

The background is a complex, layered collage. It features various textures and colors, including muted greens, yellows, greys, and earthy browns. Overlaid on these are numerous irregular, torn-edged shapes in a variety of colors: dark red, black, white, and grey. Some of these shapes have patterns, such as small white dots on a dark background or a red and black gradient. The overall effect is one of depth and visual noise, typical of contemporary printmaking or mixed media art.

MONOLOGUE:

FIVE CONTEMPORARY PRINTMAKERS

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August 29 - September 26, 2019

The Mason-Scharfenstein Museum of Art
Piedmont College • Demorest, Georgia

Curated by Rebecca Brantley & Brian Hitselberger

Featuring work by Mary Gordon, Jess Machacek,
Stacie U. Rose, Ann Stewart, & Jon Swindler

Curatorial Statement

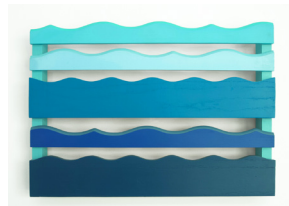
Monologue: Five Contemporary Printmakers addresses the enduring relevance of printmaking and its impact on other media. We selected print-based artists who make experimental and singular works. We limited our scope to Northeast Georgia and Atlanta, hoping to highlight the achievements of our region.

The artists in *Monologue* have absorbed the techniques and motives of print to arrive at their work. Their methods include relief, intaglio, planographic printing, monoprinting, painting, sculpture, 3D printing, and installation. At the core of each maker's practice is either an inventive use of traditional print tools (e.g., the plate or printing press) or strategies inherent to printmaking as a discipline (e.g., repetition, multiplicity, or transference).

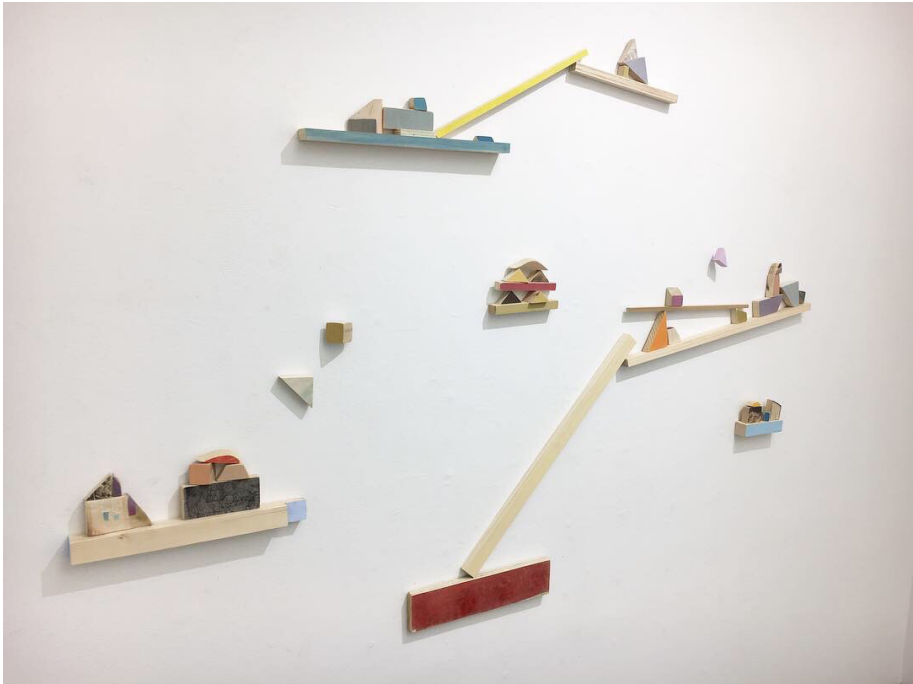
Printmaking's inherent affinity for incorporating new technologies and interdisciplinary modes appears throughout *Monologue*. Indeed, print is often one strategy amongst many. Stacie U. Rose's stippled marks sometimes recall the graduated dots of halftones or pixels. Thus, she suggests both the evolution of print technology and the tiny square at the core of screen-based imagery—both among the many forms of mark making available to contemporary artists. Jon Swindler uses collaged “printed remnants” to create self-referential and expressive monotypes. Mary Gordon and Jess Machacek share a playful intelligence in their works that blur distinctions between two- and three-dimensional media. Likewise, venturing beyond the standard two dimensions of print, Ann Stewart translates her complex visions of space from traditional print to sculptural form using a 3D printer.

Monologue suggests the ongoing dialogue between print and new media in contemporary practice. We live and work in a world undeniably shaped by the

advent of the digital in the late twentieth century. It has changed the way we process and disseminate information to such an extent that our era has been dubbed “post-print.” While this term implies moving beyond old technologies that involve plate, press, and paper, it’s worth remembering that printmaking is an adaptable field predicated on change and innovation. Taken another way, “post-print” conjures evolution and expansion—the absorption of past processes into new ones. As curators, we set out to explore the possibilities of making print-based art in a post-print world.



From left to right, clockwise: Mary Gordon, Stacie U. Rose, Jess Machacek, and Ann Stewart



Untitled Arrangement, 2019. Wood blocks and mixed media. Dimensions variable.

Mary Gordon

Improvisation, delight, and play lie at the core of Mary Gordon's work. Gordon's monotypes incorporate collage and demonstrate both rich color sensibility and formal restraint. Similarly, her thoughtfully composed installations use palm-sized wooden blocks, handmade clay beads, and wire. Her sculptural works extend her collage sensibility by making use of the wall as a kind of picture plane within which she constructs diminutive worlds. Grouping, drilling, stacking, and leaning, Gordon's miniature, built environments resist and employ gravity, skittering up the wall with the vigor of a cork popping out of a bottle of champagne.

Gordon writes, "arranging and building with objects begins at a young age as a way of learning and navigating the world in which we live." Indeed, in Gordon's work finding and making may be one and the same. Her sculptures bear a strong formal resemblance to *fröbelgaben*, the geometric children's toys created by German school teacher Friedrich Fröbel. These were created as part of the pedagogue's larger initiative to create a transitional environment for children between home and school—a radical eighteenth-century educational innovation now commonly referred to as kindergarten. This institutionalized form of play is foundational to the cognitive development of children. Gordon's works are imaginative environments in which acts of thinking and making become visible. They resemble play in motion.

"It is in the space between inner and outer world...the transitional space—that intimate relationships and creativity occur," writes British child psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott of the "transitional objects" of children (see: D.W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," in *Collected Papers, Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* [London: Tavistock, 1958], pp. 233). Such objects could include a blanket or a treasured toy. These function as a stand-in for the parent as the child ages and a way of mediating the internal-external dyad. Gordon's installations, with their formal resemblance to toys and compositional relationship to play, perhaps function as transitional objects for the artist's hand as well as the viewer's eye. Gordon invites us to enter in an imaginative space, equal parts provisional and joyous.

Jess Machacek

For her series *Two Waves/Sunset Mode*, Jess Machacek uses both conventional artistic media and prefabricated domestic materials. She employs latex paint, linoleum, vinyl, and plastic in novel ways. Machacek's materials point to her interest in domestic environments, such as the manicured suburban lawn.

In *Tankini*, printed elastic stretches across a wood background. A faint palm frond pattern on the blonde wood recalls tan lines and echoes the print of the fabric above. Given the evocation of skin, it's one of Machacek's more figurative works in *Monologue*. There's an implicit relationship to printmaking, too. The duplicated marks of a tan line recall stencil-based printing techniques. Bathing suits, sunscreen, and tanning beds are among the many ways—natural and artificial—that we adorn and modify our bodies.

Sunset Sag shows a yellow disk of painted window screen over horizontal bands of warm coral and rosy pink. A drooping band of cut-up lawn chair webbing hangs from the rectilinear supports, imbuing the work with a sculptural quality. *Sunset Sag* suggests both a seascape at dusk and kitschy beach architecture. Beauty and the mundane coalesce; such dualities appear throughout *Two Waves/Sunset Mode*. While *Sunset Sag* recalls the sun, other works allude to a celestial theme. Calling to mind the moon, *Total Eclipse* features a black orb bisected by a gray linoleum rectangle with an ersatz marble pattern augmented by semicircles. The title also conjures Bonnie Tyler's 1983 pop ballad "Total Eclipse of the Heart." This nod to the 1980s evokes both humor and nostalgia. It perhaps points to resonance with the decade's style in Machacek's work, particularly the recently revived Memphis design movement.

Machacek's work in *Monologue* draws attention to oft-ignored materials, allowing them to transcend their utilitarian functions. She explores contemporary Americana with a blend of levity and seriousness. It's a vision of cultivated, suburban utopia in which nature and artifice harmoniously coexist.



TOTAL ECLIPSE, 2017. Linoleum, pool vinyl, rubber sealant, and latex paint.



Contingent Systems, 2019. Mixed media mural and installation at the Mason-Scharfenstein Museum of Art. 9 feet 11 inches x 9 feet x 6 inches x 22 inches.

Stacie U. Rose

Stacie U. Rose’s work—on paper, on panel, and on the wall—combines painterly gesture with an array of screen-printed motifs. The result is a dynamic interplay between bold graphic sensibilities and the equally bold hand of the artist.

The abstract language of Rose’s work alternately enlarges and contracts, scaled to the dimensions of her surfaces. Paradoxically, the work maintains a degree of vastness, independent of these scale-shifts. Often using singular large brushes with multiple colors, Rose’s painterly marks weave in, under, and around larger blocks of flat color. In effect, she creates an architectural sense of space and a sensation of speed through her use of overlapping and erasure. This call-and-response between sense and sensation, the painted and printed, consistently creates a tension in each work. Indeed, this seems to be one of the goals of Rose’s varied output. Rose’s large-format wall paintings showcase this tension on a grand scale. For *Monologue* the artist created *Contingent Systems*, a site-specific mural and installation in response to the architecture of the Mason-Scharfenstein Museum of Art. Measuring over nine square feet, two propped wooden elements extend into the gallery space.

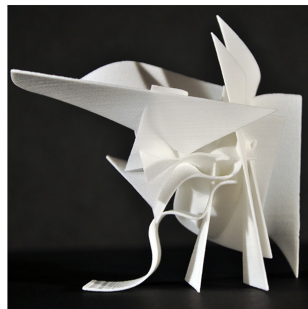
Rose’s incorporation of repeated screen-printed elements both undercut and underscore her hand-painted marks. Rose’s mastery lies in maintaining a balance between print and paint—a tightness upon which her formal language sings. Her formal contradictions manifest with a visual tautness akin to the strings of a violin. There is a musicality to her abstractions: harmony, discordance, crescendos, and diminuendos all play out visually on a scale that engages the audience.

Ann Stewart

Ann Stewart is a kind of cartographer, although her maps withhold any possibility of conventional wayfinding. Stewart states that her work gives “physical presence to the invisible process of perception,” an intriguing ambition achieved through a complex process of addition, subtraction, intuition, and pattern recognition. Her drawings and etchings cluster together dense networks of line, shape, and plane. They assemble and disassemble themselves into the architectonics of perceptual experience—the work of our eyes diagrammed before our eyes. Put otherwise: Stewart’s imagery is made by the body, but her images show us what the body does.

Optics also play a role in Stewart’s 3D-printed sculptures, which make physical the lines and networks of her drawings and prints. The white nylon forms of her sculptures radiate and surround centralized masses. The lines, planes, and arcs of these small objects become spatial iterations of her idiosyncratic diagrams of vision. Occasionally, these works resemble the biological hardware of perception—nerves, ligaments, and soft tissue.

Stewart’s work calls to mind the writings of twentieth-century French phenomenologist Marcel Merleau-Ponty, who bridged Empiricism and Rationalism by positing that the body and that which the body perceives cannot be extricated from one another. “[P]ainting,” Merleau-Ponty writes, “celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility” (see: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Eye and Mind,” in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*, ed. Galen Johnson [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993], 127). Stewart visualizes such perceptual entanglement. In her drawings, dense networks of form are often surrounded by expanses of negative space, creating a focal point at or near the center of each composition. This focal point may allude to an ocular capacity for focus, with our peripheral vision represented through an absence of mark making. Finally, her etchings mimic perception in that when printing her plates, the image itself is reversed, mirror-like on the page.



3D-printed sculptures from *Epiphenomena* and *Non-Sequiturs* series (From left to right, counterclockwise: *Plumage*, *Wisp*, *Bang*, *Whoosh*, *Instigator*, and *Orrery*) 2015, 3D-printed nylon.



Strange Location, 2019. Various print media and collage. 50 x 38 inches

Jon Swindler

Jon Swindler's series for *Monologue* consists of non-objective pressure-print monotypes. Each is a unique work though themes of transference and multiplicity are present. He uses collaged ephemera from past work that he calls "printed remnants." These tend to fall at regular intervals as if succumbing to an underlying grid. Often, the sharply delineated printed remnants suggest architecture while looser backgrounds call to mind the landscape. Swindler's titles often evoke a vague sense of geography or place—for example, *Strange Location*, *Soft Sliver*, or *Found Monuments*.

While Swindler's printed remnants are mostly nonrepresentational, some show foliage or detritus. Yet, these too are abstracted given the cropped, close-up view. Artist's tape around each shape gives it subtle dimensionality. Thus, printed remnants often read as immediate and close while the subdued colors and patterns underneath seem to recede. In *Strange Location* a field of dots and dashes—reminiscent of the static created by analog television screens—acts like a barrier between the collaged shapes and background below. The result is a perceptual play that fluctuates between pictorial flatness and illusory depth. This effect calls to mind the tactics of the Synthetic Cubists, who combined collage and abstraction to interrogate issues of memory, perceptual veracity, and representational methods. Swindler suggests a kind of archaeology of the self in which he poses similar questions. He describes his process as "a sort of auto-collaboration, with myself, through time." Stylistically, the printed remnants act as reminders of older modes while simultaneously becoming part of the fresh works. Conceptually, they suggest fragmented, lingering memories.

Finally, Swindler's work thematizes print's condition in the early twenty-first century. The recent advent of digital technology does not simply eclipse plate-and-press-based techniques. Rather, past processes lay the groundwork for innovation but do not disappear. A dialectical relationship forms: the old creates the conditions for the new, and the new absorbs and repurposes the old. The two inform one another to produce synthesized possibilities.

Artist Bios

Mary Gordon

Mary Gordon was born in Weinheim, Germany, but has lived in Kansas for most of her life. In 2015, she received dual BFA degrees in Printmaking and Painting from Kansas State University. Gordon is currently pursuing her MFA with a concentration in Printmaking and Book Arts at the University of Georgia in Athens.

Jess Machacek

Jess Machacek teaches foundations and printmaking courses for the Lamar Dodd School of Art at the University of Georgia. She holds a BFA from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and an MFA from the University of Georgia. Her work has been shown recently at Howard's Gallery in Athens, the Albany Museum of Art, and the Petshop Gallery in Omaha. She lives and works in Athens.

Stacie U. Rose

Stacie U. Rose holds a BFA from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. She exhibits throughout the U.S. and her work is held in many private and public collections. Her large architectural murals include *The People's Entrance* for State Farm Arena Atlanta (completed in 2018). She lives and works in Atlanta, where she is represented by Poem 88.

Ann Stewart

Ann Stewart is an Atlanta-based visual artist. She received her BFA in Painting from Auburn University and her MFA from the University of Michigan. She has shown work at many spaces including the International Print Center in New York, Museum of Contemporary Art, Georgia, and Auburn University's Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art. She is represented in Atlanta by Whitespace Gallery.

Jon Swindler

Jon Swindler lives in Athens, Georgia. He is Associate Professor of Art and Associate Director for Technology, Space, and Community at the University of Georgia's Lamar Dodd School of Art. He earned a BFA from Fort Hays State University in Hays, Kansas, and an MFA from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He exhibits widely and has served as a visiting artist throughout the U.S. and abroad, including cultural institutions in Sweden and Canada.

Curator Bios

Brian Hitselberger lives and works in Athens, Georgia. He received a BFA in Printmaking from Tulane University in 2005, and an MFA in Painting from the University of Georgia in 2010. He currently serves as Associate Professor of Painting and Printmaking in the Art Department at Piedmont College.

Rebecca Brantley is an Assistant Professor in the Art Department at Piedmont College and the director of the Mason-Scharfenstein Museum of Art. She earned a BFA in Painting and a BA in Art History from the University of Georgia in Athens in 2005. Subsequently, she earned an MA in Art History from the University of Georgia in 2009. She lives in Demorest, Georgia.

Designer Bio

Jenna Wendel is a junior at Piedmont College pursuing a BFA with a concentration in Graphic Design. She graduated from Brookwood High School in 2017. She is currently a member of the Piedmont College Volleyball team, Kappa Pi, Art Club, and the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.

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We appreciate the hard work of the artists in *Monologue!* They welcomed us into their studios and graciously shared their work and ideas with us. Further, we are grateful for the help of the Piedmont faculty, staff, and students who supported this exhibition and catalogue. We would like to highlight our Art Department students who contributed to the production of this catalogue: Bre Kendall (editing and photography), Bryson Gunter (editing and photography), Becca Wood (editing), Tabitha Ford (editing), Savannah Cantrell (editing) and India Cook (editing). We especially thank art student Jenna Wendel, who designed this catalogue with the guidance of Professor Tyler Mann. Thanks to all who contributed!

Rebecca Brantley
Assistant Professor of Art & Director of the Mason-Scharfenstein Museum of Art

Brian Hitselberger
Associate Professor of Art

Title image: Jon Swindler, *Found Monuments* (detail), 2019. Various print media and collage, 50 x 38 inches.

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