

CATHERINE
BEBOUT

Off the Map:
Journeys in Cartography

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OFF THE MAP: JOURNEYS IN CARTOGRAPHY

Maps tell stories, they incite fantasies, they affirm dominion, they promise wealth, and they lure the adventurous to fame or disaster. In J. Catherine Bebout's hands, maps become metaphors for the human quest for knowledge and power. Her richly layered monoprints build subtle narratives that combine details, often altered digitally, of antique maps with delicately delineated representations of real and fantastic natural specimens, recreated in a manner that brings to mind vintage botanical drawings and natural history illustrations. Often elements are arranged over watery fields derived from marbled book papers. These suggest the fluids that sustain life as well as the seas that served as the medium of transport during the explorations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Sometimes, these watery fields open up like a hole in time to reveal ocean vistas set with sailing ships.

The deliberately archaic visual language of these works brings us back to an era when humans were engaged in a global effort to extend human mastery over the earth through maritime expeditions. Individual elements – a much magnified representation of a flea clinging to a magnifying glass, images of the now extinct dodo, both stuffed and skeletal, undulating lizards, cartographer's calipers, hour glasses, rodents and exotic insects – recall the specimens collected during these expeditions and brought home to satisfy public hunger for glimpses of exotic lands. In Bebout's monoprints, these images are laid, often in grid format, over fields whose pale markings derive from maps or distorted marbling. These deliberately blurred and faded grounds serve as palimpsests, offering glimpses of a distant world.

We live today with the consequences, both good and ill, of the remarkable enterprise known as the Age of Exploration – on one side these expeditions increased human knowledge in fields like botany, geography, ethnography, natural history and ecology. On the other they left behind troubling tendencies – the political instability that lingers in the wake of colonialism, for instance, or the environmental disruptions and looming environmental disasters that result from an incautious use of power.



Elephant Bird (*Aepyornis maximus*) 1649



Madagascar 1649

Aepyornis maximus

AEPYORNIS MAXIMUS, 2006, Monoprint w/Litho, Collagraph, & Etching, 22" H X 30" W



Fated Specimens III

FATED SPECIMENS III, 2005. Pigment Print w/Etching & Litho, 28"H X 40"W



Apocalypse I

APOCALYPSE I, 2007 Etching, Collagraph, Litho and Chine Colle' 20" H X 42" W



Natural Histories

NATURAL HISTORIES, 2004, Litho, Etching, Collagraph & Chine Colle' 28" H X 20" W X 2" D (3 panels), Printed at Frans Masereel Centrum



Noble Savages II

NOBLE SAVAGES II, 2007 Pigment Print w/Etching & Litho, 30" H X 44" W



Fated Specimens II

FATED SPECIMENS II, 2005, Pigment Print w/Etching & Litho, 28"H X 40"W



Apolcalypse I

APOLCALYPSE I, 2007 Etching, Collagraph, Litho & Chine Colle' 20" H X 42" W

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Cartography and the archeology of travel have been used throughout history to inform, as well as distort perceptions of the world. Recent works intertwine these conceptual themes with multiple processes in printmaking ranging from the traditional to digital in the creation of unique, monoprint impressions. My process involves scanning visual materials from early colonial maps to topographical charts that incorporate with photographs and fragments taken from my travel journals.

Throughout the work, investigate various themes within cartography and its historical impact on the politics of science, nature, and technology. My interest is to create visual and metaphorical travelogues designed to take the viewer on a trip through mysterious flora and fauna filled regions, both real and imaginary, around the world. Similar to Victorian era "Cabinets of Natural Curiosities," collections echoing a traveler's wandering obsessions, my work attempts to reflect the collector's idiosyncratic hodgepodge of interests by juxtaposing the fine arts with freaks of nature. The underlying message is how the repercussion of travel over time has created a legacy of ecovandalism resulting in stripping the environment and bringing more species to the brink of extinction. My intention is to probe the intersection of perception and reality and how images possess the power to both inform and distort. The intent is to take the viewer on a visual journey to reflect upon how issues from our past, inform the present.

J. Catherine Bebout

BIOGRAPHY

Catherine Bebout earned her MFA from Rochester Institute of Technology in printmaking and sculpture. She is an associate professor at Montclair State University in the department of art & design and the area coordinator in printmaking since 1996. Her work is exhibited nationally and internationally with solo exhibitions in Shanghai, PR of China, Quebec, Canada, and Auckland, New Zealand. As a Fulbright Scholar to India, she will be featured in an upcoming show at the Fundacao Oriente, Goa, India in 2008 and in the Novosibirsk Print Biennial in Russia.

Recent solo shows include Anchor Graphics in Chicago and invitational exhibitions at the International Print Center, Susan Teller Gallery, A.I.R. Gallery, the Center for Book Arts, all in New York. National group exhibitions include The Print Center in Philadelphia, the Sonoma Museum of Art, California, and the University of Hawaii, Hilo. She has also participated in a number of international artist in residency programs such as the Frans Masereel Centrum in Belgium, Silpakorn University in Thailand, and Engramme in Quebec, Canada. Jay Addington Gallery in Chicago and Cline Fine Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico represent Bebout's work. Her work is in numerous public collections such as the New York Public Library, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and The Musee d'Beaux Arts, Antwerp, Belgium. Essays regarding her work have been published in the *Journal of Contemporary Impressions*, the *New Art Examiner* and *Hand Papermaking*. Professor Bebout is a Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for the Arts recipient, and has received grants from New Jersey State Council on the Arts, as well as research grants from the Canadian and Belgium governments.

WORKS INCLUDED IN THE EXHIBITION

AEPYORNIS MAXIMUS, 2005, Monoprint w/Litho, Collagraph & Etching, 22" H X 30" W

APOCALYPSE I, 2007 Etching, Collagraph, Litho & Chine Colle' 20" H X 42" W

BIG FISH, 2006, Etching & Chine Colle' 7" H X 23" W (Printed at Anchor Graphics)

DARWIN'S NIGHTMARE, 2007 Etching, Collagraph, Silkscreen on Archival Pigment Print,
28 panels, overall size 5" H X 9" W

FATED SPECIMENS 2005, Monoprint w/Etching and Litho on Archival Pigment Print, 28" H X 40" W

FATED SPECIMENS 2005, Monoprint w/Etching and Litho on Archival Pigment Print, 28" H X 40" W

HARBINGER II, 2006, Monoprint w/Etching & Litho on Archival Pigment Print, 30" H X 44" W

HISTORIA ANIMALIUM, 2006, Monoprint w/Etching, Silkscreen on Archival Pigment Print, 22" H X 30" W

NATURAL HISTORIES, 2004, Monoprint w/Litho, Etching, Collagraph & Chine Colle' 28" H X 20" W X 2" D,
3 panels (Printed at Frans Masereel Centrum)

NATURAL SELECTION, 2005, Monoprint w/Etching & Chine Colle' 28" H X 22" W

NOBLE SAVAGES III, 2007 Monoprint w/Etching, Litho on Archival Pigment Print, 30" H X 44" W

OMEN, 2006, Monoprint w/Etching & Collagraph, 22" H X 30" W

RARITIES NATURA, 2007 Monoprint w/Etching & Collagraph, 22" H X 30" W

VANITAS, 2007 Etching & Collagraph, 2 " H X 26" W



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Design: Angela DeLaura



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