

ART

Montotypes and Monoprints Reveal an Elusive Freshness

By WILLIAM ZIMMER

MONOTYPES and monoprints stand out from more common multiple prints by the quality of uniqueness. The artist paints on the copper plate or lithography stone and prints in the normal way — once only. In this way, the factor of the pressure inherent in the printing process enters in. In monoprints, some details remain on the plate so another print can be produced with variations.

The special nature of these works can be seen in "One of a Kind — Monotypes and Monoprints" at the Stamford Museum and Nature Center. The exhibition lives up to its billing, for much of the work has that elusive quality of freshness.

This viewer was most attracted to work that emphasized the slip-and-slide potential of lithography. Larry Schuh's "Paint Can" has this in spades. A liquidy red ground is a sort of anchor on which the image of a paint can with brushes is planted. "Mountains Awash" by Susan Carter is in that same vein. One thinks of a traditional Japanese print with the mountain, perhaps Fuji, decomposing. "Flying Birds" by Ginger Vaughan is a geometric wedge but still retains the slickness inherent in the printing process.

"Dancing Gloves" a particularly laconic but blithe image by Valerie Aslakson fits the criterion of movement, and in a slightly more complex way so does "Wall Street" by D. Wels. The ambiance of the two men who are very readable in this monoprint is deliberately indistinct; what stands out very clearly is the dark black lines of their neckties against the pure white of their shirts.

With spiders being the stars of a hit summer movie, it isn't surprising that one should respond strongly to "Black Arachnida" by Ashlee Basinger. It takes full advantage of the ability of a very viscous medium to be slightly repellent.

The crescendo of the slippery mode is the appropriately titled "Devil May Care." It is a collaboration by Selma Bortner and John Strawn and is distinguished by its long horizontal format on which two winged figures dance. The red ground gives it its devilish aspect.

Some strong landscapes also stand out, including "Painted Desert No. 1"



"Dancing Gloves," a monotype by Valerie Aslakson, at the Stamford Museum and Nature Center.

by Greg Pfarr. It reminds this viewer of something Marsden Hartley might have done in the 1930's, capitalizing on the fact that a wilderness place allows an artist to indulge in original shapes, here clouds, and repetition, here sagebrush. Margaret Kannestine's "Otauguechee, Yellow" encompasses a broader and more varied range of scenery, and one appreciates this turn from desert to Eastern terrain.

"From Dan's Deck" by Sally Brody is a landscape that alludes to the slithery mode discussed earlier. It is less a landscape, if that implies a distanced viewpoint, than a thicket in which the viewer becomes visually entangled.

This viewer detected a minor but interesting intellectual current running through the show. It first became apparent in the stern visage of Primo Levi as rendered by Suzanne Hodes. It is done in a style that is particularly elegant: essentially thin outline with the line being lighter than the ground, and it is an effect associated with Picasso.

The pair of dancing gloves has a thinking man's counterpart in "Flaubert's Glove No. 3" as envisioned by Charles Hobson. The glove holds a pencil and appears to be writing. This

is perhaps a metaphor for the labor that Flaubert found writing to be. His devotion to the writer's craft insulated him, as a glove might, from direct experience.

One of the great self-portraits of all time is that of Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) in which he visually compares himself to Jesus with long flowing hair and a stern countenance positioned directly in the center of the canvas. Takasuke Nakayama has reproduced this portrait but has gridded it off, displacing the alignment of the squares to deliberately undermine Dürer's rigidity.

A contemporary artist alluded to here is Connecticut painter William Bailey, known for items of crockery bunched close together. As if a T-square were his main tool, Noel Reifel has rendered commonplace items on a table top with a tablecloth that aspires to being a billowing sail.

Tie-ins to place, however unintentional, always stand out. Susan Amons's "Lizard Games" stars a reptile perched on a woman's shoulder about to nuzzle her neck. The art gallery at the Stamford Museum and Nature Center is adjacent to a fascinating exhibition on owls and their habits. Ms. Amons's monotype reprises the idea that art and wild nature can be harmonious.

This exhibition is an international



competition, with prizes awarded by Roger Crossgrove, former head of the art department at the University of Connecticut, and Andrew Stasik, the former director of the Pratt Graphic Center and Silvermine Galleries. This is the first such competition, and or

