



# CONTEMPORARY IMPRESSIONS

Volume 11, #1

Spring 2003

## ISSUES & INSIGHTS

- 2 Exploring Time and Space, *by Bonny Lhotka*
- 6 Prints & Politics: Aerosol Activism, *by Stephen Goddard and Michael Krueger*
- 9 Printmaking as Alchemy, *by April Vollmer*
- 14 A is for Art & Art is for Everyone, *by Richard Kennedy*
- 18 John Hitchcock, *Interview by Carol Pulin*

## VIEWS & REVIEWS

- 23 Exhibitions, Catalogues & Books
- 25 Honolulu Printmakers: Celebrating a Tradition, *by Marcia Morse and Max Aronov*
- 28 Learning, *by Debrah Santini and Stephanie Smith*
- 30 The American Print Alliance



- ♦ American Color Print Society ♦
- ♦ Baren Woodcut Forum ♦
- ♦ Boston Printmakers ♦
- ♦ Florida Printmakers ♦
- ♦ Honolulu Printmakers ♦
- ♦ Los Angeles Printmaking Society ♦
- ♦ Manitoba Printmakers Association ♦
- ♦ Maryland Printmakers ♦
- ♦ Mid America Print Council ♦
- ♦ Monotype Guild of New England ♦
- ♦ New York Society of Etchers ♦

- ♦ Northwest Print Council ♦
- ♦ Nova Scotia Printmakers Association ♦
- ♦ Pittsburgh Print Group ♦
- ♦ Print Center ♦
- ♦ Printmakers Council of Prince Edward Island ♦
- ♦ Printmakers of Cape Cod ♦
- ♦ Printmaking Council of New Jersey ♦
- ♦ Seattle Print Arts ♦
- ♦ Southern Graphics Council ♦



ISSN 1066-9434

© 2003 American Print Alliance.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or an information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher.

✱

Editor & Designer: Carol Pulin  
Printer: Printing Images, Maryland

✱

Cover: Richard Kennedy, *Sanctuary of Sleep*, 2000. Color inkjet print, 18 x 16".

✱

Contents: John Hitchcock, prizes from Give-away, 2002. Color screenprint, about 5 x 4" each.

✱

Back cover: John Hitchcock, *Crusade (Soldier 1)*, *Crusade (Soldier 2)*, *Wanted (Cowboy)* and *Wanted (Ndn)*, 2001. Color screenprint and inkjet, 44 x 30" each.

✱

Articles, reviews and queries welcome; please include stamped return envelope. The Alliance accepts no responsibility for materials sent. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the American Print Alliance. Indexed in *ARTbibliographies Modern* and *Art Index*.

✱

### Contemporary Impressions

is published twice a year by the American Print Alliance, a non-profit consortium of printmakers' councils; federal tax-exempt status 501(c)(3). Subscriptions include an original print: individuals \$35/year, institutions \$50/year; add \$3 to Canada, \$8 to other countries.

✱

American Print Alliance  
302 Larkspur Turn  
Peachtree City GA 30269-2210  
[www.PrintAlliance.org](http://www.PrintAlliance.org)



*Interviewer Carol Pulin, editor of Contemporary Impressions, received her PhD in art history and criticism from the University of Texas at Austin.*

*Where were you born and where did you grow up?*

*Where did you go to school and when did you start making prints?*

*So you stayed out West?*

*The images of farm animals you use are appropriated from commodity food packages. When did you start using them and for what reason?*

## John Hitchcock

*John Hitchcock is an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he teaches screenprinting, relief, digital printmaking and installation art. He graduated with a BFA from Cameron University and an MFA in printmaking and photography from Texas Tech University. He is the recipient of awards from the American Photography Institute at NYU's Tisch School of Arts and the Jerome Foundation of Minneapolis. Hitchcock's numerous exhibitions include **Ritual Device** at Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis, **Hybrid** at Texas Tech and **Fragments** at the North Dakota Museum of Art. The artist's work is in many major collections, including the University of South Dakota and The Institute of American Indian Arts.*

I'm from Medicine Park in the Wichita Mountains near Lawton, Oklahoma. I grew up on indigenous lands next to Fort Sill, one of the oldest military bases in the Western United States, and a former internment camp for many leaders such as Geronimo of the Apache people and Satethienday of the Kiowa people. The Wichita Mountains are the oldest mountains in the continental United States and are now a wildlife refuge for endangered species. My upbringing was very diverse. My mother's side of the family is Kiowa/Comanche and my father's side is German/Northern European. I consider mine an intercultural hybrid American upbringing.

As an undergraduate, I attended Cameron University in Lawton. My first year of college, I was introduced to the world of printmaking by Kathy Lontas-Warren. I fell in love with the lithography process. Kathy brought in an exhibition organized by Lynwood Kreneck, an invitational that included incredible prints from Lynne Allen to Robert Rauschenberg. She brought in several visiting printmakers including Lynwood, Lynne, John Hancock and Barry Phillips the Younger. After receiving my BFA, I moved to Dallas, Texas, to pursue a career as a musician. I played in several experimental bands for about three years, then wound up in graduate school at Texas Tech University in Lubbock studying with Lynwood. He teaches waterbased screenprinting and that's what he expected me to learn.

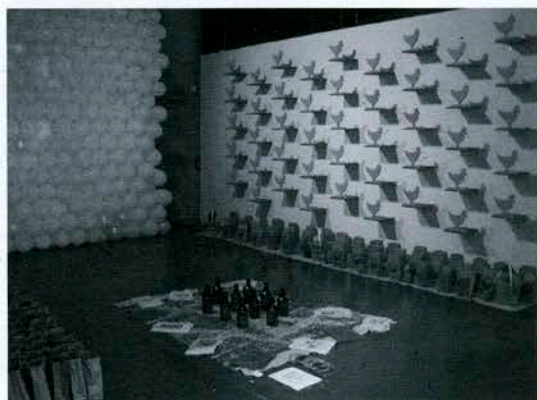
It was a different landscape and it was hard adjusting to the flat, desolate plains of west Texas. My first attempts at screenprinting turned out to be disasters, but with careful coaching from Lynwood, I gained control of the medium and began to experiment. I learned about the versatility of screenprinting and how it can work in combination with other processes like woodcut, lithography and photography. I appreciate the fact that you can screenprint on the surface of almost any object. I began to print on blankets, bottles, wood, walls and about anything that was lying around in my studio. Lynwood told me once, "John, if you were locked in a room with just a box of matches, I'm confident you would be able to create worthy art work." With Lynwood's approval and MFA in hand, my partner in life Elizabeth Prose and I moved to west-central Minnesota to teach art at the University of Minnesota, Morris, for three years. Now we are off the plains and east of the Mississippi in Madison, Wisconsin.

The commodity food items are USDA food subsidies distributed by the government to welfare programs, third world countries and indigenous lands. I began to think about the commodities on a personal level when my grandparents died from cancer. At the time of my grandfather's illness, I was traveling back and forth from Texas to Oklahoma. I started a series of screenprint-based installations that incorporated assortments of commodity food items, personal objects and stereotypical images from popular culture. I use the silhouetted logos from the commodities – a cow from a can of beef, a pig from a can of pork, and a chicken from a package of powdered eggs – to question notions of assimilation and control.



I want to reach as many viewers as I can through interaction with the multiple. When you represent an idea, concept or artwork in a public setting, it becomes inherently political. Someone will have an opposing opinion. To get viewers to react to the art, I use large-scale interactive print-game installations consisting of found objects, photographs, prints, video and audio. The current installations deal directly with issues of consumption in North America. It's highly important for citizens to speak up about social, political and personal concerns. We need as many perspectives as possible to operate as a democracy.

*Ritual Device*, installed at Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis, is a multi-media interactive game consisting of a wall of 45 bright yellow wooden chickens, video projection onto a wall of white balloons, and screenprinted bottles placed on a military blanket covered with give away prints. Audience members are encouraged to throw balls at the chickens, pop balloons with darts, hoop a bottle and take a prize bag filled with the screenprinted and inkjet prints. The idea stems from childhood memories of attending American Indian hand games with my grandparents and playing games at traveling carnivals that were set up outside of pow-wow dance grounds in Oklahoma.



It has dual cultural implications. The *Give-Away* refers to mass marketing imagery we are inundated with in contemporary American consumer culture such as billboards, television, junk mail and e-mail, pop-up advertising and now pop-under ads! The prize prints in my give-away bags are idealized interpretations from American history and images from the reality of life in rural and city environments. The *Give-Away* also refers to a traditional honor dance performed at Native American pow-wows or social gatherings where money or gifts are presented to visitors, family members and singers as an offering. Most cultures have social traditions with sharing and giving gifts as part of its customs. I use the multiples as small tokens or curios of visual images and language. On the surface, the installations are bright, colorful, playful and fun, but they have an underlying theme of political and social implications. If viewers choose to participate, they take a small part of the artwork home into their lives. The *Give-Away* can function as propaganda by using the guise of popular culture as a method of subversion.

*How are prints an integral part of your current installations? You use games, like carnival games, to initiate audience interaction. How much is that a reflection of childhood events and how much is it related to political issues?*

John Hitchcock, *Ritual Device*, 1999. Installation at Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

John Hitchcock, *Give-Away*, 2002. Installation of color screenprinted blanket and give-away prints, bottles and rings, detail, at the North Dakota Museum of Art.

---

*The context of my work is created by laying out objects and images as an offering to the viewer.*

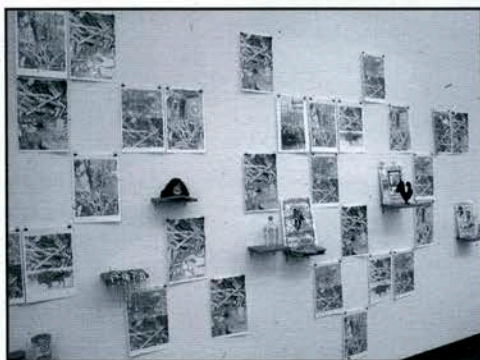
---

*Tell me more about giving away prints as part of your installations.*



*What about your use of toy figures and how those toys influence children's attitudes?*

John Hitchcock, ***Fright Sleep Shift Taste Offering Slow Down Clown***, 2002. Installation of color screen-prints, inkjet prints and objects at the North Dakota Museum of Art.

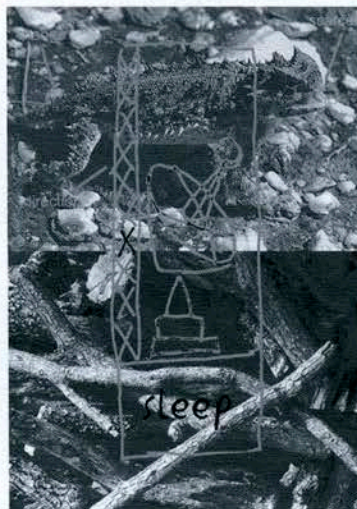


*Besides the installations, aren't you currently organizing some print portfolio projects?*

*The print of your grandfather is especially evocative of these ideas of crossing cultural and generational divides. How does your printmaking deal with personal issues about genocide and assimilation?*

These explorations are leading me to broader questions about the proliferation of images in popular culture. What are the societal and psychological consequences of this information? How does media culture effect globalization? I attempt to examine my surroundings by re-contextualizing images from American culture, electronic media and food to ask questions about our social and political systems.

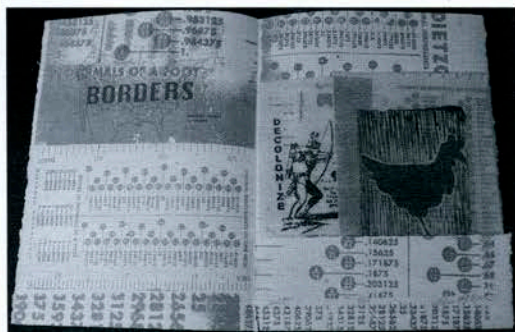
The cowboy, Indians, and soldiers in *Crusade/Wanted* are a direct response to George W. Bush's public statements after 9-11. From playing games like cowboys and Indians as children, to the overload of violent visuals in today's media, we live in a violent world. I have a fascination with weapons and war from growing up next to the military base in Oklahoma and living around the hunting culture of rural environments. Oklahoma State Highway 49 is all that separates my family's land from Fort Sill. Helicopters flew overhead, soldiers played war games in the woods, and tanks noisily drove by at 3 a.m. As a child in the early '70s, I thought the television images of war in Vietnam were coming from outside my window. It was kind of confusing.



Yes, a variety of folio projects. One for the Southern Graphics Conference in Boston titled *Multiple Perspectives: Critical Dialogue in North America* consists of twenty-two prints from contemporary print-makers. At a time of heightened security, threatening international policies and war, it's great to see artists' personal responses about our social and political situation. Another long-term project is an international print exchange titled *Cross-Cultural Identities* with David Dubose at the Seacourt Print Workshop, in County Down, Northern Ireland. We plan to work collaboratively to examine the history of our respective countries regarding issues of colonization, control of land, social problems, border identities and inter-cultural issues. We will exchange perspectives about lands that are strikingly beautiful on the surface, but have ties to social and political injustice. We will compare ideas about landscape on a physical level, as well as the psychological representations associated with living space.

The foundation of the United States was built on assimilation, relocation and genocide. The first multiple-bullet hand revolver, the Peacemaker, was designed to kill Comanches. My grandmother's relatives were removed at gunpoint by United States military forces from Palo Duro Canyon, Texas. The canyon, located in the Llano Estacado region, was an important campsite for them. In the winter of 1874, General McKenzie forced the Kiowa/Comanche out of the canyon by killing their horses and destroying their food. They eventually retreated to the Lawton-Fort Sill area in Oklahoma.





John Hitchcock, **1824**, 2000. Color screenprint book, center pages, 15 x 22".

John Hitchcock, **Tako** [Grandfather], 1997. Color screenprint, drawing and beadwork, 30 x 40".

It's a combination of both. *Tako* means grandfather in Comanche. I started the print/drawing the night after my grandfather, John Dusome Reid, died. On the left side are equivalency markers referring to measurements of time, place, culture, diseases and people. The beadwork medallion was created by my grandmother, Peggy Pohoxicut Reid. I gave her a geometric design a few weeks after his death. About eight months later at Christmas time, she gave me the beaded medallion. I placed it on the left in reference to her. She was in the background of the original photo I used to draw from. It was the perfect way to deal with death. It brought a sense of closure and incorporated an element of life that continues on.

With the commercial exploitation of images of Native Americans such as the Big Chief tablet, Crazy Horse liquor, Land -O- Lakes dairy, Cleveland Indians, Washington Redskins, and the romanticized myth of the noble savage portrayed in Hollywood movies, the proliferation of images of American Indians in American popular culture has become a part of history. So, in my art, I incorporate idealized interpretations of the American Indian with objects from the reality of life on native lands and symbols of spiritual significance. I want viewers to question their idea of the history of America in order to challenge their perceptions of living people.

We need to look at our history and ask serious question now. We need to question the notion of progress, including the influence of technology on society. How has technology affected our people and changed our relationship to our planet? What have we learned from our past and present mistakes with other countries and indigenous peoples? Are we responsible for a greedy, imperialistic government? What will be the long-term effects of the American Patriot Act? How do our international policies affect other countries and us? Do corporate entities dominate and control the media? How do we solve the economic and social class divisions in America? Institutional racism? The list goes on and on.

We go through life here in America playing the usual games. Not getting involved, focused on our own needs. Sometimes we become silent voices — hiding, lost, not able to speak. We grow up primarily in an American mass media electronic culture of consumption.

I have always been influenced by the media in some shape or form. We must consider how the graphic image shapes, shifts and creates our contemporary culture. Can and are artists challenging this system now? And why is it important? There are countless artists and groups that are creating fresh, new approaches to subverting our culture. *Adbusters* magazine, the *Billboard Liberation Front*, Shepherd Ferry's

*Do you make your prints primarily for yourself, or to help others understand those historical events?*

*You're clearly concerned about the potential loss of indigenous traditions and the replacement of reality with stereotypical imagery.*

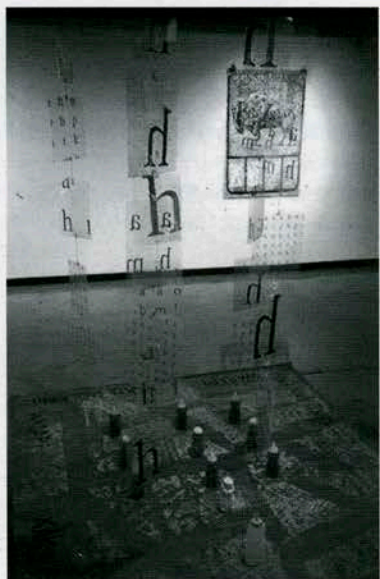
*Your prints and installations encourage people to question their knowledge of the past and hence their current viewpoints. Will that new understanding transfer to other events and to the future?*



*When someone first walks into one of your exhibitions, it also seems very busy and confusing. Then the viewer starts to see patterns that help shape the experience.*

*How does this affect your teaching?*

John Hitchcock, **Honor**, 2001.  
Installation of color screenprinted blanket, transparency banners and honeybears, at the University of Minnesota, Morris.



*André the Giant*, to name a few. We have to ask, to what extent does this art affect any system – political, social or personal? We live in a time when fashion, style and culture collide and contradict into a mix of hybrid structures. People buy into and use these structures to function. We are constantly bombarded by advertising, even in our homes. Political leaders refer to citizens as consumers. We attempt to filter and sift the many layers of information that inundate our lives, but continually get barraged by more. It has become increasingly harder to manage this information.

Yes, within the installation settings, I use complex formal arrangements to expose the viewer to an array of images. Dance, song, cycles, birth, youth, adulthood, death, nature and the contemplation of one's existence are a part of all people's lives. These are the concepts I deal with, in a broad span of time that includes past, present and future. The images I use are a direct result of stories shared by family members and issues regarding living on native lands in Oklahoma. Many of the prints comment on the loss of language, spiritual beliefs and culture from the influence of Indian boarding schools, while others refer to academic and political institutions. Researching the past to define my identity has become a vital source for my art. My intent is to present information, from historical records to contemporary issues that all people face. The resulting installations examine the whole history of our country. Colonization, land, social, economic and intercultural issues all play a part in my work.

As a visual artist, educator and citizen, it is my job to use images to make people think critically about written and visual information, to question the bias behind stereotypes. What are the sources? What is their agenda? Can we trust the information as being truthful? I recently heard N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa poet, author, scholar and artist) speak in a UW–Madison classroom. He talked about the need to consider the use and power of language. It was an honor to sit in that classroom.

I am extremely excited about the current graduate program at UW–Madison. We have a healthy environment with national and international visiting artists coming through weekly. I am currently working with a graduate student, Cristina Coleman-Rosa, on an international exchange of undergraduate, graduate and faculty artwork at the Museu de Arte de Brasília. The convergence of media with prints is amazing. We mix it up with digital media, installation art and sound in combination with the traditional media (painting, printmaking, drawing, photography and sculpture). The grounds are open. \*



John Hitchcock, **Fear America Decolonize Construction**, 2000.  
Color inkjet prints, 17 x 11" each, detail of the array of 48, 6 x 12½ feet.