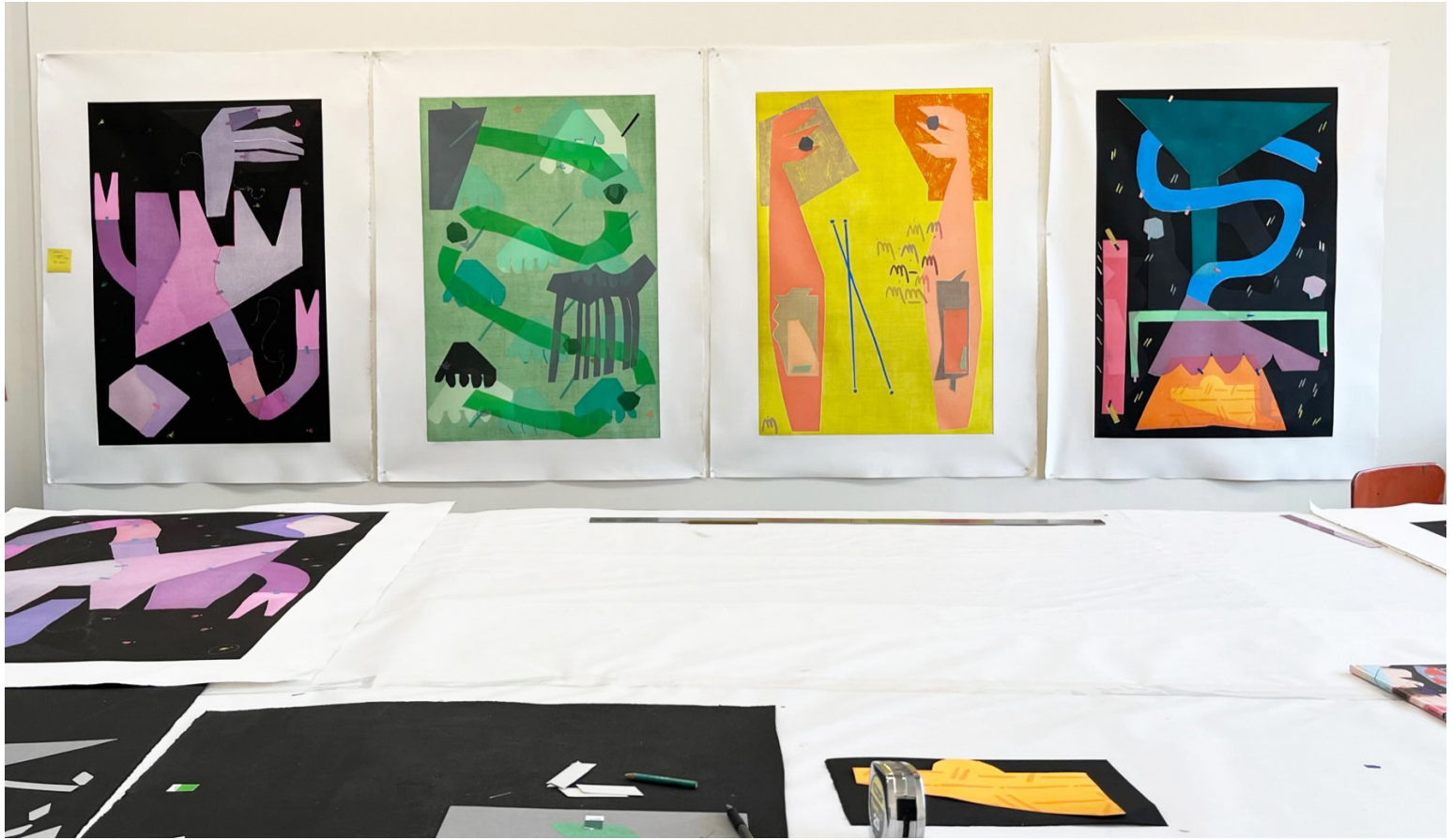


OCTOBER 2022

CAROLINE KENT



In the studio [left to right]:
The Charlatan's sleight of hand
Forest and Shadow
We hold them inside us
A poem about the cosmos

The first time I looked at Caroline Kent's mural installation at the Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), I felt a moment from childhood calling. When I was very young, I learned to use scissors by cutting out paper for collages. In her art, Caroline Kent shares the purity of that kind of moment, along with the many mysteries you learn growing up. Her black paintings are on unstretched canvas, while her lighter works are on stretched Belgian linen. As she says, they are scenographic: both improvisational and rigorous. They invite endless inquiry.

—Kenneth Caldwell

Q: How did you find your way to Paulson Fontaine Press?

Caroline Kent: I was in Berkeley about a month and a half ago working on a mural at BAMPFA, and they reached out to me. I knew immediately that I wanted to work with them. I asked myself, "What are my summer plans?" So, I brought my family out, and we are all here together.

Q: Have you ever done intaglio printing?

Caroline Kent: Yes, I took a class in undergrad at Illinois State

with artist and educator Raymond George and that was my first introduction. I did a print project with Drew Peterson of Entity Editions in Minneapolis, and that was really interesting seeing my work translated through screen printing processes. The thing that excited me about intaglio printing was that I couldn't understand how it was going to translate with my work. I was really excited to see that.

Q: Because they know your method?

Caroline Kent: Yes. When they asked me what I needed, I said, "Just give me some paper." I started cutting out and making compositions. Now, I do this at home, but on a very small scale. In my practice, I work on very large canvases with an all-black ground, and so I am imitating a cut mark with tape, and I've perfected that method.

I go into things with little expectations because I don't always have a lot of time to elaborately plan in advance and it's produced a way of working that's very immediate. In the first few hours here, I had made four compositions. I'm finding a lot of informal play in between these prints and what I do on the canvas, in the unstretched paintings and on the Belgian linen. Even moving into objects, like the wooden objects that accompany my paintings.

I've always wanted a practice where I can bounce around between different materials, yet the language remains consistent. That's what has been maybe the most exciting thing about making



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Caroline Kent in the studio



The Charlatan's sleight of hand, 2022
Color aquatint, sugarlift and spitbite aquatints with softground etching
Paper size: 50.5" x 36"
Edition of 35



A poem about the cosmos, 2022
Color aquatint, sugarlift and spitbite aquatints with softground etching
Paper size: 50.5" x 36"
Edition of 35

prints. It's another "act of translation" into another medium and a medium that lends itself to experimentation, improvisation and a little of the unknown.

Q: Did you know that before you came here?

Caroline Kent: I knew that because a lot of my paintings are very flat and graphic-and that lends itself to the nature of printmaking. What I've developed over the years is a way to get that blackness to evoke a sense of deep space. I've learned how to formally play within that black space. That's been challenging for me with printmaking, because the black in a print becomes very dense and flat, and you're pushed to the surface again. How do we get the black to be activated in some sense? How do we create a sense of activity in that space?

I'm not afraid of being confronted with a problem. When I'm translating from one medium to the next, from a canvas to a wall, for example, it's light years apart, but there's something to gain in that, as opposed to something being lost.

Q: Does the black move, or do you feel there's depth in the black? I'm thinking of abstract painters like Ad Reinhardt.

Caroline Kent: It's not static. The thing I love about the color black in my paintings is that it's a space that can hide things, so there are a

lot of ghost elements. Ghostly shapes can come forward or go back. It can act like a mist. It can act like a cloud. It can act like a veil in all these ways that lend themselves to thinking about mystery, intrigue, the unknown, and obfuscation. It's all related to how I'm thinking about this visual language that I've been creating. Black is a really active site not only in my mind, but also as I'm creating the paintings.

Q: How is that working with intaglio printing?

Caroline Kent: We have a black ground on two of the prints. You'll see some ghostly marks come in. I think there's just going to be more layers, and in my paintings, I'm making many layers or at least the illusion of layers. Here there are actual layers. There are multiple plates. That's a challenge. It's also a provocation.

I don't do any real work beforehand to figure out a composition because there are so many layers. All I know is I need a lot of layers to deal with, and then I start revealing and pulling back. This is not unlike printmaking, because a lot of times in printmaking you have all these layers of color underneath, so you know that if you adapt and take out some things, you're going to reveal prior layers. It's interesting, the overlap between printing and painting, but they are totally different processes.

Q: How does your process, your different approach with black



Forest and Shadow, 2022
Color aquatint, sugarlift aquatint and softground etching with relief
Paper size: 50.5" x 36"
Edition of 35



We hold them inside us, 2022
Color aquatint and sugarlift aquatint with softground etching
Paper size: 50.5" x 36"
Edition of 35

canvases and Belgian linen, translate with intaglio printing?

Caroline Kent: There were moves I really wanted to try, like bringing in the ground you see in the Belgian linen. I knew I wanted to try that and see what that looked like. I feel like that translation is so lovely. It announces the weave of the fabric.

Q: The Belgian linen of the paintings reads with the lines you've introduced, but what about the black pieces?

Caroline Kent: Intaglio allows for the imperfections to be useful. I think that the slippages are opportunities for things to overlap and things to carry different histories. What's fascinating to me is that this black/brown then really does implement what goes on top of it. I work with acrylic paint, which is incredibly opaque, so the transparency of color in printmaking is refreshing.

There are techniques to thin down the paint I work with and allow the color to come through, but I think in printmaking especially, that black ground comes through. It goes through all those colors. The most interesting fact is that the black wants to push through and influence all the colors that sit on top of it.

Q: These shapes feel familiar, but I haven't looked at them long enough.

Caroline Kent: These cutout forms are very active for me. I can see them cut out, enlarged, or built into three dimensional forms put on a stage.....and I can see performers. I think about it often, and I started thinking about it more because of the scale of these prints. They're quite large; there's something almost theatrical about the playfulness and scale.

I also find there is a musicality to the visual layout of the shapes. One of the ways in which my practice lends itself to printmaking is that all the parts can be taken apart and reassembled over and over. That's the real fun of creating a vocabulary—there's always going to be things to say and new ways to say them.