

**Elizabeth D'Agostino** received her BFA from the University of Windsor and her MFA from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, IL. She has exhibited in Canada and internationally including Iziko: Museum of Cape Town, South Africa; Manhattan Graphics Center, New York; and The Print Center, Philadelphia. Her work can also be found in many private and public collections including the University of Changchun Jilin, China; Frans Masareel Centrum, Belgium; and Ernst and Young, Canada. Elizabeth is an artist member of Open Studio in Toronto where she does most of her printing and is the 2007 recipient of The Nick Novak Scholarship. Currently Elizabeth teaches printmaking at the Ontario College of Art and Design and is the Curriculum Coordinator at the Toronto School of Art.

**Joseph Siu** is a Toronto artist who graduated from York University in 2006 with a focus on printmaking and installation art. His screenprints draw inspiration from popular culture and garbage. Currently he works in a commercial screenprinting shop breathing fumes and losing his mind. Joseph is the 2007 recipient of The Don Phillips Scholarship.

**Corinna Ghaznavi** is an independent curator and freelance critic. Her most recent curated exhibitions, *Neutrinos They Are Very Small*, with Rebecca Diederichs, Gordon Hicks, and Sally Mckay, and *18 Illuminations*, co-curated with Carla Garnet are both currently on tour in Canada. As well, Corinna has just started a PhD program in Visual Arts at the University of Western Ontario.

© Open Studio, the artists, the author 2007

EDITING Heather Webb  
TYPESETTING Bridget Indelicato  
DESIGN Kathy Gray/electric pear

Open Studio thanks The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation for its kind support of the 2007 Scholarship Program.

#### Open Studio Scholarships

Open Studio awards three artist scholarships annually to artists of merit to develop their professional practice and artistic excellence. Scholarships are 12 months in duration and provide print media-based artists with free access to Open Studio's facilities to produce new work and engage in professional development opportunities.

The Don Phillips Scholarship is awarded to a graduating student in an undergraduate art program who will not be returning to full-time studies the following year.

The Donald O'Born Family Scholarship is awarded to an artist in the early stages of his or her professional career with demonstrated commitment to their practice. This newly introduced scholarship starts during the 2008 Scholarship Program.

The Nick Novak Scholarship is awarded to an outstanding Open Studio artist with a commitment to a long-term project.

Annual application deadline is May 1st. Please visit [www.openstudio.on.ca](http://www.openstudio.on.ca) for more information.

Open Studio, Canada's leading printmaking centre, is dedicated to the production, preservation and promotion of contemporary fine art prints.

Open Studio acknowledges the generous support of its government funders, members, individual donors and volunteers.

#### 2007-2008 Sponsors:

Anonymous  
The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation  
Chubb Insurance Company of Canada  
Emerald Foundation  
F.K. Morrow Foundation  
The Gallery Wall Inc.  
Imperial Tobacco Canada Foundation  
Inco Ltd.  
The Japanese Paper Place  
The McLean Foundation  
The Ontario Arts Council Foundation:  
Arts Endowment Fund Program  
Steamwhistle Brewery  
The Printing House Ltd.

Charitable Registration No. 11906 8823 RR0001

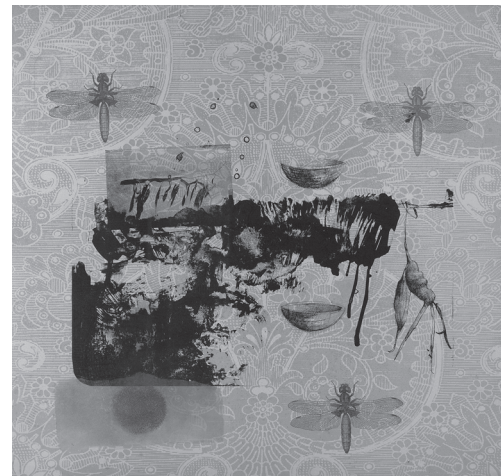
Open Studio is an active member of ARCCO, the Association of Artist-Run Centres and Collectives of Ontario.

**November 1 - 24, 2007**

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 1, 7pm - 9 pm

Artists' Talks: 6 pm

## Elizabeth D'Agostino, *Complicated Natures* Joseph Siu, *SPECIALS*



Elizabeth D'Agostino, *Room to Breathe IV*, monotype, photo lithography, screenprint and flocking, 30" x 31", 2007.



Joseph Siu, *Cleanliness*, screenprint, 30" x 22", 2007.

## 2007 Scholarship Exhibitions

**OPEN STUDIO**  
Gallery Hours

Tuesday to Saturday, noon to 5 pm

#### Open Studio

401 Richmond Street W. Suite 104  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 3A8  
tel/fax 416.504.8238  
office@openstudio.on.ca  
www.openstudio.on.ca

Canada Council for the Arts / Conseil des Arts du Canada

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL / CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

torontodartscouncil  
An arm's length body of the City of Toronto

## 2007 Scholarship Exhibitions: Elizabeth D'Agostino and Joseph Siu

by Corinna Ghaznavi

On first glance work of Elizabeth D'Agostino and Joseph Siu could not be more different. D'Agostino's prints are saturated, their surface rich, and their images poetic whilst Siu's works mirror the slick world of advertisements. Yet both artists work with notions of landscape and the power of cultural symbols: D'Agostino's landscape is personal and tied to interior and exterior habitat while Siu's landscape reflects that of invasive media that permeates all of our public and private space. The symbols we see in their work respectively are those of a personal and specific culture on the one hand and the dictated popular culture on the other.

There is a dreamlike quality to all of D'Agostino's works whose surfaces are richly textured against a painterly saturated background. Single elements float freely on the page and lure and mystify the viewer. Vegetation and stylized ornamentation come to the foreground and intermingle with insect-like forms that appear to be metamorphing even as we watch. Beyond these larger forms are delicate markings, tiny strokes and subtle signs that emerge upon closer scrutiny. The narrative of these works is elusive, at once familiar and strange; the tangible element of familiar motifs is offset against abstract marks that emphasize a dream-like quality evoking memory and personal touch. By intertwining stylized patterns of old wallpaper and real and imagined natural forms, D'Agostino transports the viewer into a nostalgic place emotionally. The patterns recall childhood and domestic interiors from the past while the framed or floating images superimposed on these suggest additions particular to place and experience. As a child of immigrants, D'Agostino is interested in how people new to a place created their surroundings by juxtaposing the old world and the new, recalling how "familiar and foreign ideas shaped their locale."<sup>1</sup> From this specific interest she has moved to a more abstract and broader investigation into how it is that we mark and define our personal spaces. Beyond the objects collected there is ambience in these spaces that reflect an individual's desires and experiences. The re-emergence of motifs and the blue hues, recalling water and sky, serve to underline a poetic reference to memory and its highly subjective quality. Colours and forms, patterns and shapes can evoke place, time and sensation in a way both highly particular and vaguely comforting. Her works are thus seductive and soothing while continuously inviting the viewer to further scrutinize her surfaces for finer marks that further enhance the lyrical, loose narrative that emerges from her pages.

D'Agostino's printing process includes screenprinting, monoprinting, etching and photo-etching; she often layers six or seven monotypes in order to reach that deep saturation, atypically working from the darkest to the lightest. The artist refers to her process as "evolutions of layering" that mimic a kind of mapmaking. Building her surface with colour and then adding, one by one, elements that live within the interior landscapes she creates is a process of mapping. By adding natural forms to imagined and stylized ones, she illustrates how objects are transformed and adapted to suit a foreign place and mark individual change and progress. By leaving her elements unanchored she suggests a personal topography that is highly complex and informed both by an interior life and an exterior landscape.

In contrast to D'Agostino, Siu examines the glaring media landscape that threatens to dominate everything we encounter. Advertisements are in the streets, on public transit shelters, walls, on our computer and television screens at home, in our newspapers and on the clothing that we wear. The most successful brands need

simply one sign (the swoosh) or a whispered phrase (zoom zoom) to be immediately recognized. Perversely, these signs have replaced traditional culture and become the most familiar icons of our society. Hence, when Siu reproduces an image of a highly idealized landscape without any sign of the original product (the man, the cigarette, the brand) we are nonetheless instantly transported into "Marlboro Country." By erasing any reference to the product, Siu offers us a view of what it is in an advertisement that speaks to desire. His work is influenced by the writings of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer who coined the phrase "Culture Industry," and argued that popular culture is akin to a factory producing standardized cultural goods to manipulate the masses.<sup>2</sup> Considering that we are all forced participants in this consumer society Siu attempts to deconstruct the images themselves as well as reproduce the techniques that they incorporate in order to examine and lay bare the factory. We see a high-gloss image of batteries and a *Revolution Aries* car, both immediately reminiscent of magazine ads which Siu has created in order to examine how fantasies are created and what triggers desire in a viewer. In a tiny detail of an ad from the 1920s he shows a hand holding a cigarette, suggestive of a romantic past. And while the motivation of the image was to sell a product the detail nonetheless evokes beauty and nostalgia. We are confronted with a conflict that is rooted in some innate yearning that is manufactured in order to manipulate. To further confound, Siu has created "advertisements" that blur intention: we see a Bowflex® machine but instead of text or supporting elements he has added a bottle of Budweiser® beer in the one, and wine, cheese and grapes in another. The product itself becomes ambiguous: is he selling exercise or lifestyle? (in our society those two things—alcohol and health—are incompatible). By creating an alluring tableau he taps into the very mechanisms that lure consumers: beauty and fulfillment that do not require long-term logic or commitment.

Broadening his interpretation of the Culture Industry, Siu has not confined himself to advertisements but also the popular art market when he reproduced Thomas Kinkade's print of *Lakeside Manor* without the dwelling. Like "Marlboro Country" we are left with simply the idyllic setting, a constructed fantasy. Kinkade describes his scenario in astonishing detail revealing that it is precisely a fantasy that he is trying to sell:

*In my new Mansions in Paradise series, I try to create mansions truly worthy of a paradise, whether earthly or heavenly. At once majestic, comfortable yet human in scale, Lakeside Manor, first in my new series, nestles along the shore of a cobalt blue lake. The gardens are lavish with flowers; radiant sunsets last for hours. This grand mansion is complete with cozy nooks where you might comfortably settle in for a warming cup of tea. A weathered old stone bridge invites visitors to stroll the verdant grounds, while the brook at the left provides a tranquil background murmur sure to make the spirit soar.*<sup>3</sup>

In a jarring move, Siu thrusts the realities of these fantasies onto his viewers with his soap pieces: made with molds and a letter press to imbed the logo, the soaps are embellished with red sparkles (Kinkade) and rust-coloured smears and human hairs (Urinoire). Real life shatters the ideal landscape that the advertisement offers. By juxtaposing all three: manipulated images, created ones and sculptural elements, Siu interrupts the one-sided dialogue that the Culture Industry holds in order to make us consider the images that shape our world.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth D'Agostino, Artist Statement, August 2007.

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/culture\\_industry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/culture_industry).

<sup>3</sup> [www.thomaskinkade.com](http://www.thomaskinkade.com)