

Saturday, September 29th, 2018

## Flight or Fight: Jeffrey Bishop's Monoprints at SRO Gallery

by John Mendelsohn

**Nomadic Mechanics: Monoprints 2014-2018 by Jeffrey Bishop at SRO Gallery**

September 6 to October 7, 2018 (extended)

1144 Dean Street, between Rogers and Nostrand avenues

Brooklyn, [srogallery.com](http://srogallery.com)



Installation shot showing Jeffrey Bishop, Monoprint #56, 2018, and #51, 2016. Chine collé, silkscreen and watercolor on Somerset, 21 x 12.5 inches. Courtesy of the Artist

Galleries and project spaces run by artists have proliferated in recent years. They constitute an essential aspect of art in New York – generative, transient, and democratic in the best sense. These are spaces where works by artists can appear, often without the high quotient of risk and reward by which market-oriented galleries can be burdened. Venues such as Centotto, ODETTA, 490 Atlantic, National Exemplar, and Sideshow, the seminal project of the late Richard Timperio, are both a community unto themselves and crucial to the ecology of art in this city. Artists Don Doe and Cecilia Whittaker-Doe run SRO Gallery in the parlor of their Crown Heights brownstone. Their exhibition of monoprints by painter Jeffrey Bishop, a revelation in its visual inventiveness, confirms the value of intimate, personal exhibition spaces.

For the last four years, Bishop has spent a number of days each summer working with master printer Myrna Burks in Orient Point, NY. The prints that they produced have evolved during this period, but they all share a kind of antic, anxious energy, and a promiscuous technical ingenuity. As monoprints, each piece is unique, combining the direct manipulation of printing ink on shaped plastic plates, with silkscreen, digital printing, watercolor, and *chine collé*, in this case the collaging of a printed image on rice paper. There is an improvisational spirit at work here, with motifs arising, and then riffed upon and transfigured in later works.

The earliest prints are the most aggressive, or perhaps defensive, in their feeling. They are full of spiky points, including excerpts of an eccentrically checkered matrix of intersecting spears, a signature emblem of Bishop's paintings. In most of the prints, the forms float on the paper's white space, and although abstract they carry a psychological charge, evoking internal struggles transmuted into high-wire aesthetic play.

Early on in the prints, Bishop developed figural forms, both bulbous and pointy, like birds or bodies, fighting or flying. Within their crisp borders they contain within themselves fluid, miasmic currents. In *Monoprint #42* (2016), we experience a real sense of vertigo with an avian figure diving over a fragment of a field below. In *Monoprint 22* (2018), the

central figure is a liquid form that seems haunted by its own mortality, as diagonal vectors that delimit squeegeed zig-zags count down its final moments.

As the prints developed, the dominating image became a digitally-derived, sinuous wave form that is distorted until it degrades, like a puddle of mercury. These avatars are the distant descendants of op-art and 1960s psychedelic rock poster imagery and its art nouveau antecedents, but with a contemporary vibe. Originating in mathematically precise figures, they yield to a liquid, vibratory vulnerability. Particularly affecting is *Monoprint 51* (2016), with its two, dripping fountain-like forms in black and white that flank a watercolor flow in a bilious yellow, tinged with lavender.



Jeffrey Bishop, Monoprint #68, 2018. Chine collé, silkscreen and watercolor on Somerset, 21 x 12.5 inches. Courtesy of the Artist



Jeffrey Bishop, Monoprint #71, 2018. Chine collé, silkscreen and watercolor on Somerset, 21 x 12.5 inches. Courtesy of the Artist

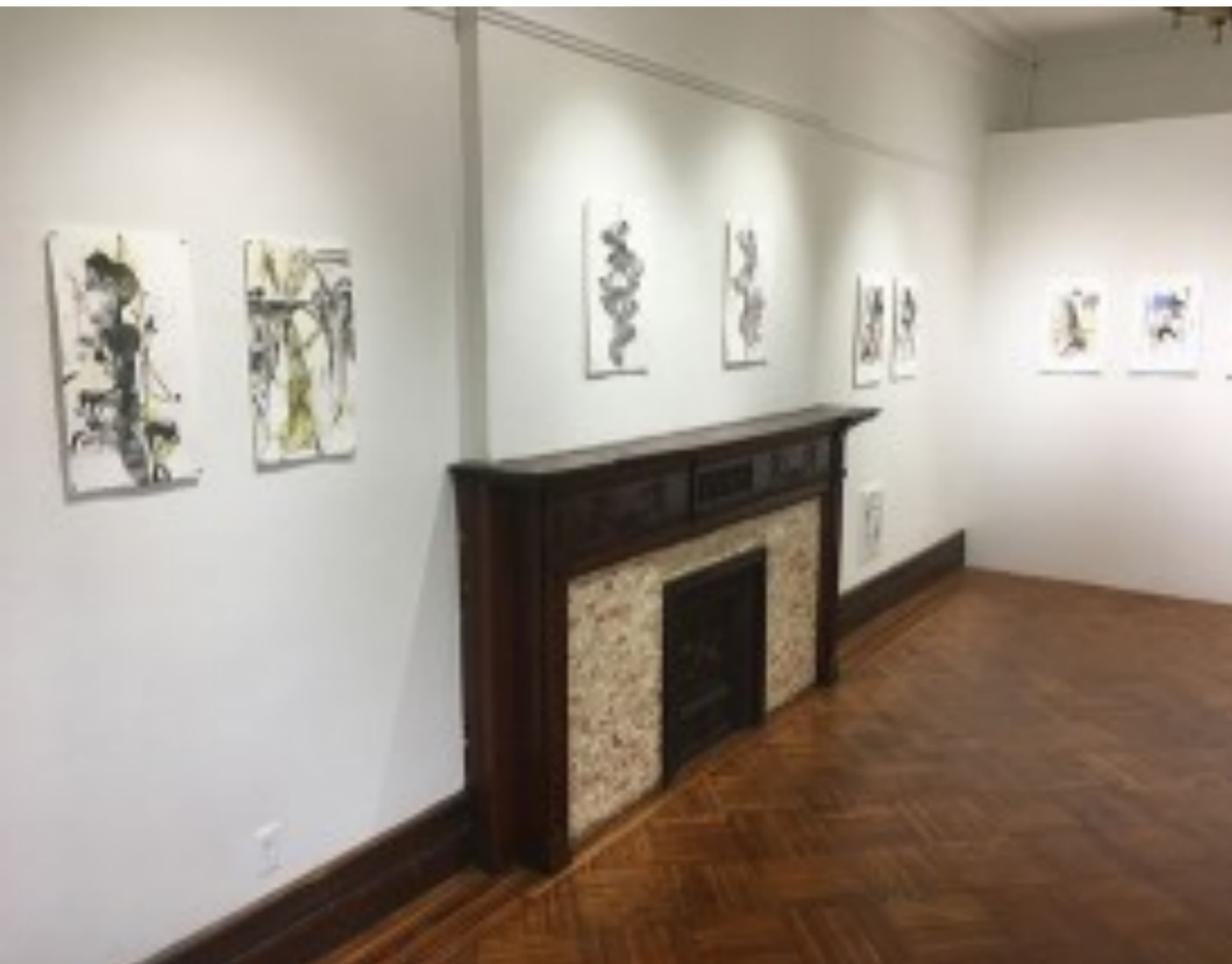
*Monoprint 68* (2018), is one of a number of very strong works in which the molten forms layer and twist around a central axis, like a caduceus on acid. In *Monoprint 56* (2018) the flowing forms solidify into a sculptural presence whose lobes and protrusions continue to bear the traces of its digital DNA.

All of the strongly vertical works suggest the merging of the mechanistic and the biological into a two-dimensional cybernetic organism, well on its way to full autonomy. In graphic experiments that combine the hand and the computer, Bishop seems to be trying out possible scenarios of the analogue and the digital in a yet unresolved coexistence.

In the most recent work, these elongated elements are transformed into a digitally generated form, reptilian with a slippy dimensionality. In *Monoprint 65* (2018), the being and its optical shadow, suspended above a square of pebbly ochre, seem to be dreaming of a material reality that is now part of their ancient history. In *Monoprint 71* (2018), the same animated being pulses red with psycho-sexual energy, recalling the Surrealist poetics that inform Bishop's art.

In Bishop's prints we witness visual ideas and urgent expression

realizing themselves in forms that have an animistic energy: corporeal, unsettling, elegant, and alive.



Installation shot, Nomadic Mechanics: Monoprints 2014-2018 by Jeffrey Bishop at SRO Gallery

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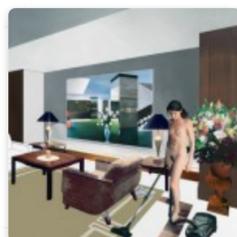
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