

The Graphic Studio Dublin – history, impacts and artistry

The sixtieth anniversary of the Graphic Studio Dublin presents an opportune moment to celebrate the institution itself, the artists that worked (and continue to work) there and printmaking as an artistic medium. The stories and concepts of modern and contemporary printmaking in Ireland to date has, in the main, been unfortunately neglected within visual cultural studies, both art historically and critically. While we are fortunate to have Brian Lalor's authoritative account of the history of the Graphic Studio Dublin, it was only recently that for the first time a broader contextualised historical narrative of early modern Irish printmaking was presented in national cultural institution. And it is an unhappy truth that in published and curated overviews of Irish art – past and present – printmaking rarely features.

Historically, while successful Etching Revivals spanned Britain, mainland Europe and North America from the 1860s, noting that the movement was expanded to include other forms of printmaking such as woodcut and lithography in subsequent years, modern printmaking in Ireland had a somewhat less auspicious beginning. The production and promotion of original fine art prints in the first half of the last century was primarily dependent on the actions of a small, but dedicated, number of individuals including Estella Solomons, George Atkinson and Harry Kernoff. With the exception of Solomons, before 1920 all early modern Irish printmakers looked abroad for inspiration, training, institutional support, critical recognition and a market for their work.

In the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s, a select group of Irish artists worked in print. Alongside Solomons and Atkinson, there was Robert Gibbings, Edward Montgomery O'Rorke Dickey and Mabel Annesley, each of whom are recognised as key figures in British printmaking and illustrated publishing. Stella Steyn and Cecil French Salkeld both spent formative years on the continent; Steyn working in Paris and spending time at the progressive Bauhaus, Salkeld training amongst German Expressionists in Kassel. In Dublin, Kernoff produced a series of woodcuts of urban and rural themes along with portraits of leading political and cultural figures. He exhibited and sold his prints as individual art works and as three limited edition critically acclaimed volumes in 1942, 1944 and 1951, a unique venture in Ireland. One of the most important printmakers of the period was the English-born artist Elizabeth Rivers, who travelled to the Aran Islands in the 1930s marking the beginning of a productive and mutually beneficial relationship with Ireland. She eventually settled in the country in 1955. Rivers is mostly associated with the relief medium of wood engraving. She is noted for her work in publishing, such as her collaborations with the Dolmen Press which included *Out of Bedlam* in 1956.

And it was in 1960, when Rivers with a group of like-minded individuals - the artists Pat Hickey, Leslie McWeeney, and Anne Yeats, together with the Dolmen Press director Liam Miller – founded the first printmaking co-operative in Ireland, which they named the Graphic Studio Dublin (GSD). In fact, the GSD was the earliest art collective to be formally instigated in the country.

From the 1860s the collaborative and dynamic relationship between the modern artist and the print workshop flourished in Paris. Into the twentieth century, key figures such as the publisher Ambroise Vollard and founder of Atelier 17 Stanley Hayter produced and promoted the printmaking of leading figures in contemporary art including Bonnard, Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Miró and Giacometti. During the years of WWII, Hayter relocated to New York where he helped establish a school of contemporary printmaking in the USA, working with leading figures of the New York school including Pollock and Rothko. Hayter would also create prints to illustrate the writings of Irish poets including Samuel Beckett, and in the 1970s he would work with John Montague for the Dolmen Press.

Inspired by master printworks by the world's leading living artists, a new generation began to engage with print. Following the example of Parisian print workshops, from the 1950s commercial and technical enterprises were established internationally to support printmakers and to develop markets. Print workshops such as Pratt Contemporaries (1956; later named Pratt Graphics Workshop), Universal Limited Art Editions (1957) and Tamarind Lithography Workshop (1960) were established in America. England saw the foundation of Kelpra Studios (1958) and Editions Alecto (1958). And whereas in the past Irish artists who wished to work in print emulated their international peers and depended on pedagogic experiences abroad to learn technique, the founding of the GSD in 1960 demonstrated that Irish artists were no longer followers but that they were active participants in and contributors to developments within modern art. As such, the studio positioned itself in the vital role of creating a new appreciation for, understanding of and market for contemporary print in Ireland.

The GSD provided for the first time the necessary training and facilities for both active and apprentice printmakers. An essential function of the studio was to address the lack of training in printmaking techniques in Ireland and the directors ran courses in etching, lithography and relief processes. Before the studio was founded, printmaking equipment was limited to art colleges and one or two private studios. The founders recognised that in order to create a flourishing printmaking culture amongst Irish artists they required a dedicated space, technical resources and training.

A number of factors have been critical to the growth of fine art print production across the island of Ireland over the last 60 years. Thanks to the foresight, commitment and example of the GSD founders, printmaking in Ireland has grown

exponentially, and the studio is to the vanguard of that progression. The studio's reputation has been defined by the creative powers of its members and its visiting artists, which includes some of the leading names within Irish and international practice. As a national state-funded organisation, they are recognised as a vital participant within the country's artistic and cultural landscape, and over the years its members have, and are, playing an active role in global artistic networks.

Key figures in the history of the GSD included John Kelly, a director of the studio for more than 10 years, he would go on to be a founder of the Black Church Studios and he would head the print department in the National College of Art and Design. Both there and in the studio, Kelly taught succeeding generations the methods and possibilities of printmaking. In the 1970s, a young American-born artist, Mary Farl Powers joined the GSD. In the 1980s, she would become director of the studio and she was a prime mover in the foundation of the Graphic Studio Gallery in 1988, the first exhibition space in Ireland dedicated to selling contemporary prints and it continues in its vital and impactful role today. Powers was part of a new generation of artists that chose to express themselves almost exclusively through the medium of print and she was renowned for her professionalism and dedication to the process.

A guiding principle at the GSD was to encourage a greater awareness of printmaking processes among the wider artistic community in Ireland. It introduced a Visiting Artists Programme in 1980, where artists with some or no experience of printmaking were invited to create prints with the assistance of studio technicians. The studio continues to work with national and international artists and those who have collaborated and exhibited with the GSD over its past and recent history include Cecily Brennan, Diana Copperwhite, William Crozier, Michael Farrell, Andrew Folan, Louis Le Brocqy, Brian Maguire, Tim Mara, Ethan Murrow, Tony O'Malley, Geraldine O'Neill, Barbara Rae, Marie Simmonds Gooding and Pat Scott. As experienced in international studios, these artistic partnerships help create a new dynamic within the studio, those not trained as printmakers often challenge the conventions and processes of the medium and bring a different ambition and monumentality to the work. Partnering with artists with established reputations in other media has been instrumental in creating a renewed public and critical interest in Irish printmaking. It is the role of artists to question and challenge the parameters of any medium, and while cognisant and respectful of the traditions and craft of printmaking, present-day practice defies historical hierarchal conventions and sees print presented on equal terms with other media.

There is no question that the work of the Graphic Studio directors and members was instrumental in changing attitudes towards print in Ireland. Previous to its foundation, artists had limited venues to sell or promote their graphic art. Independent commercial ventures such as the New Irish Salon, the Society of Dublin Painters, the Daniel Egan Gallery and the Victor Waddington Galleries exhibited some prints from the 1920s, as did the alternative establishment-challenging Irish

Exhibition of Living Art and Independent Artists group from the 1950s. However, following the foundation of the GSD, in the 1960s mainstream national institutions began to exhibit the work of national and international printmakers including the Municipal Gallery of Modern Art (now the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane) and the Ulster Museum. Of major importance to the development of Irish modern print was David Hendriks' commercial gallery in Dublin, their first exhibitions showcased international graphics, beginning with a display of Picasso's celebrated Vollard Suite. For the first time Irish audiences had access to a continuous programme of contemporary printmaking. Private collectors such as George Dawson, Gordon Lambert and national organisations including the Arts Council of Ireland (ACI) and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland sustained the development of printmaking through the sponsorship of print workshops and the acquisition of prints. In recognition of its pioneering and important work, the ACI had supported the GSD from its earliest days.

Among the earliest 'graduates' of the studio were John Behan, Brian Bourke, Charles Cullen, Alice Hanratty, Michael Kane and Chris Reid. Others included those that would take on key administrative roles within the studio namely, John Kelly, James McCreary, Liam O'Broin and James O'Nolan. By the late 1960s, artists such as Micheal Farrell, Robert Ballagh, Cecil King, Louis Le Brocqy and GSD members received worldwide and domestic recognition through their participation in numerous international print biennale including those held in Berlin, Bradford, Ljubljana, San Paulo, Salzburg, Sergovia and Tokyo. During the 1970s and early 1980s, Listowel, County Kerry, in conjunction with the Writers Week festival, hosted a series of international graphic exhibitions, showcasing the prints of Irish artists such as Simonds Gooding, Richard Gorman, Farl Powers and Anne Madden. From this period, Irish printmakers had firmly established themselves within the Irish art scene and following the example of the GSD other workshops appeared across Ireland including the Belfast Print Workshop which was spearheaded by Jim Allen in the 1970s, the Black Church Print Studios founded in 1982, and Cork Printmakers, the Leinster Printmaking Studio, and Limerick Printmakers Studio founded in the 1990s.

The membership of the GSD today is made up of practitioners from diverse experiences and to mark its 60th anniversary, the studio has organised an exhibition of current members' work. It showcases a range of approaches among the membership. The nature of printmaking, the necessity of understanding and working with the exacting demands of the technical processes involved, which some printmakers describe as the 'alchemy' of making, alongside the element of the unknown until the final 'pull', means the medium demands forethought, discipline and clarity of purpose. Printmakers revel in these challenges. And when faced with these same challenges, the benefits of being part of a co-operative come into sharp focus. While many artists have printmaking facilities in their private studios, sharing

and working through problems with technical support staff and colleagues on the studio floor facilitates and empowers the creative process.

In terms of subject matter, the GSD members work across artistic genres, from figurative, landscape and still life, and there is a substantial cohort that expand the parameters of same taking a more conceptual approach. And the abstract and the abstracted also features.

The human form, its essence and symbolic power has fascinated artists across history. Stephen Lawlor has a long and formative association with the GSD, as a member and on the board. His work in print is marked by its technical mastery, and this is evident in the visually striking *The Queen*. This silkscreen is part of series Lawlor has developed in recent years where he reconfigures images of historical female portraits. Drawing from the Netherlandish painter Anthonis Mor's portrait of Mary Tudor, Catholic sovereign of England and Ireland from 1553-58, the work evokes Francis Bacon's reimagining of Velasquez's Innocent X but the brutish handling of the pontiff is rejected in favour of diffusing the motif to suggest the imperceptibility of historical figures, the mysteries of divine right and monarchy, and conflict of patriarchal power and the feminine. *To Break a Rose's neck* by Richard Lawlor is a violent image of a prostrate woman, the menacing red of her dress and the swirling darkness around her suggests a narrative of defencelessness and terror. While based in London, Sharon Lee maintains a strong connection with the GSD. Her art delves and represents the complexities and subtleties of human histories, acquired knowledge and the archiving of experience and memory. Devising a complex visual language of emblematic motifs, idiosyncratic mark making, appropriated themes and colour studies, Lee's multi-media compositions are powerful investigations of identity. Apart from his unquestionable command of his chosen technique, one of the most striking in aspects of Liam O Broin's art is its humanity. O Broin has been a stalwart figure in the history of the studio and his commitment to the medium of print has been steadfast. His portrait of John Kelly, another significant figure in the GSD story, is a gentle, warm image of a man and a friend.

The immobile object, or an arrangement of objects, has allowed artists over time to hone and showcase their artistic skills, and as a creative vehicle the still life offers practitioners the opportunity to construct narratives, question contexts and rationalise the substance of things. The artistry of master printmaker James McCreary is unquestionable. His reimagining of objects, from the natural to the manmade, assumes their own essentialness and beauty as seen in *Ropes, Balbriggan. Plaiice* by Jennifer Lane is a playful yet sophisticated image. A pun on its title, the fish with its beautifully rendered pattern, appears to be placed on a grained board, quoting the image's method of making, a woodblock. Yet, the grain may also represent the movement of the plaiice through water, as a series of marks draws the eye to a motif in the upper corner – which may be read as a moon or another

foodstuff. Siobhan Hyde's work stems from reflections on her circumstances and her environment. Her screenprint is a distilled and mediative still life study of the everyday, where the balanced, utilitarian design of a household jug is composed within a geometrised and essentialised setting. At times an artist will create a work that is specifically of its time – a commentary on current events. *Wearing thin, October 2020*, by Ned McLoughlin presents an embossed surgical mask, an object once for a select group of professionals in special circumstances, now part of everyday attire. A mask may hide, misdirect, be a barrier to communication, but in 2020 this fragile object became a symbol of both political division and protection. Ruth O'Donnell's playful composition *Order and Chaos* is a commentary on the hubristic fragility of life. A house of cards serves as a common metaphor in the history of art, often presented in the context of childhood pastimes. However, while representing play it also suggests a future of, conversely, both disappointment and resilience. The isolation of O'Donnell's motif, and the delicate instability of the sugar-lift process, creates an image of beauty and poignancy. The art of Jean Bardon is famed for its considered compositions, and its rich and opulent surfaces. Elements are decoratively isolated from nature, and may echo or differ in form. The inventiveness of the work lies in Bardon's ability, using space, colour and pattern, to create pleasing, if at times, surprising, interconnections. Quiet, measured control distinguishes the art of Yoko Akino. Her asymmetrical arrangement of blooming branches, placed in a pulsatingly blue vase, flow beyond the compositional frames. Their organic forms carry pops of vibrant red and accents of yellow and green. The use of primary colours creates a sense of chromatic musicality.

Ireland has a long and esteemed history of landscape art. From the idealised view of the colonisers' eye, to its romanticised form for the visitor and poet, to its service in reclaiming and defining Irish identities and mythologies, to its evolution as a medium of self-exploration, the landscape serves as an agent of expression and means of testing humankind's relationship with nature. *Paragon* by Ria Czerniak-LeBov is part of a series of urban-themed works by the artist. As a printmaker, Czerniak-LeBov is committed to sustaining the qualities of a well-made print and argues that it is possible to be respectful of process and see printmaking as a medium for experimentation, conceptual exploration and spontaneity. Describing herself as a cinephile, the aesthetics of French New Wave cinema inform her artistic vision in terms of view point, lighting and tonality, whilst the image itself is a composite sourced from a digital platform. The artist uses technology to 'walk' through familiar city streets, the distorted viewpoint, the differing perspectives and disassociation from physical experience allows the viewer to see, and question, a fractured familiar. Matthew Gammon is an artist that works in print and photography, each discipline informs the other in his practice. He finds inspiration in both the natural and the built environment and he seeks out to re-educate audiences in the aesthetic power of what may have become, through over-familiarity, unseen. *Liquid Skyscraper* was printed from a photopolymer-covered

light-sensitive steel plate on which a photographic study of New York's architecture - by the artist - was exposed. Gammon was drawn to the effects of light and reflection on the building's glass which conversely suggests the illusion of water in defiance of the immense physicality of the structure. Looking abroad and into the historical, Vaida Varnagiene has created a series of appropriated views from 'past' places. Part of an ongoing series, her etching *A post card from Paris* replicates a popular commercial image of the city dating to 1919. Looking to photographic archives and by visiting the sites today, the artist seeks to re-examine the past, to trace the physically changed and unchanged, and consider the impacts of time on meaning and experience.

At first glance, Dermot Ryan's print represents the American dream – a fine home set in landscaped suburbia. However, within warm lit interiors, armoured inhabitants stand on guard, reflecting instabilities and siege mentalities that – according to some political and media agendas - proliferate contemporary middle-class life. In contrast, Gerry Cox's somewhat surreal, dreamlike space, evoking the stillness and shifting perspectives of a de Chirico, suggests a beloved remembered experience, softly coloured by the passage of time. *Nightly Levitation Over Grosvenor Road* by Daniel Lipstein began as a painting and is an example of magic realism finding voice through visual expression. Here in a familiar place, a place where the artist lived, a naked figure, perhaps the artist themselves, hovers, vulnerable but unseen. The observed details and the richly applied, textured colour convince the viewer of the vividness and veracity of the artist's vision. In contrast, the delicate illustrative quality of Grainne Dowling's etching of the Old Jewish Quarter in Verona creates a sense of timelessness and endurance. This is a place of life, of loss, of memory and of the future. Paul Fitters leads the viewer along a sunshine path towards the sea; this place of rich hues is one of warmth, repose and abandon. Rebecca Phelan's landscape etching rejects colour in favour of a detailed textured view comprising soft tones of whites, blacks and greys. Despite the lack of colour, light-bleached stones, hazy mountains and reflected light creates an atmosphere of heat and sanctuary. However, colour often plays an important role in the construction of narrative, and its select isolation in art serves to capture and direct the viewer's attention. *Kite in the Rough* by the GSD's current Studio Director Robert Russell, one of the county's most highly regarded printmakers, is a case in point. The single note of red, suspended amongst shaded foliage, set against the yellow heat of a summer meadow suggests an all too human story of preparation, expectation, joy and dismay.

The lucid defined exactness of Susan Early's copper-plate etching makes known her training as an architect. The immense form of the man-made lighthouse in North Donegal stands in brilliant white defiance of the harsh, weathered Atlantic coast. Early's detailed exploration of the aesthetic contrasts of the natural and built environment is underpinned by consummate drawing skills. Describing herself as

an intuitive artist, Camilla Fanning uses carborundum as it harnesses the immediacy of the spontaneous mark, allowing it to find its own expressive language. Drawing from her sketches, experience and memory, she captures the forceful energy of the Atlantic Ocean, the medium 'holding' her intense, subjective and ambitious colour choices. However, the coast can also be a place of calm, of soothing, and the softly coloured, gently textured and reflective light-filled linear composition by Niall Naessens brings the viewer to a place of stillness and thoughtfulness. Marie-Louise Martin works on steel for its particular plate tone and the feel of immediacy brought to her mark-making. Created on a residency in Annaghmakerrig, the image comes into to focus from the bottom of the composition – like a glimpse from a window which becomes a moment of contemplation as the first snow of the year settles. Silhouetted trees ground the event to a location but the subtle tones which gently fades conjures the creation of memories and the passage of time. Louise Leonard is an artist where the recreation of place is an essential element of her work. Drawing is the bedrock of her process as she meticulously records the buildings, nature and atmospheres of her local environment. Here, in urban life, she finds the lyrical and beautiful. Another artist who responds to the local, but who looks for the otherworldly within the familiar is Julie Ann Haines. She records happenstance encounters on her phone, seeing the same sights anew at different times of the day and she records the impacts of seasonal change. Haines responds emotionally to the transformative effects of lighting and atmosphere. A 1930s coastal shelter takes on an iconic presence, heroically centralised in the composition and is the illuminated by the cool, yet soft morning lights of a city waking on a winter's morning.

Pamela Leonard has been a member of the studio for over 30 years and her reputation within Irish printmaking is peerless. Presenting a richly coloured rambler's view of Howth's headland, the print demonstrates her trademark synthesis of painterly mark making and graphic clarity. German-born Elke Thonnes has lived in Ireland for many years, yet, she describes her travels across the island as a continuous quest to find her place on its map. She is drawn to water and she has undertaken numerous studies of the Atlantic coast, including West Cork. She employs a number of techniques in particular photoetching, sourced from her own photographic studies, and the painterly qualities of carborundum allow her to explore atmospheric effects in creating a personal response to familiar views. *On the Mekong* by Adrienne Symes is a monochromatic woodcut based on sketches made on a tour to Vietnam. The artist's memory of lush surroundings, torrential rain, a swollen river, together with the joyful tenacity of the local people is vibrantly articulated through expressive mark making which creates a sense of perpetual movement and vivacity. Mary Grey works in the traditional Chinese and Japanese water-based woodblock process of Mokuhanga. Her image of a robin in full song reveals a dexterous and sensitive handling of the medium – the splintered texture of the wooden matrix which defines the illustrative elements is an integral part of the composition and is in stark contrast with the clarity of the unblemished background.

Eilis Murphy has produced a hand-printed and hand-bound volume entitled *Words about Words*. The relationship between the printmaker and the book has existed for centuries, and Murphy juxtaposes fragments of text and images of nature to gently direct the reader through a tactile experience and a visual journey. The art of letterpress is explored by Mary Plunkett. The over-layering of iconic Colmcille type, designed in the 1920s by Colm Ó Lochlainn and Karl Uhlemann, allows for an abstracted aesthetic experience, while the innate balance and harmony of the individual letters is expressly retained.

The wish to perpetuate a sense of wonder and joy in nature is the starting point for Grainne Cuffe. A printmaker for over three decades, she is an intense observer of her subject matter, oftentimes the flowers of her garden. Through a command of line and colour she captures their sculptural forms and luminescence. The etching *Green Aventurine* shares its title with a crystal, one associated with growth, rejuvenation and creative energy. A member of GSD for just over two years, for this print Michelle Fahy creates a richly patterned composition based on her sketches and photographic studies of the exuberant, living interior of the National Botanic Gardens' Great Palm House. Heavily inked passages define a variety of leaves and fronds and these are counterbalanced by a myriad of delicate texturing and subtle colouration. As an artist, Cliona Doyle is drawn to, and draws from, nature. Working directly from the motif *en plein air* is an important aspect of her work, often bringing prepared plates on site to work on. Through this process, Doyle brings a freshness and immediacy to her imagery, capturing nuances that may be lost if created at a remove from the subject. Responding subjectively, presentation and colour choice can deviate from the object's natural form and contexts, as elements can be isolated and rearranged decoratively and imaginatively, informed by the art of the past and antiquity. In her etching of a gull chick, Renate de Brun's isolated study harks back to centuries of nature studies in its meticulous attention to anatomical detail, but its decontextualization represents both the wonder of the infant bird's existence and its vulnerability, a poignant metaphor for the earth's current fragility. Nancy Previs suggests rather than describes form and atmosphere, her images are composed of idiosyncratic painterly marks, calligraphic lines leading the viewer through a painterly 'landscape' of colour, movement and pattern. At times, printmakers, in defiance of the edition, will introduce other media with printmaking methods to achieve the visual effects they desire. Barry Meskell combines printer's ink and watercolour to create a rich, painterly study of a white petunia.

For some artists, the shapes and arrangements of the natural world provide a platform from which space and elements can be reimagined and reconfigured. Niamh Flanagan, drawing from her memories of walking through the glacier-scored Alps, creates a fantastical crystalline mountain range. The undulations and textures of nature are meticulously rendered in linear clarity and are accentuated with

patterned tone. Within the permanency of soaring peaks, the fragile, yet doggedly persistent presence of humankind is represented by built structures, their geometrical forms interrupting the towering forms of nature.

And for many artists nature provides a departure point for greater conceptual and imaginative exploration. Artists employ the means of juxtaposition, re-situation, de-contextualisation to direct viewers to question, rethink assumptions and biases, and reimagine their surroundings. *Starlight* by Melissa Ellis is richly illustrative image of cosmic-soaring flying fish, the detailed, lithe forms of the sea creatures set against celestial globes and orbiting planets. Redolent of the unashamedly decorative excesses of the Art Nouveau movement, the artist's mastery of line creates a mesmeric visual experience. Niamh McGuinne is notable for her experimental approach to her process, often incorporating methods other than 'pure' print, such as printing etched matrixes on to a variety of surfaces other than paper and presenting them in a 3-D configuration. *She slid on slowly by* is representative of her ongoing interest in the history of feminine psychological experience and resulting somatic responses, and how these have been received and perceived within society. The snail, emblematic of armoured vulnerability, is an entity that leaves traces of its presence, marking and mapping its movements. These are subtle, visible in a raking light and are captured by the artist within the photogram form of a snail. The snail's outline also reveals anthropomorphic elements and a suspended darkened woman's eye reveals traces of trauma and pain. A similar approach is taken by Rebekah Lord Gardiner. Her composite images, of the appropriated, the hand-drawn and mechanical effects create images that suggest the biological make up of natural elements, and she exploits these for their aesthetic and abstract elements. For Michele Hetherington, who is one of the studio's newest members, the materiality and physicality of the printmaking process sustains her fascination with the medium. Traditional, or analogue, methods, used addition with the non-print, appeal to her innate need for tactile experience, which in turn drives her creative impulses. In *Proteus*, Hetherington is illuminating the darkest object in the earth's solar system as part of her exploration of the unknown, the murky, the imperfect and the uncontainable in defiance of art's historical preoccupation with representing beauty and the ideal.

Experimentation and reflection are an important part of Mateja Smic's process, results from the act of making directs her artistic response. For *Lode*, a term which refers to a source of metal or rich abundance, Smic applies a gelatine transfer to the metal plate, a process she has developed in recent years. The unhindered reaction of gelatine, metal, ink and paper are a metaphor for the immaterial and conceptual, which are guided to a creative resolution in a tangible, physical way. In a more controlled, yet personalised manner, Joe Ryan's textured, disparately sized geometric patterns creates an unstable rhythm for the viewer to contemplate. Even

greater restraint and control is presented in Katsutoshi Yuasa's Mokuhanga geometrical studies. Suspended in deep black pigment, a cuboid form, its construction suggested though subtle tonal variations of line and shape, resonates a rational order from within the depths of the unknown. Another artist who has trained in the self-adaptive methods of Mokuhanga is Kate MacDonagh. MacDonagh's hand-printed *Cerise* is redolent of restrained aspects of Japanese visual culture, and is an astute study in binary relations, opaque versus translucent, smooth versus textured, geometric versus organic, straight versus curved. Yet, the entire composition is held together by tonal gradations of vivid red/pink colour and the evidence of making.

As evidenced by its 60th anniversary exhibition, the continuing presence of the GSD ensures that printmaking is in a strong place in Ireland. Yet, it recognises that it cannot afford to stand still – as an organisation must continue to evolve and grow, this includes participating in debates as to the role of print in contemporary practice including questions as fundamental as its making. For example, while now somewhat dated, the role of computer-aided imagery and digital printing remains a provocative issue. For some, fine art printmaking is defined by the use of time-honoured methods such as etching, lithography and woodcut, for others they welcome the opportunities and possibilities offered by new technologies which allows for explorations of, and collaborations with, diverse media, including photographic and digital processes, film and 3-D printing. These debates have been in existence for over a hundred years, those who worked in lithography were rejected by 'purist' etchers. For many contemporary artists, as in the example of the members of the GSD, they happily mediate between being custodians of tradition and leaders in innovation.

As it celebrates its 60th anniversary, the Graphic Studio Dublin is proud of its heritage and it dutifully continues to fulfil the hopes and dreams of its founders. And, may it continue in its vital role in sustaining and expanding the art of the print – in all its guises – for generations to come.

Dr. Angela Griffith

**Director of the Irish Art Research Centre
Department of History of Art and Architecture
Trinity College Dublin**

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