

May 28 to June 20, 2009

Opening Reception
Thursday, May 28 | 7-9 pm

Artists' Talks at Open Studio
Thursday, May 28 | 6 pm. Free admission

Kai Chan

Seaweeds and Other Floating Things



Kai Chan, *Seaweeds and Other Floating Things* (detail), screenprint on rice paper, 48 x 178 cm, 2009

Kai Chan: Floating Worlds

by Corinna Ghaznavi

In his many years of practice, Kai Chan has created drawings, paintings, sculptures, and jewelry; he has worked with diverse materials including paper, found objects, stainless steel, and textiles. Printmaking has now been added to his repertoire—a technique that he was interested in because he felt that it would challenge him to think differently about the process of making art. Printmaking requires strict planning and involves indelible mark-making and so Chan came to Open Studio prepared with a series of drawings and a set of ideas about how they would be used. Almost immediately, he changed directions: the necessary planning and precision nonetheless allowed him an unexpected freedom in execution, which resulted in a series of works under the overall title of *Seaweeds and Other Floating Things*.

Read together, the titles form a poetic rhythm: *Floating, Floating World, Seaweeds, Other Things, Other*, a rhythm that becomes visible in the prints themselves. Chan used a limited number of forms on a series of different papers ranging in format—some are long and horizontal, others on paper so thin it is almost transparent, others still on Japanese paper that is dyed to a rich saturated green—creating a series of works that offer endless possibilities. If we imagine the different string of words that form the various titles we see gently moving seaweed, we see water, ripples, waves; we move through ideas of floating gently, then aimlessly, then consider emergence, submergence and are led into the depths of worlds concealed beneath. Water transports, connects, tows, ebbs and flows. Objects float, meet, mutate, devour, and drown. Sea worlds are translucent, opaque, mysterious and magical. Somehow, as each series unfolds, all these disparate things surface and offer as many interpretations of single forms as is possible.

For Claude Levy-Strauss, images of myths were the materials of the *bricoleur*. His definition of these kinds of images was twofold: that they had a use which mythical thought “detached,” and that they could be used again, either for the same purpose or, if diverted, for a new one. He imagined a kaleidoscope which provides a vast but not unlimited number of patterns that could project provisional models, and that these models were based on patterns expressed in terms of strict relations between its parts.¹ The importance here is the provisional model based on the different use of parts; repetition ensures a loose foundation that demonstrates coherence while diversion from the original, through new juxtapositions, different colours, and backgrounds, allows for a dynamic, open-ended, and tempo-

ral model. This is achieved by Chan in this series of works: a limited number of forms are used in the most extensive way possible to open up ways of seeing and imagining a floating world; A sea of floating forms that assemble, hold, and then float apart towards a new constellation. We see a myriad of colours extending across the paper like dancing figures that culminate, at the far right side, in a single form, like a punctum. Then we see forms laid down on a background of delicate drawn lines that recall a music score, then again a background so solid that it pushes into the foreground, unsettling the pictorial space. The stark luminosity of *Seaweeds*, where forms are laid down against delicate tracing paper stands in extreme contrast to *Other* where the deeply green paper saturates the dense central composition. Like the sea, which can transport from one place to another, each variation in the model can transport the viewer to a different aesthetic, conceptual and emotional space.

The two newest sculptures that I saw when visiting the artist's studio are a startling example of harmony created by merging two radically different elements: a stainless steel form combined with silk thread makes a sculpture that is breathtaking in its beauty and apparent simplicity. Here we have together the solid and ephemeral, weight and lightness, the pristine surface of the steel and hot magenta of the thread. These sculptures appear to me aptly connected to the prints made at Open Studio where Chan captures the complex rhythm and patterns that exist in tandem with chaos, mutation, and the anomalous. The stasis of the metal is interrupted by the gentle movement of the slight thread, underlining the dynamic and changing aspects of a floating world anchored only momentarily.

¹ Claude Levy-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962: 35f._

Kai Chan is a textile artist living and working in Toronto. He has exhibited across Canada, the United States, Japan, Australia and Europe. He has received numerous grants from the Canada Council and Ontario Arts Council and awards including the Jean A. Chalmers National Crafts Award (1998), and the Saidye Bronfman Award for Excellence in the Fine Crafts (2002). He is represented by David Kaye Gallery in Toronto, Galerie Elena Lee in Montréal and Galerie Ra in Amsterdam.

"I would like to thank everyone I met at Open Studio who are so friendly and encouraging; in particular to Jill Graham who helped me in my preparation for the printing and to Daryl Vocat without his expertise and patience I would not have anything to show. Also I would like to acknowledge the support of the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts in supporting this project." -Kai Chan

Corinna Ghaznavi is a writer and curator based in Grey County, Ontario. She has curated exhibitions throughout Canada and in the Netherlands. In addition to numerous catalogue essays, her work has been published in Canadian Art, Parachute, Espace, Flash Art, and Artpress. Corinna completed her B.A. in Art History, American Literature and Germanistic at the Albrecht-Ludwigs University in Freiburg, Germany in 1994, and her M.A. at the Heinrich Heine University in Duesseldorf in 1996. She is currently working on her doctoral thesis, *Animals and representation*, at the University of Western Ontario.

Through the Visiting Artist Program, Open Studio is accessible to all professional artists, with or without printmaking experience, to explore and develop new bodies of work through print media. Each year, four artists produce their work in the Open Studio facilities followed by two-person exhibitions in the Open Studio Gallery.

Open Studio, Canada's leading printmaking centre, is dedicated to the production, preservation and promotion of contemporary fine art prints.

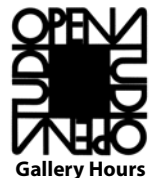
Open Studio acknowledges the generous support of its government funders, members, individual donors and volunteers.

2008-2009 Supporters:

Anonymous
The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
Emerald Foundation
F.K. Morrow Foundation
The Gallery Wall Inc.
The Japanese Paper Place
The McLean Foundation
The Ontario Arts Council Foundation:
Arts Endowment Fund Program
Vale Inco

Charitable Registration No. 11906 8823 RR0001

Open Studio is an active member of ARCCO, the Association of Artist Run Centres and Collectives of Ontario.



Open Studio

401 Richmond Street W. Suite 104
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8
tel/fax 416.504.8238
office@openstudio.on.ca
www.openstudio.on.ca

Gallery Hours

Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 5 pm

May 28 to June 20, 2009

Opening Reception
Thursday, May 28 | 7-9 pm

Artists' Talks at Open Studio
Thursday, May 28 | 6 pm. Free admission

Endi Poskovic

Marry Folly at Mt. Blanca and Some Other Stories



Endi Poskovic, *Untitled iceberg*, stone lithograph in one color, 16" x 21", 2009



Open Studio
401 Richmond Street W. Suite 104
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8
tel/fax 416.504.8238
office@openstudio.on.ca
www.openstudio.on.ca

Gallery Hours
Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 5 pm

The Itinerant World of Endi Poskovic

by Eric Mathew

The works presented by Endi Poskovic in *Marry Folly at Mt. Blanca and Some Other Stories* give the viewer an insightful snapshot of an artist in transition. Of the works presented, three are recent stone lithographs, and the balance recent woodcuts. At first glance the dissimilarity of these media might seem a bit disingenuous. Though, given some context, one can begin to appreciate that what Poskovic is exhibiting is that which many artists are afraid to show an audience – those moments when an artist's creative output is in flux, perhaps unsure of its direction, and surely undergoing regeneration.

Many of the woodcuts in this exhibition are indicative of Poskovic's recent oeuvre. *In the Western Land* is an engaging example of such work. The composition is anchored by red text in serif characters which reads *La Liberté y est*. Above the text, we see an expansive landscape with rolling hills, butted up against a flat green plain. In the foreground marooned in the grass is a tiny red boat – a caricature of a boat really. A cloud or plume emanating from beyond the hills looms menacingly over the boat. The cloud is elaborately patterned with a stylized Art Deco treatment composed of overlapping arcs and circles punctuated with thin vertical lines. The vertical lines then descend into the foreground as rain, or some form of unwelcome precipitation.

Poskovic's strength lies in his ability to graphically meld these disparate elements into a cohesive composition both sublime and surreal. *In the Western Land* is undoubtedly playful as a result of its bright, near primary palette and Poskovic's skill as a mark maker. For this viewer, however, the beauty lies in this woodcut's dark underbelly—the loneliness it connotes and the notion that what is depicted in this picture is a foreshadowing of some dark fate to come. This practiced formula wherein Poskovic combines an exotic text (rarely English and sometimes nonsensical) with a sublime picture immediately conjured familiar imagery in the form of old travel posters. Rail and steamship advertisements of the early twentieth century often depicted stunning landscapes rendered with graphic economy. These ads also seduced the viewer with a dark exoticism and the thrill of the unknown. Poskovic's work explores themes of journey, isolation, and displacement and employs the same visual accessibility and dark exoticism of early travel posters.

It should not come as a surprise that these themes are important to Poskovic's work. Originally from Sarajevo, Bosnia, Poskovic spent time as a touring Balkan folk musician before turning to visual art as a career. He landed in Buffalo, New York, and eventually settled in Los Angeles where he began producing numerous series of colour woodcuts. Impressive in their scale and execution, this body of work has been exhibited extensively across

the globe. Poskovic's production mirrors his milieu and his widely traveled past. His early print work was suffused with brooding patterns and religious iconography gleaned from his multi-cultural upbringing in what was then known as Yugoslavia. His woodcuts reference the landscapes of the American Midwest, and his palette evolved to echo the sunny and luminous play-ground of California. Geographic relocation has once again begun to reshape his pictures.

A recent move to Michigan, far from Lotus Land, has apparently instilled some new directions within the imagery. The primary subject of *Marry Folly at Mt. Blanca*, whose wood blocks were cut at Open Studio, is a sullen and abject octopus who is mysteriously beached in a barren scrubby landscape in the lee of snow-capped mountain peaks. Who is this fish out of water? Notice the wandering eyes of the octopus searching for new directions; these new directions may not be too far off.

During his residency at Open Studio, Poskovic returned to stone lithography as a medium. For Poskovic, print media is fundamentally about inquiry through drawing and mark making, and there is an incomparable seductiveness to drawing on a litho stone. Poskovic instinctively reached into his lexicon of imagery. Here we see imagery that is not new, but repurposed. Signature subjects—such as the hulking blimp—are rendered through stark-er monotone means. In *Moonlight Bay*, the blimp appears devoid of the patterning and elaborate graphic stylization of his earlier woodcuts depicting the same subject. Curiously, no text is offered as additional subtext to these new lithographs. It would be hearsay to suggest that Michigan is responsible for the stark new direction of Poskovic's imagery, but what can be said definitively is that we are seeing an honest and raw cross section of Poskovic's work as it evolves – something few artists are willing to bear.

Endi Poskovic (b. Sarajevo, Bosnia, 1969) is a graduate of Sarajevo School of Music (Primary Music Diploma 1982-86), Sarajevo School of Applied Arts (Diploma in Fine Arts 1983-86), University of Sarajevo Academy of Fine Arts (BFA 1986-90), and State University of New York at Buffalo (MFA 1991-93). He has represented the US in virtually all major international print biennials and triennials and is the recipient of numerous grants, fellowships and prizes and his works are in numerous public collections in the US and abroad. He has been on faculty at universities across the US, has lectured extensively as a visiting artist throughout the US and abroad, and is currently tenured Associate Professor of Art at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor School of Art and Design and CREES Faculty Associate in the University of Michigan's Center for Russian and East European Studies.

Endi Poskovic would like to thank Jane Low Beer and Rochelle Rubinstein for being great hosts; Eric Mathew for his essay; Jill Graham for making his prints come through; and Open Studio staff and artists.

A print based artist from Toronto, **Eric Mathew** completed a BFA at Queen's University, and an MFA at York University. Recent projects include the Live with Culture street banners adorning the streets of Toronto, and a large wall installation at the AGO's Massive Uprising party. Eric will present a new installation at the printmaking triennial Graphica Creativa '09, in Jyväskylä, Finland.