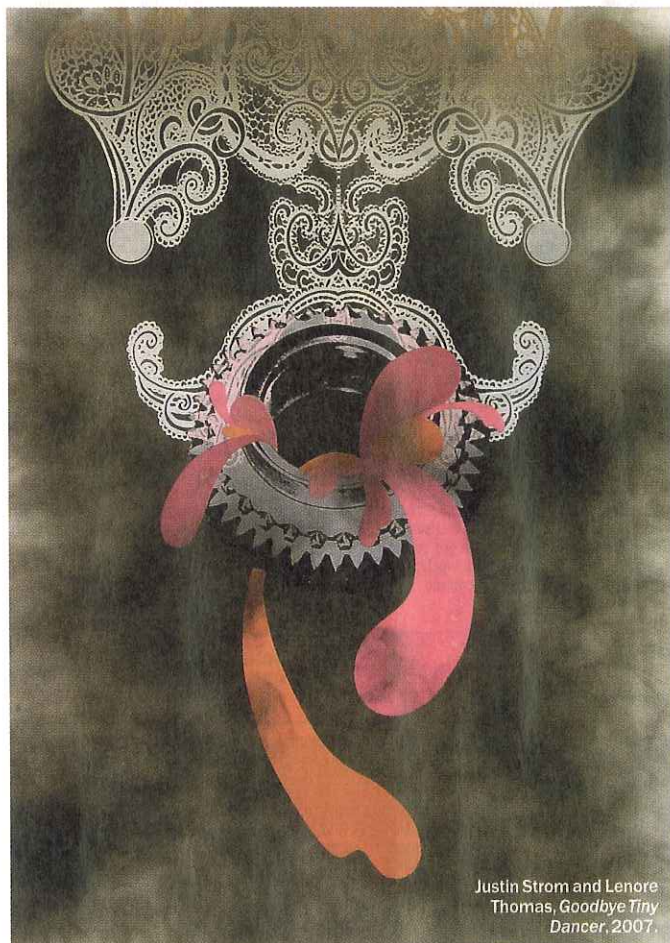


Art & Design

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Justin Strom and Lenore Thomas, *Goodbye Tiny Dancer*, 2007.

Printing finesse

The Hyde Park Art Center highlights two cities' cutting-edge printmaking. By Lauren Weinberg

A young girl vomits a torrent of red flowers in Philadelphia artist Judith Schaechter's deliciously perverse linocut *Child Bride* (2001). It's the most twisted of the experimental prints in "Broad Shoulders and Brotherly Love," on view at the Hyde Park Art Center (HPAC) through March 29.

The enjoyable exhibition assembles approximately 40 works from the archives of Chicago's Anchor Graphics and Philadelphia-based Philagrafika, two nonprofits dedicated to promoting the medium. We thought the show would reveal rich, unknown connections between the two cities' printmaking scenes. It doesn't matter that we were wrong.

Cocurator James Iannaccone, 31, the assistant to Anchor Graphics director David Jones, explains that he intends to present a snapshot of contemporary printmaking styles and techniques: All of the works on display were created within the past ten years, most within the past three. When asked why the medium continues to flourish, given that computers have yielded much less labor-intensive ways of reproducing images, Iannaccone says artists like the physical aspects of printmaking; working with stone, metal and ink becomes especially attractive when "spending multiple hours a day in front of a computer is the norm."

Despite the exhibition's title, its works don't reflect geographic idiosyncrasies, according to Iannaccone, even though Philagrafika's mission is to promote Philadelphia artists. The organization, which celebrates its ninth anniversary this year, has plenty to choose from.

Philadelphia's not only a haven for artists priced out of New York; the city's been a printmaking hub since before Benjamin Franklin set up his print shop there. It's now home to famous studios such as Space 1026, where two of the prints in "Broad Shoulders and Brotherly Love" were made.

Founded in 1990, Anchor Graphics has bolstered Chicago's own vibrant printmaking community by offering lectures, workshops and studio space at Columbia College, where it's been located since 2006. But the prints Anchor Graphics contributed to this show were made by its international group of artists-in-residence.

The resulting diversity is the primary strength of "Broad Shoulders and Brotherly Love." Iannaccone and his cocurator, Philagrafika's Rebecca Mott, chose an eclectic assortment of

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abstract and figurative pieces by artists working in lithography, screenprinting, engraving, etching and combinations of multiple processes. Some prints have a rough, overtly handmade aesthetic. Others incorporate digital photographs or layer images in sophisticated ways that reflect the help of computers. "The exhibition shows how comfortably traditional and contemporary means of printmaking fit together," Iannaccone says. "Much of today's print processes are direct descendants of older print technology. The idea that oil and water don't mix, which Alois Senefelder used to invent lithography in the 1790s, is behind today's high-speed offset press."

The next several weeks bring dozens of opportunities to learn more about contemporary printmaking, as Chicago museums and galleries mount shows to complement the Southern Graphics Council's annual conference, which Columbia and Anchor Graphics host March 25–29. Iannaccone admits the SGC—a nonprofit whose members include printmakers across the U.S.—is considering changing its misleading name. It's about time: Good printmaking has no borders.

The Hyde Park Art Center hosts a reception for "Broad Shoulders and Brotherly Love" on Sunday 8, 3–5pm. See *Museums & Institutions*.

Review

Robert Davis/ Michael Langlois

★★★★★

"House of the Rising Sun," Chicago Cultural Center, through Apr 5 (see *Museums & Institutions*).

With a suggestive wink, a naked, pornographically perfect blond becomes the focal point of "House of the Rising Sun," a carefully curated suite of four recent works by Chicago- and Brooklyn-based collaborators Robert Davis and Michael Langlois. The woman draws the viewer's gaze to the center of *Babylon*, a beautiful, sexually charged, oversize blue-tinted painting inspired by '60s and '70s rock posters. The view from this modern Tower of Babel transfixes us: Davis and Langlois surround the blond with languid nudes, twining vegetation, frolicking grasshoppers and other animals—including a pig humping a goose.

Look closer, and this place seems more Escheresque than utopian, however. The artists portray a complex balance between power and weakness: Images of women in bondage give *Babylon*'s flowery psychedelia a sadomasochistic tinge, while two morbidly obese sumo wrestlers who pose on either side of the blond increase the sense of excess. Tapping into the libido's dark side, *Babylon* feels like a grown man's reflection on his greedy, horny teenage mind.

Davis and Langlois's expertly crafted painting *Dads*, which they based on photos of their fathers during the *Brady Bunch* era, also makes nostalgia a critical theme. By expending a vast amount of effort to reproduce their dads' instant portraits, the artists make us question whether sentimental yearning benefits us or keeps us rooted in the past. Yet *Face of God*'s bold, abstract, bright-yellow depiction of the sun provides a radiant conclusion to the show, a hopeful end to a fresh take on self-reflection.—Amy Schroeder



Davis and Langlois, *Dads*, 2008.

PHOTO: BOTTOM, COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS