

OKTP



RADCLIFFE BAILEY

03.01.2007

Paulson Press is pleased to release a series of monoprints by Radcliffe Bailey. Each image contains one or more old photographs from a collection that belonged to his grandmother. While these photographs appear to be a realistic element that contrasts with the colorful, dreamlike collage of squares and marks, the interview below suggests another perspective. What seems most “real” is typically a portrait of someone unknown to the artist, while the abstract imagery represents notations from Bailey’s daily existence. He does not seem to be making an overt political statement about his life, but simply sharing what he sees

and, also, what he hears. We spoke to him on the phone at his home in Atlanta.

—Kenneth Caldwell

Q: How did you come to make prints and how does it relate to your paintings?

A: My first time printmaking was in college, but it wasn’t anything serious. Then Pam and Renee invited me out to Paulson Press for the first time in 1996. There are similarities in my painting and the process of printmaking. There are seven layers in my paintings. In printmaking, you think about the process and the different layers you can build up. I have really defined the layers in my work. I say define, because before I dealt with layer-

ing fairly loosely or randomly. It was layer, layer, layer, work, work, work. Now I am more specific about when I put the layers in the painting.

The thing that interests me with printmaking is the alchemy. I am very interested in traditional practices in terms of African influences, such as traditional healing. I go through working and asking questions, and some solutions come about. It’s almost a place to pray. People call it a talisman.

Q: Does your work grow organically?

A: It’s just built. I work on several paintings at one time. It’s almost like I am taking notes every day. Whatever happens



Radcliffe Bailey working in the studio.

Mississippi, 2003

Spitbite and sugarlift aquatints, photogravure, hardground, drypoint, with hand painting, velvet and felt chine collé.; Paper size: 39" x 47"; Monoprint



Blue Flower, 2003

Spitbite, sugarlift, aquatint and softground etching with oil pastel, velvet collé, photogravure, and gold leaf; Paper size: 44" x 30"; Monoprint

in my life every day, I incorporate into the work.

Q: How did you get started?

A: My mother created a school outside of school for me. My mother had an aunt who was an artist, and she introduced my mom to art. My mother and aunt brought me direction and interest in art.

Q: What about the photographs you use?

A: The photographs came from my grandmother. When I was finishing college, she gave me 400 prints before she passed. I was asking myself, where was I going with my work? To be directed by someone close, by a family member, it was so perfect.

Q: You bring these photos with you when you make prints?

A: I may show up with some photos, but I don't come with any thoughts. The photos are more like decoys to keep some things very private. They serve as a visual element and hold the secrets of the paintings. Even though they are family members, I pick the ones that are unknown. They are the discarded ones that nobody talks about. These people may have been friends of the family.



Love Hunter, 2003

Spitbite, sugarlift, aquatint and hand painting with color photocopy, velvet and felt chine collé; Paper size: 44" x 30"; Monoprint

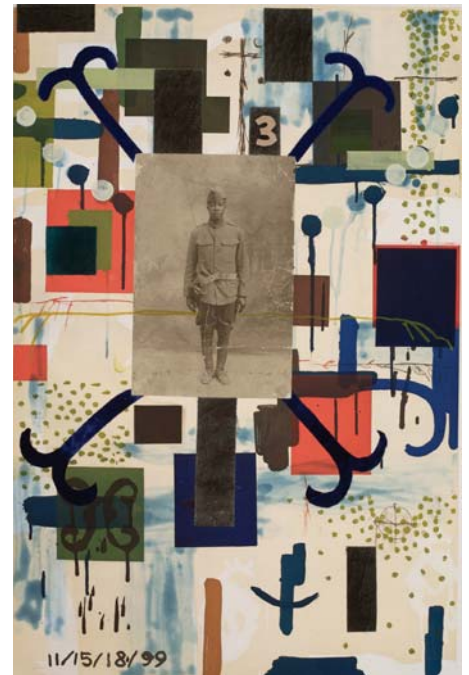
Q: Can you say something about music? Are you still listening to Sun Ra?

A: I've been listening to the sound of the wind and I've been listening to my dogs bark at night on a full moon. Of course there are certain jazz musicians and female singers I listen to. Usually the ones that people think are crazy, but they make sense to me. But there are also moments when I don't listen to music at all. I have an iPod built into my brain; I make my own music.

Q: Are there specific stories in your work?

A: I look to be sparked by whatever crosses my path. I also know my work can be very direct. I want to see myself as a vessel.

I often refer to my grandfather and the stories he told. They didn't come to me in a natural 'come over here and sit down' kind of way. They came to me by watching my grandfather exist, by his actions and the way he lived his life. I allow the materials which are loaded to speak on their own. I am not so much telling stories, but documenting every day. I believe there are areas that we don't acknowledge, like dreams; we dismiss them. Think about a dream. How could I articulate a



Liberator, 2003

Spitbite and sugarlift, aquatint with hand painting, color photocopy, velvet and felt chine collé; Paper size: 44" x 30"; Monoprint

dream and make it make sense? I think the dream has so many places where you can enter and break away. My work is like a never ending dream. And it is very cryptic.

As much as people may think I am looking in the past I am looking in the present. I take things from various time periods and create something futuristic.

Q: You also work in sculpture?

A: In college I had an individualized major. I went through all the departments and I ended up a sculpture major. Painting came to me at the last minute; it wasn't my major. That's why my paintings seem constructed. I am interested in questioning. What is painting? What is sculpture? I can build up paint so it feels like sculpture.

Q: Do you think you'll make prints that are sculptural?

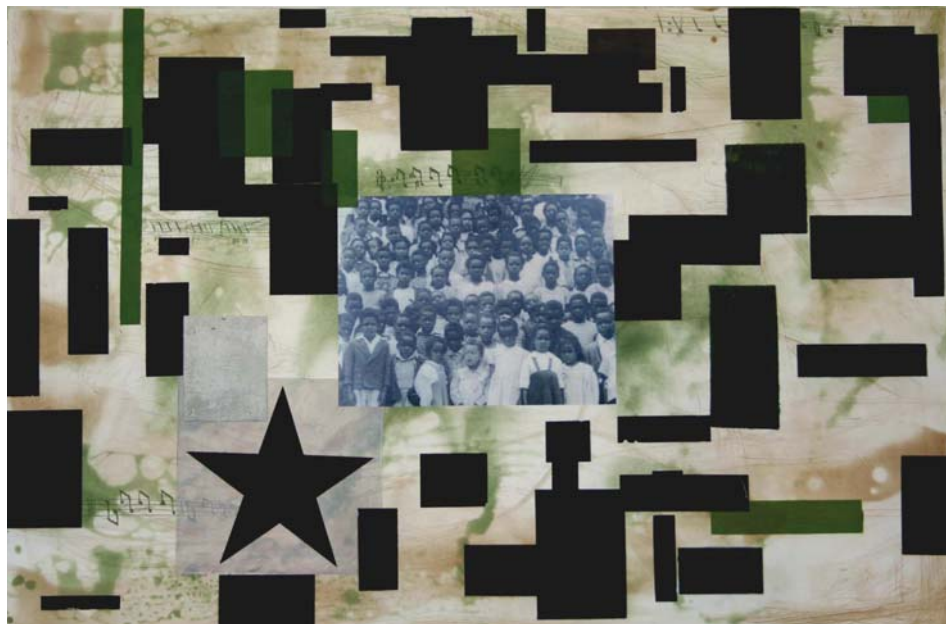
A: I feel like I am getting there. I would love to make prints that had a certain odor. If you can make an object that you can walk around because it commands a certain personal space—that's what I want to do.

Q: I see quilt patterns in some of the monoprints. Is that intentional?

A: It is and it isn't. It is a reference to quilting, but also a reference to great composition and space. I have used these patch-like squares in my paintings. When I first started I would paint within these squares with tar, a material that is loaded with a painful history. In my earlier work I was just angry and in a whole different space. But back to the squares, they are really about composition. I've always looked at painting like it was chess. I'm always making compositions that don't work so I'm creating problems to solve, just like chess. I like to get into trouble.

Q: Do you have anything else to add about the way that you work?

A: I don't question it. I feel like I do it. I don't know if it makes sense. I don't really deal with the act of making it and talking about it. I don't have many conversations around the work. My friends come over and we don't talk about the work, we talk about everything else. My work is about everything else. I may want you to think about certain jazz music and it's not especially about that and you can't figure it out. I can't read every sound and say what it meant. I look at the work in the same way. My desire is just to make art, to make things. ✱



(Top Right)

In the Garden, 2003

Spitbite, aquatint, hardground etching, with color photocopy, gampi and velvet chine collé; Paper size: 31" x 42"; Edition of 30

(Bottom Right)

UNIA, 2003

Color aquatint etching with color photocopy chine collé and velvet; Paper size: 30" x 22"; Edition of 20





Between Two Worlds, 2003

Spitbite, aquatint, drypoint with color photocopy and velvet chine collé ; Paper size: 44" x 30"; Edition of 30



Virginia Harvest, 2003

Spitbite and sugarlift aquatints, photogravure, hardground, with Hosho, velvet and felt chine collé; Paper size: 44" x 30"; Monoprint

Please join us for a reception with the artist:
Friday March 30th,
5:30-8:00pm
TRANSBLUENCY
March 10th-May 12th, 2007
Monoprints

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