, to trust in this delicate transmutation is a natural act of faith, which the Puritan hesitates to venture upon: which of the two, one asks, is the greater idealist?"<sup>12</sup> Both of these series were achieved through "Distancing." The series of seventeen prints that are seven inch by seven inch takes this process even farther, as does the book made using the size "Seven" inches.

Printed on acetate, the images are taken through the same series of steps as the intaglios in the "Lust for Life" series. They are exposed to intaglio plates treated with photo emulsion, then washed and etched.

The first printing was black ink on white paper. The printed forms, although digital, resemble classic intaglio printing techniques of aquatint, in their use of soft and hard ground as well as white ground. When traces of tusche become pixels, and the image is digitally enlarged (forcing the computer to compensate for missing data) everything works seamlessly to create the images as a new form of printmaking.

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<sup>12</sup> Edward Bullough, "Psychical Distance and a Factor in Art and an Esthetic Principle", *British Journal of Psychology*, Volume V, 1913, p. 217.



Infinite possibilities to expand on basic concepts open, such as, inking the plates in CMYK; changing the directions of the plates; adding transparency, or making the inks translucent or opaque, and/or printing multiple plates in many different directions. There are endless possibilities.

"Seven" became the theme of my art book that accompanied the seventeen black and white images. The original book was not necessarily meant to be seen by the general public; this echoes Duchamps's "Green Box"<sup>13</sup> (which was the title under which he published his notes for the creation of "The Bride and the Bachelors") which was not necessarily seen by the general public. However, events took their own course. The Puritans would have to go in another direction to find their safe death scenes. The images in "Seven" are actually relatively tame. It has been said, if the images don't make you wet they are not working. These images are not pushed to that extreme. The images in "Seven" are made even more harmless by reducing the size to seven inches by seven inches. The book is made in the fashion of an accordion, and one side shows seven full images while the other side reveals seven cropped images. Seven was printed on a special rice paper that has been traditionally used in printmaking, and is now possible to use with a computer printer. The alternate pages display handmade papers and art papers. One of the unifying elements in the book is the interplay of these handmade papers, some marbled, that work well with the India ink effect that the tusche achieved. Another element is the use of silver pages that sometimes fold out to become reflecting pools of imaginary water, or reflect from the opposite page the mirror image (or part of the image.) The marbled paper, and the silver reflective pages, as well as the prints themselves, all create a meditative mood of water and reflection, symbolic and reflective of water being a primary force in our existence.

Seven images in the book are named "Lady Anna", "Walter's Woman", "Walter", "Man in Flight", "Oh! A Horse", "Power Lunch", and "Man Standing". Originally, these images are not to be named, but it became easier to communicate with the people once they were given mildly humorous names.

"Lady Anna" was cropped around the face, and is one of the first images to draw the viewer into the book and the puzzle of the two sides; to realize that more is happening here than first

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<sup>13</sup> Tomkins, Calvin. *The Bride and the Bachelors*. (Penguin Group Penguin Books USA Inc. 1968.) p. 77.

expected. "Walter and his woman" make a thoughtful couple, each in their own separate world, "Walter..." as the voyeur, deep in his own thoughts, while "...His Woman" is in her own dream-state. Several parts of Walter are cropped; one is his face resting on the back of his hand, while another is the middle of his shin, with a strong highlight on the outer edge of the muscle. "Man in Flight" actually started as an etching with a figure of a massive male flying over a sleeping woman. A better title for this could be a quote from John Keats, "The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream--he awoke to find it truth".<sup>14</sup> The images were then covered with soft ground. Dried leaves and flowers were pressed into the soft ground and the surface was etched for the original image. These two elements, dried leaves and fresh flowers, describe the essence of life and death, beginning and end. The linear quality of the crossing over of the lines was cropped to make two of the seventeen images. "Oh! A Horse" is one of the few etchings that deal with clothing. The name arose spontaneously from many people first looking at the image, deciphering the content, and not knowing what to say; realize that a horse is the dominant character and they inevitably say "Oh! A Horse". One of the most exquisite abstractions is the one of the woman's hair flying through the air, from this image.

"Power Lunch" has a life of its own and was inadvertently seen by a foreign student, and was mistakenly placed in a glass display case during Family Day at RIT. She only saw it as enchanting. If art is meant to cause reflection and to encourage people to discuss their beliefs and private feelings, "Power Lunch" certainly has accomplished this task. Many discussions have taken place, transcending across cultural barriers, as to the appropriate nature of this work, among other topics. Although it was intended, as with all other works, as two consenting adults, a third person is seen by some in this image, along with a questions as to whether the original dominate two are indeed of the opposite sex? and which of the two is the dominate one? Several of the seventeen images are parts of this print. "Man Standing" was the last image to be abstracted. One of the most sensual images abstracted shows the man's hand pressed into the woman's thigh. The image of

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<sup>14</sup> Roberta Weir, *Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's Way of Seeing*, "Leonardo's Ink Bottle: The Artist's way of seeing." (Celestialarts: Berkeley, California. 1998), P. 192.



"Man Standing" displays the couple cheek to cheek, so that only the back of their heads and shoulders are revealed. This cut of heads touching is an intimate moment of closeness.

This body of work has come full circle: the original photographs, that were abstracted, layered, and altered in digital format have been transformed into hand-made prints that were further abstracted using digital and modern technology, thus creating an "Antinomy of Distance" that allows the viewer to appreciate the print without having seen the original subject matter. "Seven" is as Duchamp's "Green Box". The box itself is not necessary to appreciate "The Bride and the Bachelors". The artist role in society is to utilize every concept, with their imagination, to create the new golden age for a new millennium.

We may think using computers in art as new technology, but are not we all computers of a type?

"Art is a personal expression no matter how much or how little it covers of the universe. Whatever it encompasses, it has to be a sincere vision. The technical skill with which it is created is essential for its success. I see, in every artist, a priest of his own religion who wants to deliver his sermon in order to collect his believers. The places where he exposes his beliefs are art institutions and galleries. There are many priests but hardly any saints within a given epoch.

"I believe in complete freedom of expression. You have to choose your own god and interpret him in your own way. But you have to be sincere about it if you want your prayers to be appreciated and remembered.

"The brilliant mechanisms built in your heads are glorified computers. The creator must have constructed a great variety of such computers to try them out on so many animals. They registered only what was needed for their survival and reproduction. It was only when he attached to the computer a channel that had a direct spiritual contact with him that the human brain was completed and he announced, "Ecco Homo!"

"Once this computer is fed with the history of art and absorbs the influences of numerous works of art, soaks in beauty and horror, past and present circumstances and experiences, the result may be a mixture that is an intellectual production--or there may

be only a copy of something that has been done before. When the artist is capable of associating with the spirituality of the universe--that is to say when his soul feeds the computer as well--then the miracle happens. A striking balance of intellectual and emotional experience makes a great artwork. An original artwork will delight the responsive viewer."<sup>15</sup>.

Ideally, the artist would be working at the computer sitting in a turn-of-the-century handmade rocking chair, with one of Grandmother's handmade quilts close by, illuminated by a Roycrofters stained glass and hammered brass lamp, drinking tea from a teapot that was hand thrown by a friend. The computer will be, yet, another tool for their art. Just as photography has been a tool for artists for over a century, new technology will play a major part in artist's creations to come. After all, if all artists had shunned technology and tools, musicians would be whistling in the wind and visual artists would still be drawing in the sand with their fingers. Just as the accordion book weaves back and forth and reflects, so must an artist weave between total hands on control of their work and the distancing through technology. They are the magician first and the surgeon who uses all technical achievements to his advantage.

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<sup>15</sup> Lee Caplin *The Business of Art*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Published in cooperation with the National Endowment for the Arts, Prentice Hall, NJ 1989), p. 228.



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## Germanow-Coffey Gallery Announcement

June at the Gallery finds Priscilla Clay's etchings and works on paper. She holds a BFA from Virginia Commonwealth University in Painting and Printmaking with a minor in Art History. A MFA from Rochester Institute of Technology in Fine Arts Printmaking and a minor in Computer Graphic Design. She studied in Italy two summers with Swietlan Kraczyna. This year she has curate several shows at the Germanow-Coffey Gallery. This is her first one artist show in Rochester.

Etching is a lost art form, to many people, and the social and political values of printmaking have been forgotten in this country. Etchings such as in Goya's "The Disasters of War", series from the 1800's. Which can be seen in the Gallery this month on loan from Priscilla's Collection.

The work of Priscilla Clay will be on display and these etchings do not reflect any major statements against society, but do reflect a passion for the craft of etching. The contrast between light and dark show the artist background in photograph. Creating an aesthetic that takes black darker than any photograph could ever dream to be, rich, a velvety black and a contrast of a cool satin light, give these abstracted etching the feel of sensual skin as the eye touches the image.

Other works incorporate computer graphic design that represent the modern media with multi images appearing before us per second. Taking images through the photographic process to digital then separating the colors that are transferred to metal through yet another photo process and etched. The etched plates are red, blue and yellow (or RGB and CMYK). Many of the images are from photographs the artist took during travels through Italy and are of a classical content.

The processes represent ancient techniques using modern day technology. The images are classical, playful, and sensuous.











































































































