

Maira Kalman

Mostly (2012)

Boxed set of 27 sugar lift and hard ground etchings on linen and Somerset textured white paper, portfolio 13 1/2 x 11 1/2 x 1 1/2 inches, each sheet 12 x 10 inches. Edition of 15. \$15,000.

Blue Shoes and Five Stones (both 2012)

Hard ground etchings with hand coloring and chine collé gampi on Somerset soft white paper. Image 6 x 8 inches, sheet 13 x 14 inches. Editions of 20. \$1200 each.

Pink Hat (2012)

Hard ground etching with hand coloring and chine collé gampi on Somerset soft white paper. Image 20 x 14 inches, sheet 28 3/4 by 21 3/4 inches. Edition of 20. \$2000.

Rhinoceros (2012)

Sugar lift and aquatint on Somerset soft white paper. 8 3/4 x 11 1/2 inches. Edition of 20. \$1500.

Rollercoaster After Hurricane (2012)

Sugar lift and spit bite aquatint with chine chine collé gampi on Somerset soft white paper. Image 14 x 20 inches, sheet 22 x 27 inches. Edition of 20. \$2000.

All printed and published by Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley, CA.

Maira Kalman's etching portfolio *Mostly* reads at first as a series of painted sketches, an impression reinforced by the unexpected, canvas-like substrate (they are printed on linen mounted on paper). Though the paper is of consistent size, the shape, color and position of the fabric changes from print to print such that the group suggests confetti-driven festivity. Single words or phrases, sprinkled above and below some of the images, add to the quiet cacophony. Kalman is well-known as a writer and illustrator of such quirky children's books as *Sayonara*, *Mrs. Kackleman* (1989) and *Ooh-la-la (Max in Love)* (1994), and, more recently, books for adults, among them her personal year-long study of American democracy, *And the Pursuit of Happiness* (2010); she is also the creator of numerous *New Yorker* covers (including the iconic 2001 "New Yorkistan" with Rick Meyerowitz).

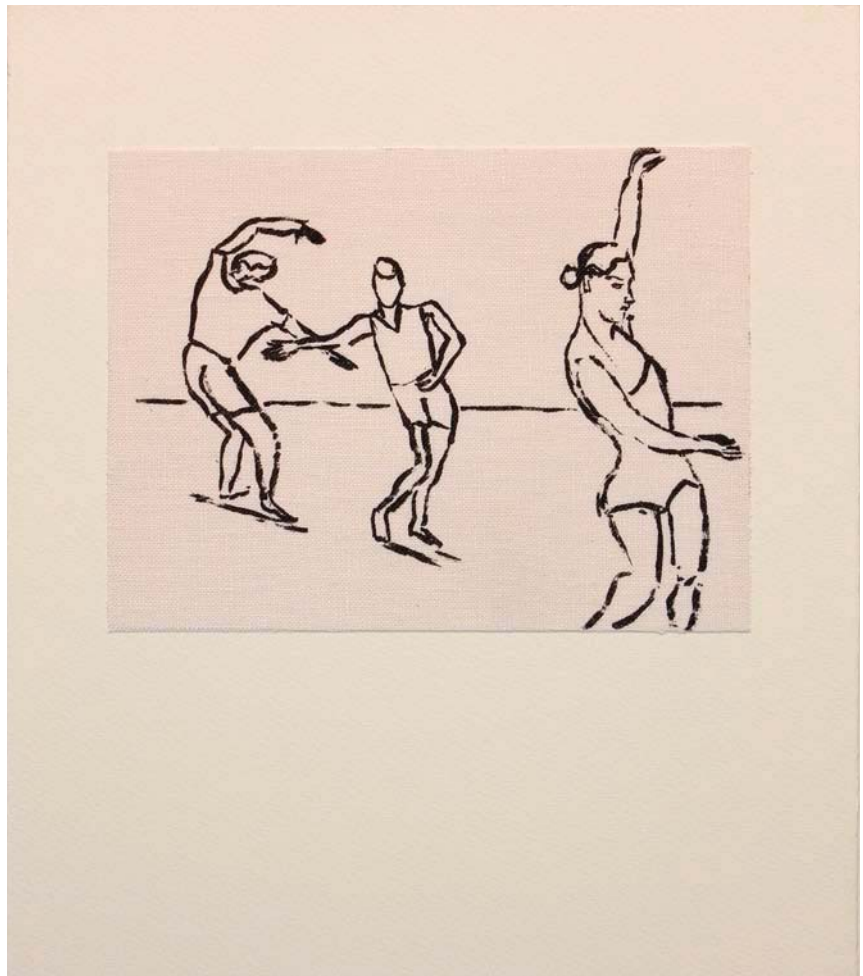
The portfolio, produced with Paulson Bott Press in Berkeley, houses an assortment of isolated subjects, at once familiar and just off-beam enough to divert

an easy reading: a quickly delineated woman twists away either in anger or in mid-dance; another figure lies face down beside a small boat, a duck and an inexplicable grid of 12 circles; a thistly concatenation of lines may represent a nest or an elaborate chrysanthemum; and so on. The five individual prints she created at the same time are larger and more intricate—two offer fictional accounts of life in her grandmother's home, one is a kind of sketchpad of studies, while the last two depict a melancholy rhinoceros and a tumble-down rollercoaster. The narratives are made mysterious by hand-coloring of a few, peculiar details (blue shoes, pink stones) and the presence, on closer inspection, of a number of inexplicable elements (bizarre little figures set outside the immediate family group, the child intensely contemplating the disproportionately large stones on the floor).

This was Kalman's first foray into

etching, but she was not inhibited by any veneration for printmaking pyrotechnics—she was simply curious to see how "using a drawing hand with another tool" might alter her aesthetic idiom of guileless figuration.¹ If anything, etching seems to have encouraged a certain reductionism—the prints are less colorful, less filled in, less busy than her book illustrations. The party has a melancholy air.

Some of the prints in *Mostly* carry isolated words or phrases that hint at a storyline: a hummingbird, captioned "h. bird" in schoolroom cursive, suggests a page torn from the sketchbook of a Victorian naturalist. Other pairings are more enigmatic: "mostly" appears below the visage of a masked woman; "always" below the heads of a woman, a boy and a scratchy rectangle; a pinkish sketch of a pinafores girl on a beach is labeled "was true." The fragments never connect, and the suggested tale remains insistently untold.



Maira Kalman, *Dancers* from the *Mostly* portfolio (2012).

The words are there, Kalman said, “because I never just do art.” The motifs do not derive from a specific narrative, but from “an inconsistent mood of images that I love, and then some dreams.” In *Mostly*, this seems to be an otherworldly space populated by enigmatic figures. Most of these appear alone, often dressed in archaic clothing. (She groups similar subjects on a single sheet in her print *Pink Hat*.) There are plants and fountains and animals, also in studied isolation, like the gloomy rhinoceros (which also appears in an eponymous single print). She fleetingly references great artists of the past (the rhino could be a nod to Dürer, and Matisse and Picasso are summoned in an image of three loosely drawn figures cavorting on a beach), but Kalman, the proud illustrator, is unsettled by the notion of etching as a slippery slope into “fine art”: it’s “a big scary, dark hole. That’s why I’m scrambling to put words on these pieces.”

The role model Kalman looks to in place of Dürer or Picasso is Ludwig Bemelmans, a painter who achieved immortality through *Madeline*. “Maybe he wasn’t a great painter,” she acknowledges, “but the sum of his writing and drawing is just so wonderful that you think, okay, there are many different worlds to be in.” Kalman shares Bemelmans’ attention to the idiosyncratic. It’s all very charming but just a tad peculiar. One etching in *Mostly* shows a small girl in Edwardian dress with leafy forms fluttering around her. She might almost be Bemelmans’ fearless little lion-snubber—like Kalman, naturally irreverent. ■
—Catherine Bindman

1. All quotations from Kenneth Caldwell, an interview with Maira Kalman, OKTP (press release), Paulson Bott Press, Berkeley, CA, 16 September 2013: http://www.paulsonbottpress.com/about/oktp/oktp_kalman.pdf.

Anish Kapoor

Shadow V series (Untitled 01–04) (2012)
Series of four etchings, 72.4 x 96 cm each. Edition of 39. Printed by Peter Kosowicz and published by Charles Booth-Clibborn under his imprint The Paragon Press, London. Price on request.

In his sculpture and printmaking Anish Kapoor explores ideas about perception and space, both physical and psychological. *Shadow* is the title he has given a



Anish Kapoor, *Untitled 03* from the series *Shadow V* (2013). ©Anish Kapoor and Paragon / Contemporary Editions Ltd.

sequence of prints in which he explores elements of form and color. Whereas each of the earlier four groups included nine or ten prints in multiple colors, *Shadow V* is pared down, comprising just four etchings, all printed in purple. The saturation and slight shifts in color entice the viewer to linger.

Kapoor’s work reminds us that sculpture and printmaking share many attributes, from the comfort of working in a workshop setting to the idea of repetition. At first glance the four prints look nearly identical, but on closer inspection differences are discernible. The seriality of the image challenges your perception and calls for closer investigation.

Kapoor’s sculptures often feature a seemingly infinite interior visible through a hole in the wall or floor, such as *Memory* (2008) and *Origin of the World* (2004). In *Shadow V* the fields of color appear empty; your eye wanders about trying to find an elusive focal point. These etchings are not merely abstract fields of color, they depict a void in space beyond the picture plane. The effect would nearly be an optical illusion if not for the deliberate moiré caused by offsetting the plates. This calls attention to the physical reality of the two-dimensional paper surface and to the elasticity of human perception. The illusion of the space coming toward or moving away from you continues until

the moiré snaps you back to reality. This oscillation between perception and reality is the true subject of the work.

The title *Shadow*, coupled with the artist’s fascination with convex forms, can be seen as an allusion to Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*, which Kapoor has discussed on several occasions in relation to his use of light and the anti-phallic forms that are a feature of his sculpture.¹ In Plato’s view, humans are like prisoners in a cave who can see only shadows projected on the wall, and they mistake these shadows for reality; the unshackled philosopher, however, perceives the true form of reality. Thus shadows are a distorted indication of reality and also evidence of a presence yet to be seen. It is easy to see the edges of the plate in *Shadow V* as marking the cave opening and the light in the center as the offered escape into the real.

This series by Kapoor is not only beautiful but also tackles issues of dimensionality, reality and illusion, and in the end provides the occasion for deep contemplation. ■
—Benjamin Levy

1. Anish Kapoor in conversation with John Tusa (<http://anishkapoor.com/180/in-conversation-with-John-Tusa.html>); Kapoor conversation with Marcello Dantas (<http://anishkapoor.com/178/in-conversation-with-Marcello-Dantas.html>); and Kapoor lecture at the MCA Australia (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Mt3fGk1f4A>).