

Hyde Park**ART**CENTER Gallery 2

May 4 - July 27, 2008

Faster, Cheaper, Bolder:

Silkscreen prints by students
at the Hyde Park Art Center



Installation view

and Olivia Schreiner for the exhibition emphasizes both the technical and thematic characteristics of silkscreen.

Art provides a forum for critical discourse in a period in which American consumerism, waste, and media-saturation are at an all-time high. Silkscreen is one method that can quickly and inexpensively spread the message that our actions have social, economic, ecological, and political consequences. As many of the students' works suggest, rarely has boldness been so imperative.

Jessica Hester
Exhibitions Assistant

Related Events:

Exhibition Reception

Sunday, May 11, 3 - 5 pm

All events are free and open to the public.

Hyde Park**ART**CENTER

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.

To be bold is to defy the limits of conventional thought or action. It is to be conspicuous, striking, or brazen. The pieces in *Faster, Cheaper, Bolder*, an exhibition of student works from Elke Claus and Olivia Schreiner's silkscreen classes at the Art Center, range from playful to politically engaged. Whether irreverent or impassioned, the works invite us to explore the relationship between high art and mass-produced images and text.

The historic distinction between fine art and popular culture has been destabilized by Marcel Duchamp's nomination of un-altered mass produced "readymades" as fine art, Richard Prince's appropriation of

the Marlboro cowboy and other advertising images, and Claes Oldenburg's larger-than-life sculptural replicas of everyday objects. But no one is more famous for problematizing the division between art and popular culture than Pop artist Andy Warhol. In the 1960s, Warhol famously painted the Campbell's soup can; he quickly switched to making silkscreen prints of photographs from newspaper archives or film studios. These serial prints were not only artistic depictions of mass-produced objects; they were mass-produced objects themselves. Employing silkscreen, formerly an industrial tool, as a method for producing "high art" sparked an artistic revolution.



Barlow Nelson, *Untitled*, 2008.
Ink on paper, 20 x 25 inches.

"Faster," "cheaper," and "bolder" are perhaps the perfect words to describe why silkscreen has become such a potent and provocative medium. Low production cost and ease of reproduction make silkscreen an economic and efficient form of art making.

The simple process of making a silkscreen begins by applying a stencil to fabric - typically silk or polyester. An image is produced by



Shylo Bisnet, *Burlesque Stomp*,
2008. Ink on paper, 17 x 14 inches.

pushing ink through the stencil using a squeegee. The final step is repeated on different papers to create multiples of the same image.

Affordability and ease of reproduction have also rendered silkscreen an ideal art form for social agitation. Warhol's use of silkscreen may have caused stirrings of an artistic uprising, but the process has also been integral to social and cultural revolts. Silkscreen offers a convenient and inexpensive replication of images and text that makes it possible for individuals to disseminate their personal manifestos to a wide audience. Silkscreen is a medium that reconciles the aesthetic and inflammatory. In addition to being utilized as a means of producing propaganda, silkscreen has become a medium of choice for subcultures, grassroots activists, and fans of the do-it-yourself aesthetic and lifestyle. In a sense, these counter-culture connotations have been institutionalized when the silkscreen aesthetic has been appropriated for logos, cd covers, and typefaces.

The works in this exhibition are surreal and subversive, cerebral and comical. The diverse prints are a testament to the versatility and relevance of the medium. Michelle Nordmeyer's condemnatory *W* is at one end of the spectrum. Nordmeyer's work is fundamentally political: it raises questions about the necessity for and validity of our current military deployments. Shylo Bisnet's *Burlesque Stomp*, featuring a stilettoed leg and the proclamation, "Stomp the Patriarchy," is a tongue-in-cheek cultural critique that juxtaposes a feminist sentiment with a highly-sexualized image. The result is an illustration of the highly complex questions surrounding issues of gender equality and female empowerment. Abigail Samaha's *Horse Race* exemplifies the myriad artistic possibilities offered by the medium. This graphic print has sharp, clearly-defined lines that are reminiscent of etchings or wood-block carvings. The work selected by Elke Claus