

Recent prints, 2011 -14

I made a series of photographic screen prints in the early 70s, and occasional mono-prints over the years, but I have only recently come to fine art prints, invited by the Royal Academy Schools to work on an edition with them in 2011. I loved it. Hen Coleman was the printer and with her I made *Ruby Tuesday*. The crucial moment was when I asked for a second red to be pulled over the top right rectangle. I had planned for further stages, but that red suddenly opened up the space and everything clicked into place as I wanted, so I decided it was finished.

I think I kept postponing making prints because it is so different as a process from the way I normally work. I imagined it to be like painting back to front, or inside out. I work strategically but also with a great deal of improvisation, and I enjoy the relationship between these polarities. I thought printmaking would not allow such a free play between them. It doesn't, but I have found it offers different possibilities, which have taken a while for me to grasp.

My second print was a smallish silk-screen (*Mesh*) at Advanced Graphics, for their London Suite II, in 2012, and something similar happened towards the end of the process. I had built a linear mesh of blues and reds, with three apertures to the solid colours beneath. I wanted the space to twist more, and Bob Saich suggested simply glazing over one of the shapes, which I was amazed to find did the trick. It brought the rosy-pink up to the surface, which in turn complicated the deeper, darker space beyond in exactly the way I had wanted.

Then last summer I made a colour etching (*Drift*) with Peter Kozovitz at Thumbprint Press, at the invitation of Other Criteria. At first, when painting the black stop-out onto the shiny metal, I had slowly lapsed into being a painter again, liking the black on bronze, then realizing I was relating to it as direct painting. I am so used to responding visually to what emerges in front of my eyes as I work that it takes effort to remember that in printing these are merely preparatory stages for something quite different. This print was quite an adventure, seeing the first plates go through the press, then struggling to get the right transparency for the overlaid shape that was to float above a multicoloured grid. I came in one morning rather despondently, after many failed attempts to get exactly the degree of translucency I wanted. Pete had tried something new and I saw straight away it was right.

My most recent silk screen (*Bridge*), in 2013, was made with Kip Gresham at Cambridge. He already knew my paintings and was sensitive to the adjustments I have to make in a print studio. Again, it was one crucial step towards the end that clinched it, in this case Kip's suggestion of glazing the very dark grid that crossed over blocks of high-key colour. This sheen was barely visible, but it animated the darks and helped them in their relationship with the strong colour beneath.

So these four different prints all have something in common - my interest in how space can be constructed on a surface, opened up by colour relationships and various transparencies. How an image might eventually be arrived at, through this exploration. They address all sorts of other sensations too, but it has been fascinating to discover how different printmaking is from painting, and yet how my interests can be explored, expressed, in this other process, this other medium. I think of the works as collaborations with artist-printmakers, whose great skill and expertise was for a short time at my disposal. Each experience was different, not only because of the various studios and processes, but also the different temperaments of the collaborators, and how I related to each. It was surprisingly good to be a raw learner again.

Some of the things that happened during printmaking have fed back into painting, again unexpectedly. The motif in *Drift* continues to fascinate me, and I am still exploring it through painting methods. I made some paintings directly influenced by the contrasts of dark/ bright in *Bridge*, and I am always hoping for that shock of resolution that happened in *Ruby Tuesday*, when one small move makes for a sudden conclusion.