

# GUNPOWDER FOR THE MIND



JULY 7 – AUGUST 25, 2017

APRIL DEAN  
ERIC HILL  
CAITLIN MULLAN  
ROWAN PANTEL  
ROBERT TRUSZKOWSKI

WE ARE  
NEVER  
AS BRAVE  
AS WE  
SHOULD BE

ART GALLERY OF REGINA



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## GUNPOWDER FOR THE MIND

*Gunpowder for the Mind* brings together a diverse group of artists exploring the medium of printmaking in innovative ways. Often the artists incorporate traditional analogue techniques that haven't changed in decades, if not hundreds of years, while blending them with digital processes and tools invaluable to artists working today.

The work of April Dean, Eric Hill, Caitlin Mullan, Rowan Pantel and Robert Truskowski explores how modern printmaking practices build upon the past and offers a glimpse into the future of printmaking.

At its core, printmaking relies on the transfer of an image from a matrix (whether a silkscreen, lithography stone, copper plate or relief block) onto a substrate (often, but not always) paper. There is also the historical convention of creating editions of prints, but as *Gunpowder* demonstrates, contemporary printmakers are no longer bound by these traditional constraints.

Prints produced using fine art printmaking techniques are considered original works of art unto themselves and should not be confused with photomechanical reproductions of artworks. "An artwork conceived as another medium which is then reproduced... is very different from an image that was conceived as a print. It doesn't exist in another form, that is the original form, it is an original print," says artist April Dean.

There are several themes that unite the work of the artists in *Gunpowder*, including the innate history of mass production and communication within printmaking, finding meaning, value and gratification in a process-based medium and embracing digital technologies as valuable tools within a contemporary printmaking practice.

April Dean trained and worked as a photographer before she became interested in printmaking and says "the camera is always my primary tool when producing an image, but I am always composing images with the intention for them to result in ink on paper, so I am thinking like a printmaker even when I am working in camera."

At first glance, Dean's photographic, glossy inkjet images may not read as traditional print-based works, but upon deeper investigation, another subtle layer rooted in traditional print, is visible.

Drawing upon her experiences printing t-shirts while in art school, in her "Wet T-shirt Series", she hand-printed shirts with "we" statements, which can also be read as slogans, a nod to the commercial side of printmaking and the printing industry.

She then photographed the t-shirts while wet, backlit by a light table. She notes the use of "we" in the printed statements is an important component of the work. "I want the viewer to feel implicated..., it is not just the wearer of the t-shirt, it can be the viewer as well. I think that open language really allows the content to resonate with people."

Another artist whose work is not rooted in traditional printmaking is Eric Hill. Hill is a filmmaker who studied film production at the University of Regina. In his recent work, he has been exploring 16mm film. "With this project, I have different animations, essentially of movement, of a person running for example," explains Hill.

For inspiration, he turned to the work of Eadweard Muybridge, an early English photographer known for his pioneering work in photographic studies of motion. Hill used Muybridge's studies to create tiny stamps that represent one frame in a sequence of an animation. He explains further, "I turned each frame of that movement into a fingernail sized stamp, so I can stamp out every frame... It's almost like I am making an animated GIF that just repeats, but I am doing it on film."

Like printmaking, filmmaking is a process driven medium and it is the process and the ways in which the process influences the final product that intrigues Hill. "I like art that changes or isn't exactly consistent. When something is always one thing, there are no surprises or happy accidents, but art that can change with each edition really intrigues me," he explains.

Caitlin Mullan also uses the production of multiples in her work in a non-traditional way by creating multiple "bases" to which she can then add hand-colouring or other unique elements. "Printmaking allows me to create an initial framework that I can then improvise with," she says.

In her large-scale combination print/drawings, Mullan explores symbols from 16th century woodcuts, combining them to create new compositions. Presented outside their original context, Mullan investigates how the reading of these 500 year-old symbols has changed, with the aim to understand what, if any, meaning has persisted across our collective unconscious over time.

Initially, Mullan arranged the symbols in an aesthetic way rather than by their meanings, and was later able to go back and figure out their "translations". "I sat down with [the compositions] over and over, just rearranging different elements. I really wanted them to be finalized before I peeked at the meanings. What I found [after I looked them up] is that they make a lot of sense, they sound like they are meant to go together," she explains.

Elements that are meant to go together is also a common thread in Robert Truskowski's work. Truskowski created a series of UV screen-printed letters based initially on images created from scans of antique letterpress tympan paper. Mounted on foam core, he can then assemble and disassemble the letters in many configurations. "I am using these letters the same way a printer uses type out of a case, but the common language is the letters, it is not the message," notes Truskowski.

"The phrase talks about my struggle with being an artist that uses other people's words. I often dip into pop culture..., so [in this piece] I talk about the struggle that I have about whether it is legit for me to quote lyrics from a rap song [in my work]."

Truskowski, along with other artists in the show, has a keen interest in the process of printmaking itself. "I like process and I like repetition and... I like the process of, for example, doing a photo etching, or I like the process of preparing a screen. I like all the steps that have to go into making a thing."

It is the process of printmaking that initially drew Rowan Pantel to the medium as well. Before she discovered printmaking, she was on track to complete her BFA degree from the University of Saskatchewan with a major in painting. It wasn't until she took an Art History class and fell in love with multi-colour stone lithograph posters by Toulouse-Lautrec and ambitiously took on creating a three-colour reduction stone lithograph as her first foray into printmaking. Pantel explains, "Printmaking was doing everything that I was trying to do in painting kind of by accident. That is how I became interested in printmaking as a process and everything that surrounds it."

Like Mullan, Pantel also uses the multiple in an unconventional way. Creating multiples allows her to use collage techniques, cutting and pasting prints to create fragmented environments. "My photo-lithographs are based on images from around my parents' house, where I grew up. I explore the idea that memories get fragmented, so every time you return to a place, a new memory goes over top of the previous one. I'm working with the idea that the memories that I have from childhood are not necessarily the true memories anymore, it's like an altered fragment of it," she explains.

*Gunpowder* showcases a depth and breadth of contemporary printmaking being produced in Western Canada. It highlights the fact that no matter how advanced digital technologies become and how much contemporary artists incorporate these developments and tools into their work, there will always be those who appreciate and are drawn to creating images with the kind of tactility and quality of ink on paper that is only afforded by printmaking in the most traditional sense of the word.

# ART GALLERY OF REGINA

## Gunpowder for the Mind

July 7 – August 25, 2017

April Dean

Eric Hill

Caitlin Mullan

Rowan Pantel

Robert Truszkowski

© Art Gallery of Regina Inc.

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2013, digital print on film, 40" x 27"

Photographs: courtesy of the artists

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Images of Artworks:

- 1 Rowan Pantel, *Finding the Trail*, 2017, waterless lithography and silkscreen on mulberry paper, chine-collé to Lenox, 30 x 59.5 inches
- 2 Caitlin Mullan, *Superstition is Next to Religion*, 2017, silkscreen and coloured pencil on Stonehenge, 22 x 30 inches
- 3 April Dean, *We Are Ill Equipped*, 2013, inkjet print on film, 44 x 28 inches
- 4 Robert Truszkowski, *Am I a Rapper?*, 2016–2017, UV silkscreen on paper mounted to foamcore, dimensions/configuration variable
- 5 Eric Hill, *In Motion*, 2017, 16mm clear leader film, black solvent based ink, 7 seconds loop; 4 1/2 feet film

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