

Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

Artist's reception:

Sunday July 17, 3 - 5 pm

About the Artist:

Barlow Nelson was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After graduating from Dartmouth College, he served as an officer in the U. S. Navy then returned to study at the University of Tulsa, College of Law. He practiced law for 42 years, while also taking serigraph classes at the Philbrook Museum, University of Tulsa, and the Lachenmayer Arts Center. After retiring in 2007, Nelson moved to Chicago where he began taking regular silkscreen classes at the Hyde Park Art Center. His work has been shown in group exhibitions such as *Broad Shoulders* and *Brotherly Love* (2008) at the Art Center.

Barlow Nelson: *Pushing Ink*



The Red Dot

2010

screenprint

14 3/4 x 15 inches

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

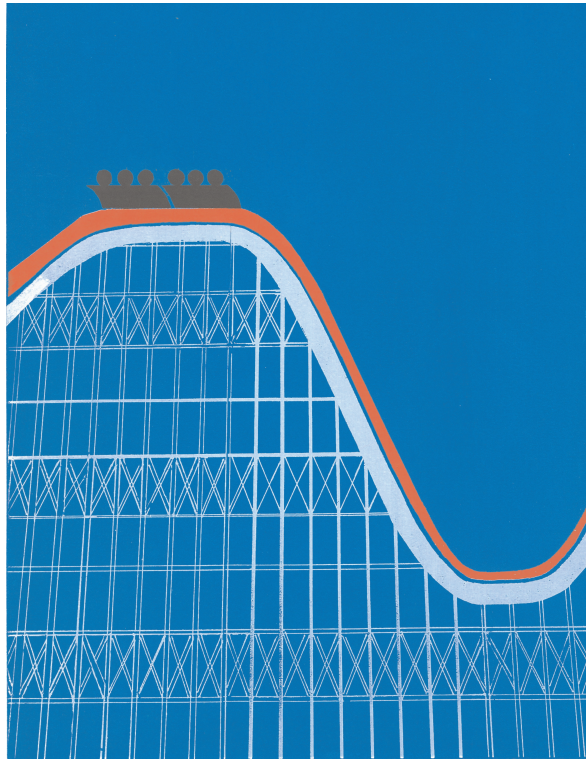
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The screen prints Barlow Nelson makes are highly personal works originating from his own responses to the everyday stimuli that surrounds us. Imagery employed in the screen prints by the Art Center's student and artist, ranges from serious to humorous and often takes inspiration from items or images that he encounters daily either in person or online. The simple curve of a dinner plate is translated into a graphic looking face in *10 gallon hat*. A painting Nelson observed at a friend's house serves as a departure point for the compositional permutation in *Untitled*. Even a randomly found leaflet can prompt Nelson to make a drawing of an old skating instructor as seen in *Nostalgia*. Nelson's interest in the representation of ordinary objects derives from his curiosity about the ways in which memories and objects are assessed.

Each print showcases a unique selection of colors that also bear specific personal associations. For instance, the red in *Lonesome Relic*, the artist calls "Chicago brick red" and references the old

red brick commonly found in Chicago's residential architecture. The purple detail in the skirt of the skater from *Nostalgia*, captures the color of a young girl's dress Nelson once saw. What makes him think of these? Perhaps it's a way to collapse time into a visual sensation. The displayed images with their uncanny compositions, contrasting color combinations and familiar, yet odd, shapes ooze a retro appeal, somewhere between nostalgia for old advertising imagery and the modernist aesthetic. As such they put us in a meditative state and a simpler time.



Zingo IV, 2010, screenprint, 17 x 18 inches

The contemplative feeling that these prints create contrasts sharply with the title of the exhibit. *Pushing Ink* suggests a

kind of struggle, if not a slightly aggressive act. This association does not refer to the subject matter but forces us to look into the direction of the process involved in making of the pieces. "Pushing ink" is also a colloquial term for making a print. It emphasizes the fact that at the core Barlow's practice is deeply connected to the

technical exploration of printmaking as a medium. His previous career as a lawyer informs the way he approaches printmaking. One could see correlations between the amount of preparation and the strict rules encountered in the practice of law and Barlow's inclination to test his creative ideas in relation to the boundaries of this demanding medium.

The process by which the silkscreens are made is difficult and timely. It takes years to master and Barlow has been printing on-and-off again for over 20 years with many instructors (and most recently with Chicago printmaker Elke Claus) to hone his skill. Due to the complex layers that go into making a print, Nelson allows the medium to dictate some of the finished aesthetic. When unexpected mistakes occur he responds to them by incorporating them into the fabric of the picture. This compositional flexibility allows the images on view to display a level of playfulness and freshness. Furthermore, by incorporating the space for error and playful experimentation, the artist puts us at ease with notion of the mistake and chance in the definition of art.



Comets, 2002, screenprint, 14 x 15 inches

Try to decode the silkscreens on view in Gallery 2 and it is easy to get lost in a Proustian like stream of consciousness. Offering no predetermined content or thematic unity, the silkscreens have the curious power to take us on a journey through our own memory, allowing us to unpeel layers of conscious and unconscious responses, association, images and stories. They tell us much more about ourselves than about the artist that made them, who produces the artwork, for the most part, to learn and perfect the different printmaking techniques that are new to him.

Magdalena Strzelczak
Exhibitions Fellow