

Student Artist Uses Old Methods To Create New Works of Art

Artist, Brandon Gunn, has a number of prints hanging in a local gallery for sale. He was able to create them with the help of an ORCA-sponsored student research grant at Brigham Young University.

The printmaker from Orem made his artwork by means of lithography, a centuries-old method using a limestone tablet on which he draws an image. The drawing is done using a litho crayon composed of grease and wax. The grease reacts with the limestone where the image is drawn and the bland areas are chemically treated to repel the grease. A thin film of water and oil-based ink are then applied to the stone's surface to create the final image. Gunn says the artwork is "based on the grease and water repelling each other." Finally, a piece of paper is placed on the limestone and run through a press to transfer the image onto the paper.



Brandon Gunn has recently completed a series of lithographs he used for his senior thesis. Some of his work is on sale at a local gallery.

Gunn also makes prints using another old method, called intaglio, which uses etched metal plates to bring out various surfaces, giving a more three-dimensional look to the image than lithography. He likes working with both surfaces because he says there are things that each method can do that the other can't.

Gunn's interest in art began during high school, and grew when he was able to get involved in printmaking as a student at BYU. "I really like to work with my hands and I like to draw," he says. Not being an artist who creates his work quickly, he enjoys the time and process it takes to do lithography. "It gives me a chance to think about things while I'm working and still be productive. For me it's easier that way. I just really like the process."

With mentored guidance from professor Wayne Kimball, Gunn worked on the project for five months to make the 20 pieces for his senior thesis. He says that gaining feedback on the objective project was helpful as it differs from most scientific research where results can be plotted and observed more readily. "This is more like a personal thing, my taste, my feelings going into this, and other people come into it with totally different ideas than what I'm putting into it," he says. "Any feedback I get on the project is definitely beneficial. In fact, it's mandatory."

Every fine arts student must display his or her work as part of the thesis presentation. For his, Gunn displayed his lithographs in Gallery 303 in the Harris Fine Arts Center this past May. Some of his work is currently being exhibited at the Utah Valley State College gallery in the University Mall for visitors to view, critique and purchase.

The funds he received through the ORCA grant paid for materials and shop fees. “The worst part was having to frame this stuff to present it, which probably ended up costing me six to eight hundred dollars alone,” he says. “With the ORCA grant I didn’t have to worry about that as I was creating the work.”



A lithograph, made from the original image on Bavarian limestone, is the end result of weeks of painstaking work.

Though the grant and opportunity might not have contributed to his getting accepted into graduate school – he will attend Illinois State University this fall – Gunn says they did help him gain valuable experience as an artist. “This is the first time I’ve been able to create a body of work this big, partially because of funding, and the time that I could commit to it.” Where normally it takes three months for him to create a single lithograph, the funding allowed him to create 20 different prints in five months. “It’s a huge difference in what I was able to accomplish,” he says. The work and

its products have helped him get taken seriously by gallery owners who want to show more than just one or two pieces by an artist.

Gunn also notes that with the ORCA grants students are at greater liberty to design and pursue their own project, as opposed to other funding sources that require specified work and results. He recommends that students interested in performing their own research plan ahead what they will do and how they will do it, in order to make them more competent for ORCA funding.