

Related Events:

All events are free and open to the public.

Exhibition Reception

Sunday, July 19, 3-5pm

Art Thing

Tuesday, June 2, 6pm

The artist will talk informally about his work.

Artist's Workshop

Saturday, June 6 & Sunday, June 7, 1-5pm

A two-day class led by Matthew Harris exploring the creative possibilities of printing on clay.

About the Artist:

Matthew Harris received a B.F.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he was awarded a Hilldale Research Fellowship for study at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing and independent field research throughout China. From 2006-2008, he was an Artist-In-Residence at Lillstreet Art Center, where he currently teaches. In August 2009, he will begin an interdisciplinary M.F.A. program at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER**

5020 South Cornell Avenue Chicago, Illinois 60615 773.324.5520 www.hydeparkart.org

The Hyde Park Art Center is a not-for-profit organization that presents innovative exhibitions, primarily work by Chicago-area artists, and educational programs in the visual arts for children and adults of diverse backgrounds. The Center is funded in part by the Alphawood Foundation; The Chicago Community Trust; a City Arts III grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council; The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; The Leo S. Guthman Fund; The Irving Harris Foundation; The Illinois Arts Council, a state agency; The Joyce Foundation; JPMorgan Chase Foundation; The Mayer & Morris Kaplan Family Foundation; The MacArthur Foundation; The MacArthur Fund for Arts and Culture at Prince; The Orbit Fund; Polk Bros. Foundation; The Clinton Family Fund; The Sara Lee Foundation; South East Chicago Commission; The Wallace Foundation; and the generosity of its members and friends.

Hyde Park **ARTCENTER** Gallery 5

May 31 – July 26, 2009

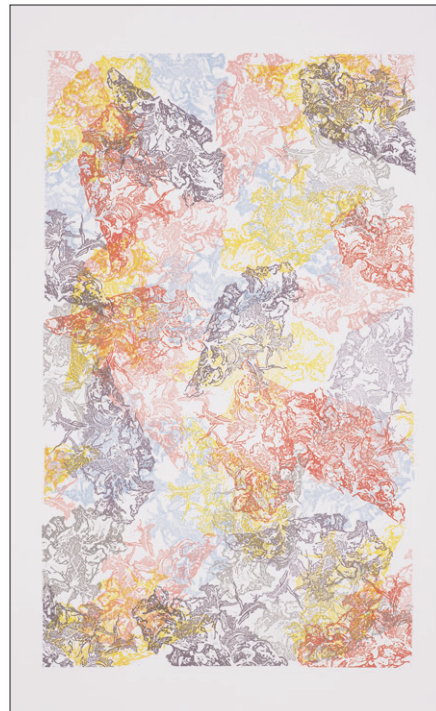
Matthew Harris: Beyond China



Court Lady After, 2008, stoneware, 30 x 13 x 10 inches

In the exhibition *Beyond China*, artist Matthew Harris explores themes of tradition and expansion, both in his own artwork and in the world at large. The title of the exhibition has a dual meaning, referring to Harris's experiences in China and also to his artistic movement beyond the medium of clay. This new body of work exemplifies Harris's exploration into watercolor and print while still maintaining a strong interest in sculptural forms.

From 2002-2003, Harris lived in China on a fellowship studying Chinese ceramics, literature, and language. His experiences included visits to small villages where artists practice ancient ceramic techniques using only local materials. Harris also visited factories that produce consumer goods such as Pokemon bowls, taking special note of the tension between ancient and modern civilizations in contemporary Chinese society.



Untitled, 20 09, unique linoleum relief print, 43 x 29 x 2 inches

Such tension is represented in various ways in the artwork that makes up *Beyond China*. The series of segmented and silk-screened busts, entitled *Slice*, embodies the reality of ancient traditions and cultural heritage struggling to survive amongst rapid change and economic development in modern China. The busts themselves represent the ancient heritage through traditional Chinese statuary figures. The silk-screened images, visible in the sliced cross-sections of the busts, portray modern cultural realities such as the destruction of temples due to development, Chinese youth laboring in sweatshops to produce trivial consumer goods for export, and the pervasiveness of material desires manifested in pricey designer products--in this case the well-known plaid pattern of Burberry.

Harris's watercolor paintings attempt to express the symbiotic relation between the economies of China and the United States. The artist explains, "Although China is geo-

graphically far away, it is economically close. We interact with Chinese laborers almost every time we shop." The images in the watercolors are derived from photographs Harris took of sunglasses and baby dolls for sale in a Chicago store. These are then placed within silhouettes of Chinese figures.

The wallpaper print, *Patterned Eras*, appears from a distance to be composed of abstract decorative elements. A closer look reveals figures representing three significant eras in Chinese history: Confucianism (Confucius), Communism (Mao Zedong), and Capitalism (Ronald McDonald).

The fourteen untitled silhouettes are each diluted into a single flat image, devoid of detail or individuality. This loss of unique characteristics represents the homogenization and generational loss of past traditions in China's contemporary culture. Two white sculptures on either side of the series of silhouettes further explore this theme of fading boundaries between global cultures. Within the context of the exhibition one assumes the forms are derived from Chinese sources but on their own they become ambiguous shapes not easily identified with any particular culture.

Each relief print begins with a single object or figure found in traditional Chinese paintings. Isolated from its context, the image is repeatedly printed over and over until it begins to lose its original identity. The result is evocative of the transformations occurring in China as its culture both evolves from and struggles with a national identity that is closely tied to its ancient social roots. The crowded overlapping patterns in Harris's prints relate to the chaotic speed at which these changes are taking place and the social confusion that such fast-paced transformations can cause.



Relocation, 2008, stoneware and mixed media, 10 x 16 x 7 inches

Charles Fox
Exhibitions Assistant