



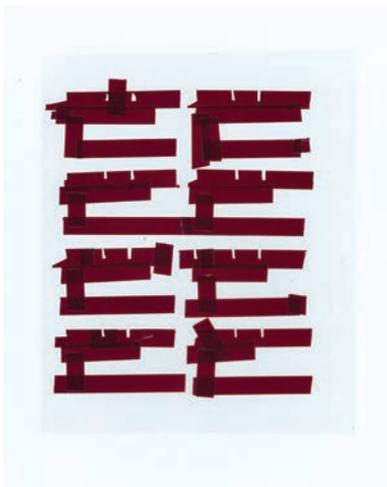
## Hazel Eckert: *Traces*

Eckert plays with alternate notions of making—employing tactics such as collecting and displaying. She engages in a turn towards the compiled as art, a notion at play within the lineage of contemporary art resulting from Duchamp’s introduction of the readymade.<sup>4</sup> Eckert explores the found object as a means of speaking about materiality, drawing everyday materials directly into her art practice. Throughout the exhibition she plays with various forms of collage and assemblage, grouping and overlapping found and produced prints, papers, and transparencies. These new works are an exercise in observing the fragmentary, and the outlying space that surrounds printmaking.

Eckert works in a commercial letterpress printshop where she collects all manner of debris and peripheral materials—from ink and grease stained offcuts, to the leaders of film negatives used to produce printing plates. In her series of material studies titled *Peripheral Vision* (2014) she arranges and suspends such fragments within the space of a traditional picture frame, making them highly aestheticized objects for the viewer to contemplate on a formal, but also almost anthropological level. Across the room in *Present Tension* (2014), her material studies become points of departure for an installation of layered prints, which reference their silhouettes and tonal qualities to create geometric fields and voids. The haphazard nature of their grouping also references spaces of work—reminiscent of a studio wall filled with tests, samples or points of reference.

Susan Stewart describes collections as “... a form of art as play, a form of involving the reframing of objects within a world of attention and manipulation of context.”<sup>5</sup> This approach seems very much in keeping with Eckert’s methods. She describes her practice as a form of “visual research: a process-oriented investigation of [her] environment.”<sup>6</sup> Eckert reframes her found objects in a way that subverts their natural order and purpose. Although her accumulation is purposeful, it does not enter the territory of classification or inventory, Eckert prefers to address the presence of her artefacts rather than control them.

At the centre of the exhibition, *Offcuts* (2014) assembles found film leaders taken from the edges of large negatives used to generate photopolymer plates. Each object exhibits an irregular atmospheric horizontal fade, oscillating between shades of black and grey. The patterning in these negatives alludes to an abstract, landscape-esque space. Eckert extends this intrinsic reference to space by overlapping her accumulation of films in an arrangement that protrudes from the wall. The array is a slowly shifting grid, a study of translucence as the films interact and create a sense of depth through areas of light and dark space.



Emphasizing the shapes, stains and the inherent line within her collected fragments, Eckert highlights tone and form as elements of both purpose and chance. These scraps of paper, film and transparency are elusive of subject matter, yet their materiality alludes to some unpictured image or product. Likewise, their status as material culture and the evidence of use-value they bare creates a sense of reverence for this detritus. Collecting is a means of understanding objects by creating proximity and relationships between them. Umberto Eco suggests that most collections are

infinitely capable of expansion, often based on subjective, incongruous and expandable mandates or passions. And, that collectors are prone to “a taste for accumulation and increase ad infinitum.”<sup>7</sup> In Eckert’s instance, there will always be more offcuts, more possibilities to salvage and arrange these traces of process.

## Conclusions

The works in *Traces* and *Wayfinding* create and compile curiosities. Each artist engages with curiosity as a product and result of their work, by obscuring and revealing details and materiality. By encapsulating an object in a frame or a contained viewing area it becomes elevated, transformed. Through these tactics both artists dialogue with cultures of musicological display. By isolating the ephemera she collects, Eckert gives it a rarified status, while Lam’s viewing windows and false wall lend her dioramas an air of preciousness and authority. Both Eckert and Lam physically layer cut paper and other materials to highlight a sense of wonder that can be found in transforming the everyday into something not quite ordinary.

<sup>1</sup>Rugoff, Ralph, and Toby Kamps. *Small World*. La Jolla, CA: Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, 2000. 6

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 7

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. 7

<sup>4</sup>Watkins, Jonathan. “Every Day.” In *The Everyday*. Ed. Stephen Johnstone. London: Whitechapel, 2008. 63

<sup>5</sup>Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1993. 151

<sup>6</sup>Eckert, Hazel. *Artists Statement*. 2014

<sup>7</sup>Eco, Umberto. *The Infinity of Lists*. New York: Rizzoli, 2009. 165

## Artists' Biographies

**Hazel Eckert** (Nick Novak Fellowship recipient) is an emerging multi-disciplinary artist and printer based in Toronto. Her work has been presented in solo and group exhibitions, including The Toronto Artist Project. In 2010 Hazel received The Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition’s Best in Printmaking award and participated in Atelier Graff’s Insertion Project in Montreal, Quebec, which was funded in part by an Ontario-Quebec Residency Grant from the Ontario Arts Council.

*Traces* has been produced with the generous support of the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council and the Nick Novak Fellowship from Open Studio. This exhibition has been shaped by hours logged and materials collected at Lunar Caustic Press and the insightful critiques provided by the YYZLAB community. Hazel Eckert would like to thank her family and friends for their constant love and encouragement, especially Daniel Neill, Colin Rogers, Kate MacNeill and Craig Rodmore for their constant feedback, technical expertise and committed support.

**Annyen Lam** (Don Phillips Scholarship recipient) received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from OCAD University in 2012 and is currently based in Toronto. Her practice includes lithography, screenprinting, book arts, and cut paper works. She has exhibited throughout Canada and has participated in shows and print exchanges in Japan, Russia and Venezuela.

Annyen extends her deepest gratitude to Flora Shum and Emily Cook of Paperhouse Studio for their valuable help; to Leah Ataide for her expertise and advice; to Pudy Tong for his ongoing guidance and assistance; to Barbara Clark for her continuous support; to the Open Studio community for their generous help and good energy; and to her friends and colleagues for their care and encouragement.

## Writer's Biography

**Kristie MacDonald** is a visual artist and writer who lives and works in Toronto. She holds a BFA from York University specializing in Visual Arts (2008), and an MI from the University of Toronto specializing in Archival Studies (2011). MacDonald has recently exhibited her work at the International Print Centre (NYC), Gallery 44 (Toronto), and Xpace Cultural Centre (Toronto).

**Open Studio Scholarships/Fellowships** are awarded annually to artists of merit to develop their professional practice and artistic excellence. They are 12 months in duration and provide print media-based artists with free access to Open Studio’s facilities to produce new work and engage in professional development opportunities.

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