

ne 22, 2013
Artist Talk
ay 24 | 6-7 pm
ing Reception
ay 24 | 7-9 pm

mith ight



the auspices of the
ch by William Eakin.



Suzie Smith: Shapes Shifting

by Jenny Western

I am always trying to make an image without making an image.

Suzie Smith, on her artistic process ¹

Go on transforming a square canvas in your head until it becomes a circle. Pick out any shape in the process and pin up or place on the canvas an object, a smell, a sound, or a colour that came to mind in association with the shape.

Yoko Ono, *Painting To Be Constructed In Your Head* ²

In the 1960s Yoko Ono presented her instruction paintings, a series of text-based pieces that allowed viewers to construct the image of Ono's words within their own imaginations. Since that time, the conceptual basis for this project has captivated art audiences and inspired countless other artists in their approach to creative production. Winnipeg artist Suzie Smith may be said to be one of those artists who has benefitted from Ono's transformative imagery. Smith, an interdisciplinary artist with a penchant for printmaking, has been amassing her *Shapes Shifting* series as an examination of how a work's title may define its process and subsequent image in an effort to elude the standard practice of image making.

But how does one endeavour to go about making an image while not making one? In an attempt to wrap her head around this conundrum, Smith arranges a riddle for herself to be solved visually. Through titles such as *Square Imitating Circle* or *Lines To Pattern*, Smith plays a game to create such transformations. In the case of the two aforementioned titles, the instructive for Smith is to coax a square into a circle and conjure straight lines into a wavy pattern. The process that follows the directives of these titles usually involves manipulating one form into another by folding paper, a trick that seems simple enough but with an outcome that appears downright complicated when considering that the square we now see was once a circle. To capture what she has accomplished through her process, Smith then takes the folded paper, scans it for documentation of the original's metamorphosis, and creates a lithograph from it. As Smith explains, *Shapes Shifting* is about "documenting the act rather than showing the act."³

However, the artistic sleight of hand does not end there. Smith's use of lithography as the final medium within her artistic process suggests that the outcome of this experiment is the multiplicity of the documented image. While the role of printmaking within this project does allow for several copies of the resultant image to be made, Smith is in fact investigating issues around the high/low relationship inherent in the lithographic process. Her piece *Lines Not Straight*, printed at Open Studio during Smith's recent Visiting Artist Residency, speaks of how trajectories can be broken and thrown off their course by a simple gesture. And in employing lithography for the *Shapes Shifting* series, Smith breaks down the division between this medium's usage for fine art purposes and also for industrial processes such as newspaper and poster printing. Smith is resisting the "perfection" that is often associated with the techniques of printmaking in lieu of a looser approach overall. It is a style which Smith refers to alternately as "DIY Modernism," "Bad Origami," or "Messy Minimalism."⁴

Even Smith's influences, from Ono to Sol LeWitt to Miranda July, demonstrate a loosened sense of form. Smith admits that chance plays a role in the creation of the series in that it determines the outcome of the initial act. While Smith's goal is to create a square into a circle (or vice versa), her folding technique does not produce a square but rather something a little more folksy in appearance. Yet the scanning of the resulting image reveals the folds and texture created by Smith's hand in the initial stages rather than the printing by hand accomplished in the later stage of creation. States Smith, "I am trying to create both material and process to create both poetic or complex yet totally simple and poetic or complex yet totally simple. They may be left to wonder exactly what they are apprehending in the finished piece, after a cursory glance at least, since the use of media is not instantly apparent."

As with Yoko Ono's instruction painting *Painting To Be Constructed In Your Head*, the *Shapes Shifting* series invites viewers to use their imaginations by using the visual cues provided in the finished work. Works like *Circles to Grid* we see the artist lured into wondering which way to go, but are lured into wondering which way to go. In a sense, Smith's collaborators as the process unfolds, realizing that Smith's creative process is to have shifted its shape as well.



¹ Smith, Suzie. Personal interview. February 23, 2013.
² Ono, Yoko. *PAINTING TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN YOUR HEAD (1)*. 1962. Accessed from <http://www.yoko.ono.com/>.
³ Smith, op. cit.
⁴ *Ibid.*
⁵ Smith, Suzie. Artist statement. February 2013

Image: *Lines To Pattern*, lithograph, 35" x 25", 2011. Photograph by Song Yun Kim.

Jenny Western is a curator, writer, and educator who lives and works in Winnipeg, Manitoba

May 24 - June 22, 2013

Artist Talk

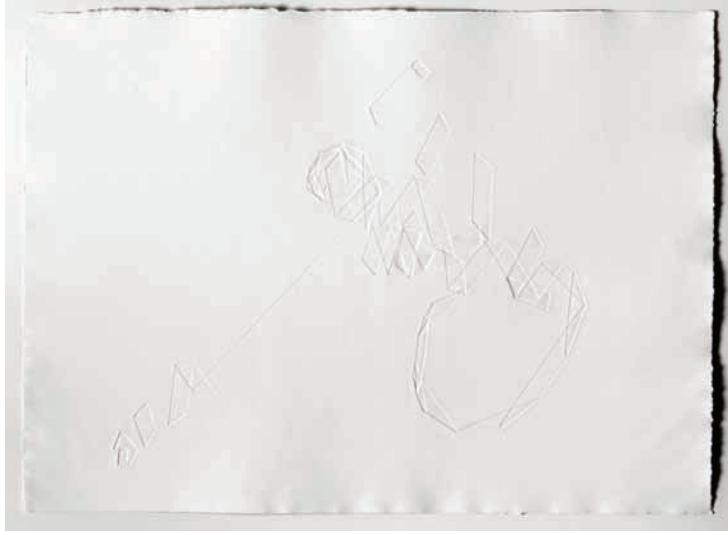
Friday, May 24 | 6-7 pm

Opening Reception

Friday, May 24 | 7-9 pm

Kristina Lahde

Criss-Cross



Criss-Cross 7, embossment on paper, 22.5" x 16.5", 2013. Printed by Laine Groeneweg under the auspices of the Open Studio Visiting Artist Residency, 2012-13. Photograph by Toni Hafkenscheid.



Open Studio
104 - 401 Richmond St. W.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8
tel/fax 416-504-8238
office@openstudio.on.ca
www.openstudio.on.ca
Gallery Hours: Tues - Sat, 12 - 5 pm

Kristina Lahde: *Criss-Cross*

by Bill Clarke

Throughout her art-making career, Toronto-based Kristina Lahde has used commonplace materials and objects to produce her work, obscuring their original functions through folding, cutting and rearranging. Viewers of her work are encouraged to look beyond the physical properties or use-value of the materials and consider the more complex meanings that lay behind them. Visually, her work challenges and delights the eye as much as the brain. Although her practice is informed by the tenets of Conceptual and Minimal art, Lahde's creations are usually bursting with rhythmic and kaleidoscopic patterns. She also often seems compelled to tease out as many different variations on a theme until she has exhausted it.

Until recently, Lahde was best described as a particularly methodical artist. Early series such as *Zeros* (2002-03) saw Lahde clipping out hundreds of tiny zeroes from the prices of items pictured in advertising flyers, configuring them into swirls, spirals, loops and ellipses on paper or in large installations thereby creating visual representations of consumer culture spinning out of control. The series *Kaleidoscope* (2008-09) likewise saw Lahde rearranging typographical elements from pages of *The Globe & Mail* into swirling pinwheel patterns; a comment, perhaps, on how disorienting and "abstract" our media-saturated world can feel. Such approaches to collage require plenty of forethought before one starts affixing the cut-outs to the paper.

Over the past few years, however, Lahde has started to experiment with less conventional art-making methods that have intentionally resulted in unpredictable outcomes. "I was starting to feel that my work was perhaps getting a little too orderly," she explained during a visit to her home-studio in the West End earlier this year. "I began to feel like I needed to break away from that; to embrace randomness and take some risks." Her first move in this less-predetermined direction is the series of ink and pencil paper-based works titled *Chance* (2010-11). Here, the mark making depended, literally, on a roll of the dice. For these works, Lahde used board game dice as stamps, inking all six sides before tossing them across sheets of paper. The arbitrary marks made by the dice bouncing across the surface were then meticulously reproduced in graphite as a mirror image on a second sheet of paper. Here, Lahde formally emphasizes the visual tension between the messy and capricious blotches left by the dice, and the accurate and purposeful replication of the marks made by her hand.

For her most recent series, *Criss-Cross*, produced during her Visiting Artist Residency at Open Studio, Lahde removes her hand almost completely from the work, the images emerging from these prints being produced with few interventions on her part. As in her previous work, Lahde started with a commonplace item — in this case a flexible tape measure of the kind most often used by tailors or clothing designers. (Lahde says that she often has one of these draped around her neck as she goes about her workday in the textile department at the Royal Ontario Museum. And, without a doubt, being surrounded by textile designs on a daily basis has influenced the repetition and patterning found in much of her artwork.) Lahde casually dropped the tape measure onto the bed of an etching press, occasionally making a few minor adjustments to its positioning. She then laid down paper and ran the whole thing through the printing press, which left behind the flattened, ghostly imprint of the tape measure once she peeled it from the surface. "When I asked the master printers at Open Studio if I could run the tape measure through one of the



an object's form on paper, like a fossil. The source material embedded in the p

Despite the decept series, each is rema to stand out boldly attempts to trace th "breaks" caused by elled through the f tical concepts of en er conclusion is rea evident that somet

Image: 90.45.45.30 x 3, 1 pieces of the Open Stud
1 Duchamp, Marcel. *The collection/object.php?c 2012-April 15, 2013).*

Bill Clarke is a Toronto- including *ARTnews*, *Car Magenta Magazine*, an (www.magentamagazir