

Opening the Door

by Kim Vanderheiden



Artist in Residency through
California Society of Printmakers
at Mullowney Printing
Summer 2017

The Denied Pieces of Our Selves

My project, “Opening the Door” is made from a torn patchwork of woodcut, monotype and letterpress. It features life-sized human figures, each having found a door in its torso which it has opened and is drawing out symbolic objects from within, such as a packet of seeds, or an egg. This project is being created with Mullowney Printing in San Francisco as part of the California Society of Printmakers (CSP) Artist in Residency (AIR) program for 2017.

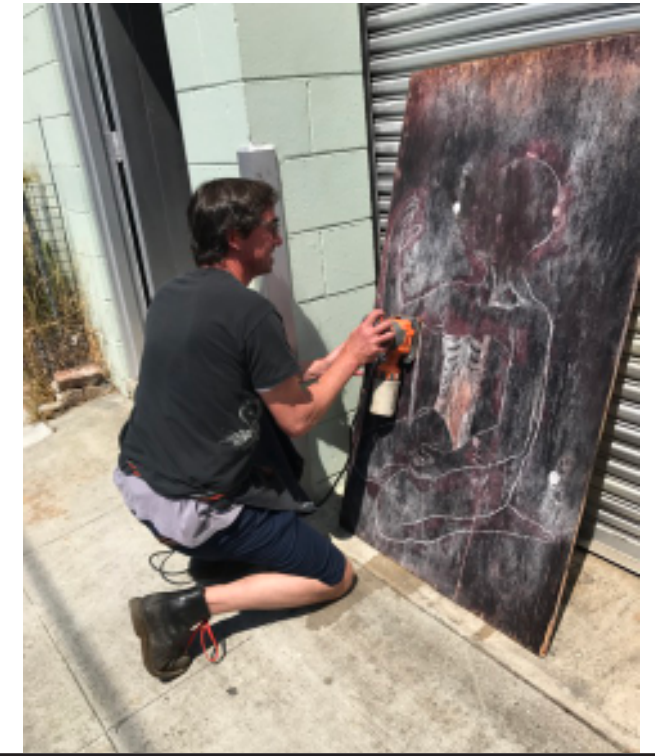
Psychologist C. J. Jung wrote extensively about the collective unconscious, referring to mental underlying structures, such as myths, archetypes, and symbols shared among all people or among a subgroup. Joseph Campbell said “Myths are public dreams, dreams are private myths.” Do we, as artists, affect the public dream through the images we create? If so, can dream-like, myth-like symbolism be used to address the schismatic and combative nature of social issues in our present time?

In “Opening the Door,” I am using torn paper and disparate print techniques to compose a human figure that reflects the fragmented nature of the collective self, existing together as one body. Rather than projecting its fears and suppressed shadows outwards, the figure is removing symbolic elements that it finds while looking inwards, perhaps to release them, or perhaps to find what’s essential within itself.

My past work on changing our justice system tends to be called ‘activist’ though it doesn’t fully align with most expectations of activist work. Rather than protesting or exposing events or attitudes, it speaks in symbolism of evolving our collective vision of “Justice.” Through this new work, I am further exploring this path, addressing political anger, exclusion, and hate by gathering people through images of turning inward, observing and holding the denied pieces of our selves.



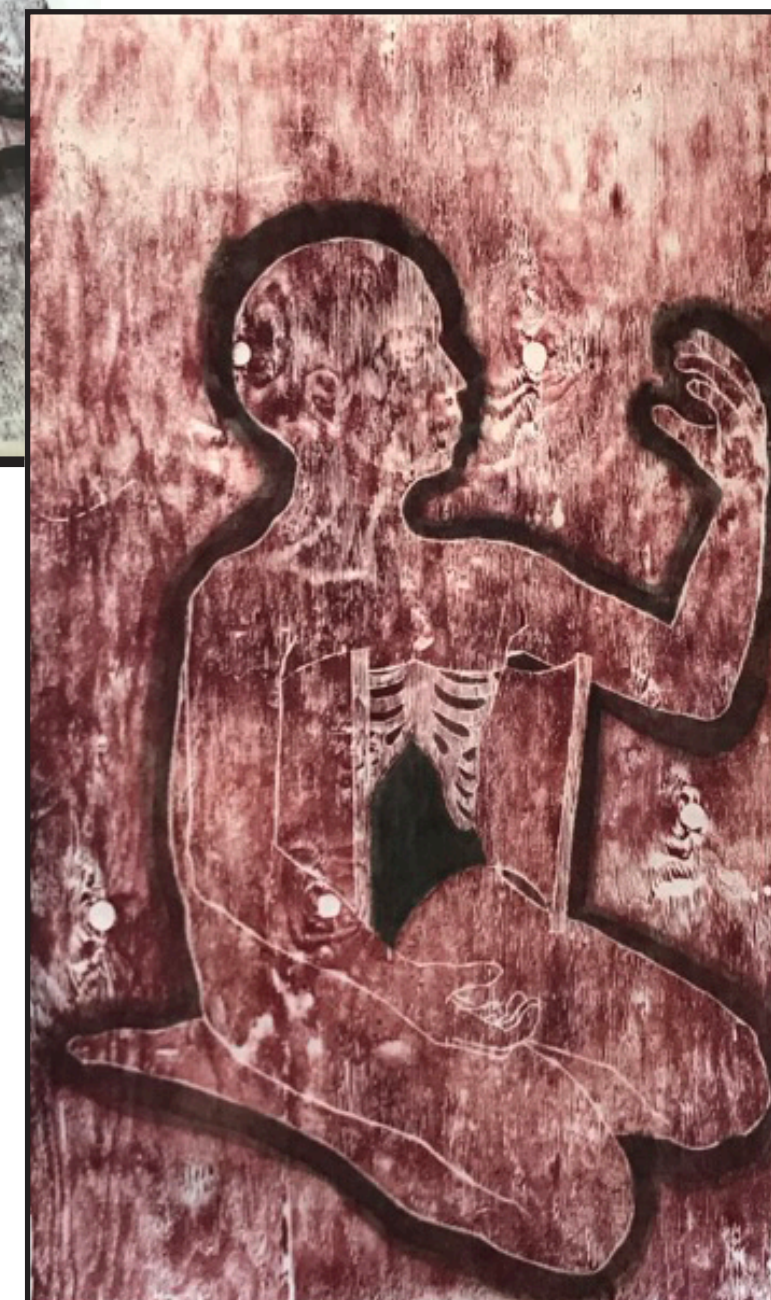
Reused wood was selected from Urban Ore. It was dry, warped, beaten up, and weathered, with plenty of sumptuous wood grain. Male and female figures were drawn and carved into the wood.



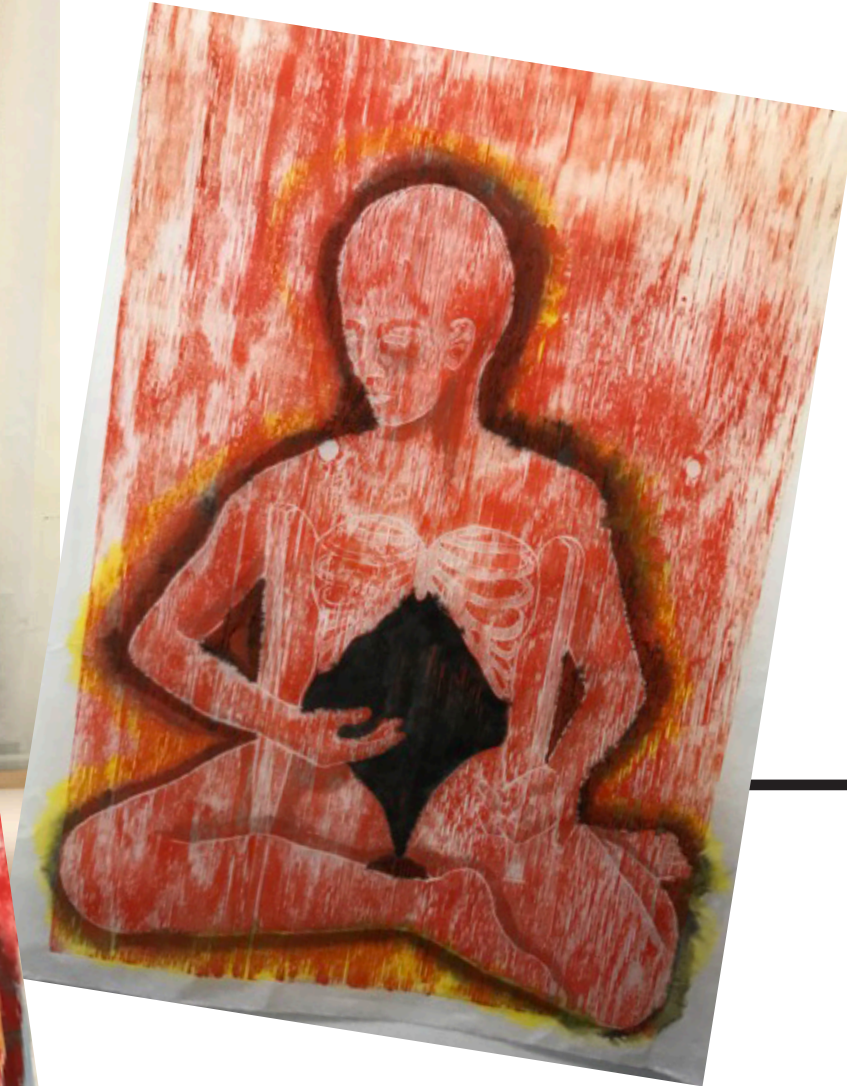
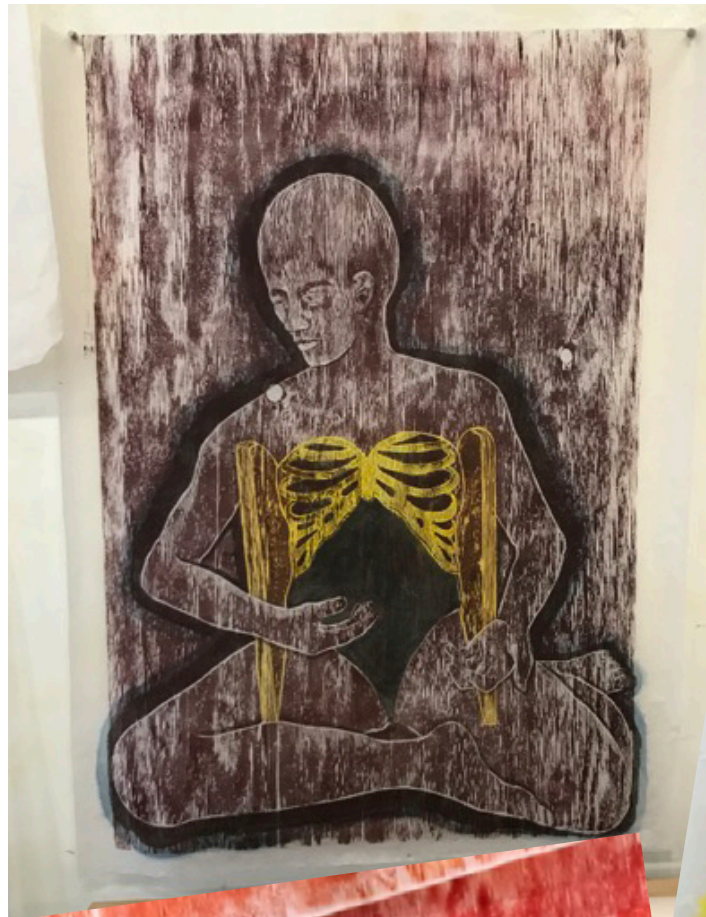
The upper left photo shows how the blocks looked when I arrived at Mullowney Printing for the first day of work there. The blocks were proofed on newsprint, and that delectable wood grain turned out to be a little too much of a good thing. The figure receded, barely visible. The doors in their torsos were nearly undetectable.

Applying watercolor to the outer edges of the figure brought it out somewhat, but so much remained lost.

Paul oiled and talced the dry blocks and I put woodfill into specific areas where I wanted to knock the woodgrain back to bring the figure out. The woodgrain dried and the blocks were sanded and all seemed firm. However, as soon as the inked roller hit the block, the woodfill flaked off in thousands upon thousands upon thousands of pieces all over the roller and all over the rollout. It was a terrible mess. The woodfill had to be scraped off and the blocks sanded again.

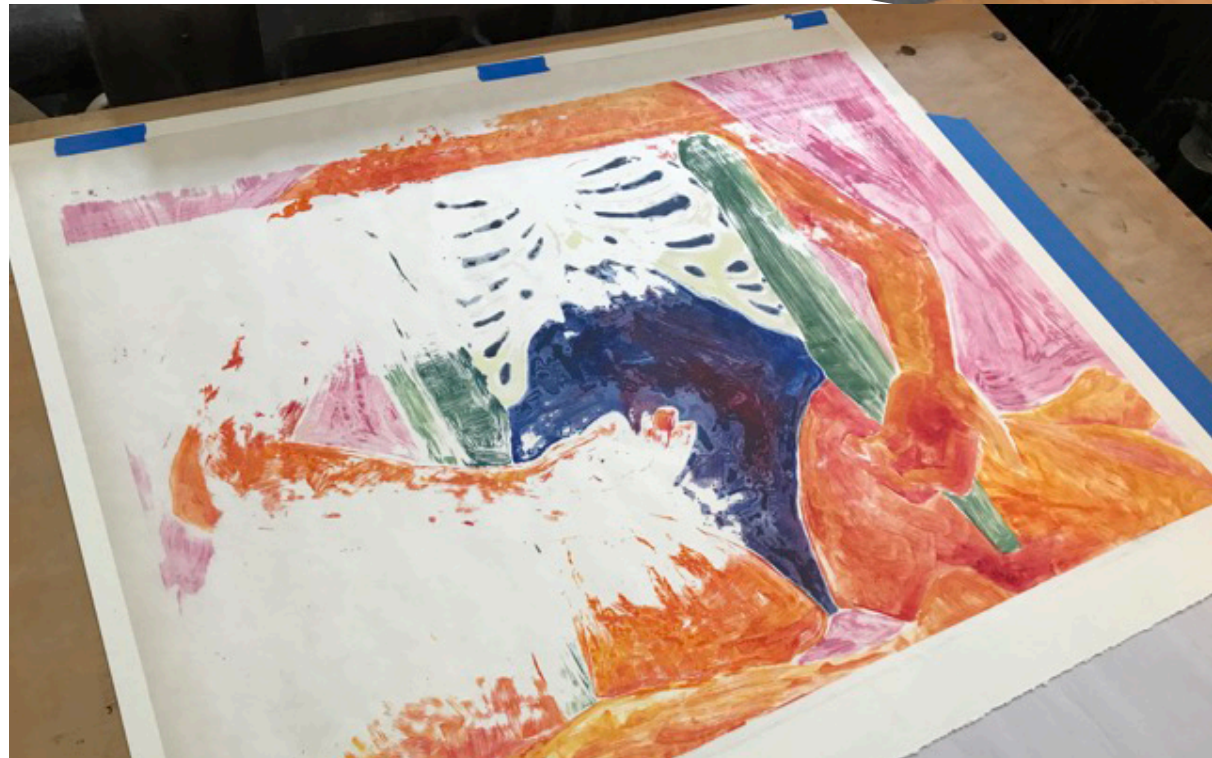
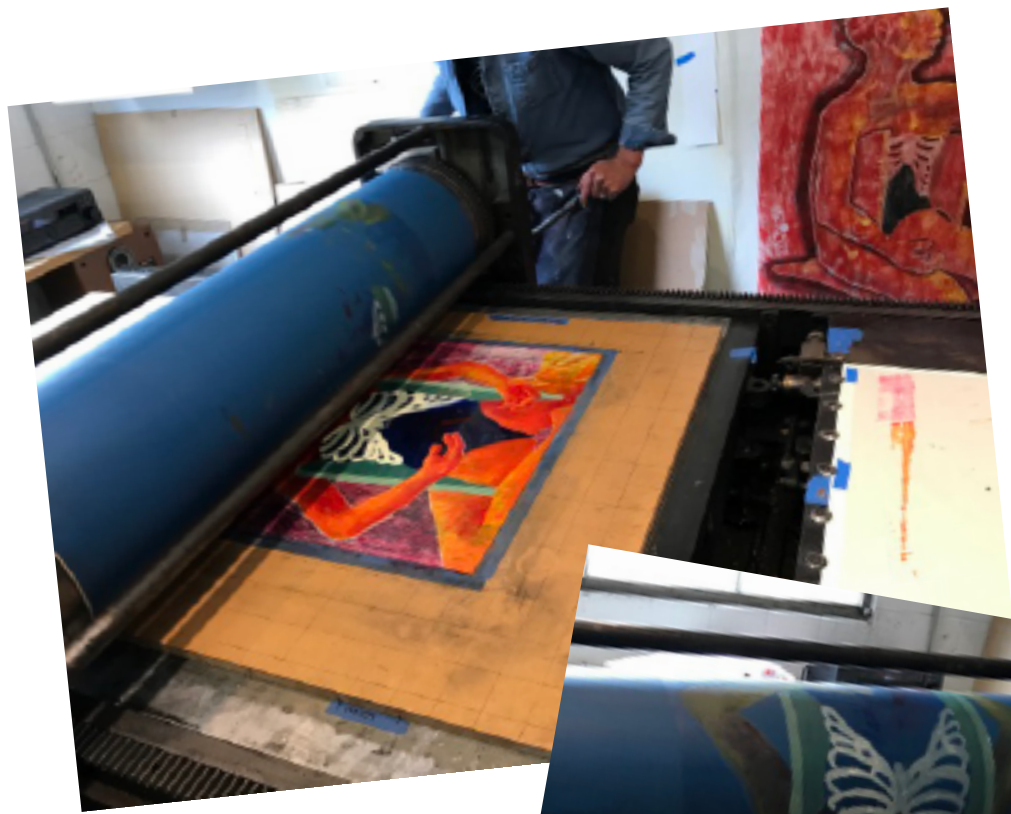


It was the end of day two, and we still didn't have a solution for bringing out the figure. Paul suggested trying out a technique of painting from the back of the print with sumi ink. He handed me the brush and ink, and after two days of effort, the figure suddenly began to emerge... by painting the shadow.



On the next two visits to Mallowney Printing, we pulled more prints from the blocks in various colors, and I tried different approaches to the hand painting.

I also painted the monotype plate for the female figure. Although I've done a lot of experimentation with monotypes and monoprints on my own etching presses, those in this project were printed on the "new" 40"x30" Offset Dufa using a process completely new to me. The pictures on the following two pages illustrate how that unfolded.





A couple of weeks later, I returned to Mullowney Printing for an afternoon to paint the plate for the monotype of the male figure.

In the meantime, at my studio, Painted Tongue Press, I had been drawing and drawing and drawing, using pen & ink, all sorts of objects to be symbols pouring out of the open door torsos of my figures. I made about 40 plates containing about 60 symbols, until I was past out of time for making any more, and I still regret some that I didn't manage to draw. Perhaps they will come into play at another time.

To the right are film negatives which are used to make the photopolymer plates used for letterpress.



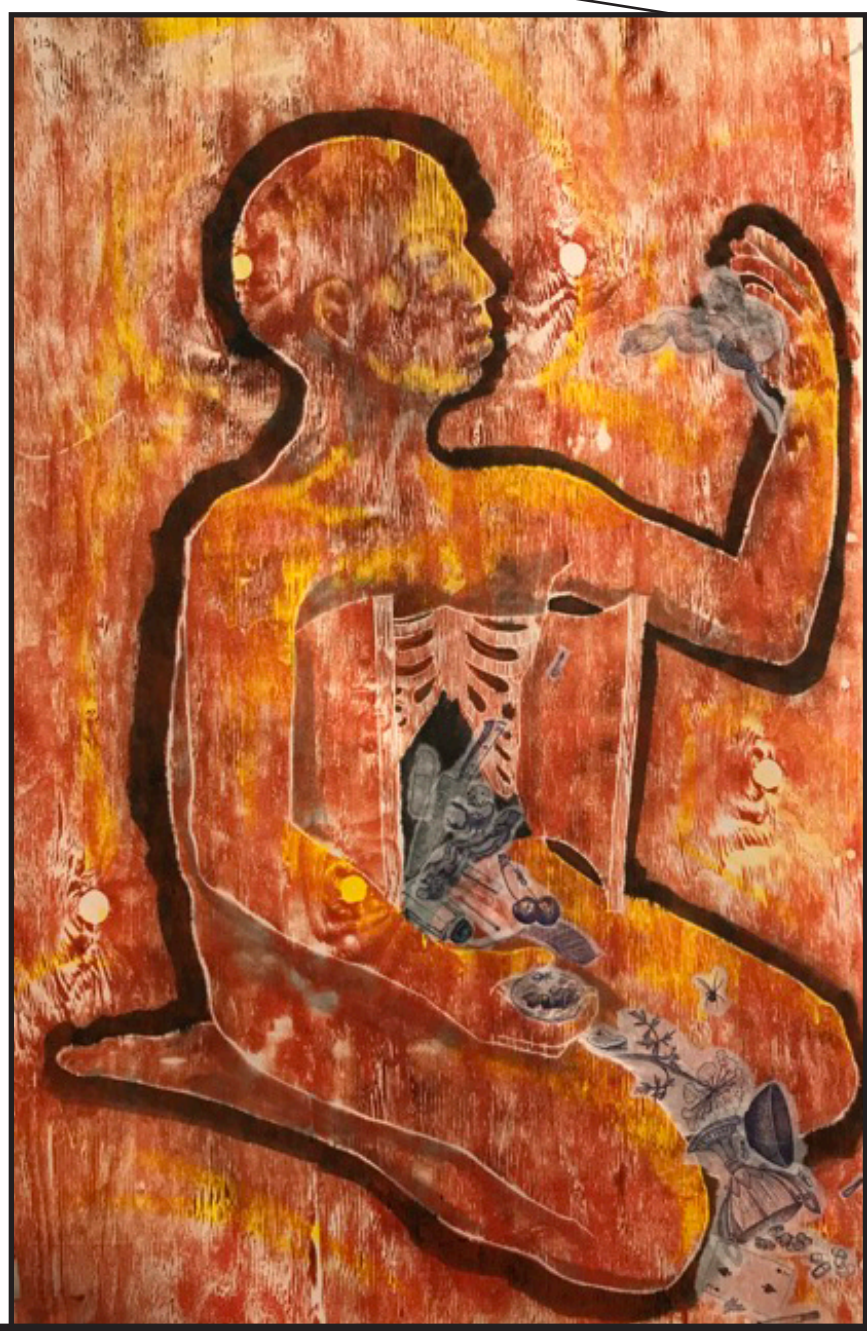
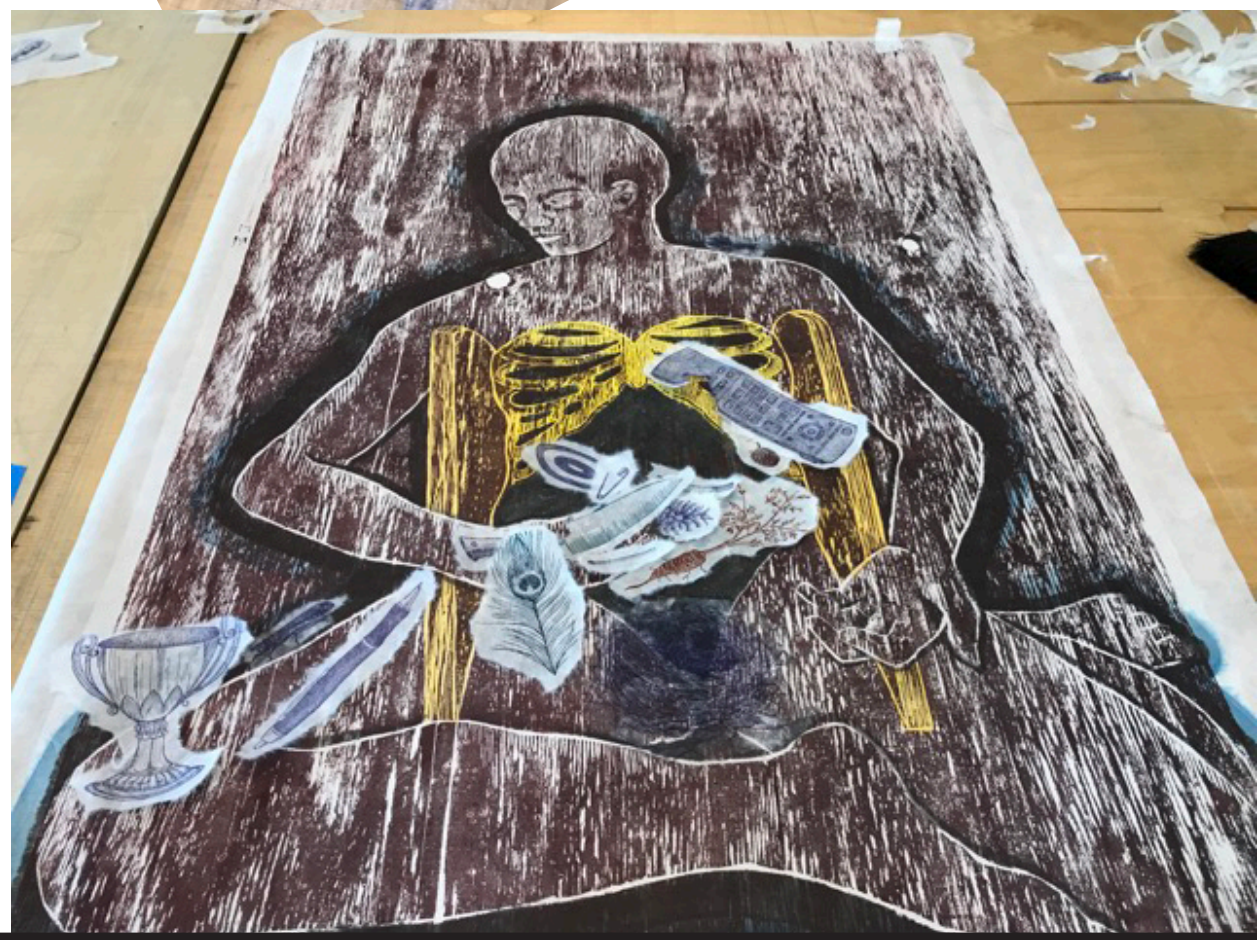


When I next returned to Mullowney printing, I tore the hard edges off of the monotypes and we used wheat paste to laminate them to the woodcuts.

That week I also letterpress printed my symbols onto some very special Korean hanji paper purchased from one of my former students, Steph Rue, who had apprenticed at Painted Tongue Press and went on to study at University of Iowa Center for the Book, and on from there to Korea on a Fulbright scholarship to study how to make hanji, as well as other traditional Korean book, scroll, and paper techniques. The hanji in this project was not made by Steph, but was supplied by her through her new business.



See the completed work!
California Society of Printmakers Artist in Residency Reception
Sunday October 8th 2017 1-4 pm
Muldowney Printing
931 Treat Avenue, San Francisco



About Kim Vanderheiden

Kim Vanderheiden's recent visual art and writings have focused on the nature of the U.S. Justice System, sharing a vision of how it can further evolve towards a restorative role based on love. This work has been displayed in solo exhibitions at local institutions, including Dominican University, Contra Costa College, and the Alameda County Law Library, and recently featured in publications of the Marin Independent Journal, the Project for Integrating Spirituality Law and Politics.

Vanderheiden is especially interested in the connections among beings, the underlying mysteries of those relationships, and the ways they turn up physically in the larger conflicts of our society. Her work is influenced by poetry, mythology, world cultures, religious writings, illuminated manuscripts, graffiti, cityscapes, and activist art.

Her media typically include drawing, painting, and various printmaking forms on paper collage. She respects the disparate nature of the media as she unites them organically into a whole, synthesizing the outward fragmentation into an underlying unity.

About Paul Mallowney

Paul Mallowney received his training at San Francisco's Crown Point Press where he became Master Printer in the early nineties. There he worked on and led projects with the leading artists of the studio, including: John Cage, Richard Diebenkorn, Francesco Clemente, Pat Steir, Sol LeWitt, Shoichi Ida, and Judy Pfaff. Later Mallowney moved to Nara, Japan where he lived for ten years in a 17th century Zen temple, working on many projects in collaboration with a local scroll mounter while employing Japanese techniques and papers which continue to inform his approach to melding Western and Eastern traditions in contemporary printmaking.

From 2004 to 2009 Mallowney was founding director of HuiPress in Maui where he worked on collaborative large-scale projects with Sadow Birk, Joyce Kozloff, Judy Pfaff, Nicola Lopez, Swoon, Artemio Rodriguez, Robert Kushner, and many other emerging and international artists. He has taught numerous workshops and has been visiting faculty at Portland's Pacific Northwest College of Art, and the San Francisco Art Institute.

Mallowney Printing was started in San Francisco in 2011 and is named after the commercial lithography company founded by J.D. Mallowney in the early 1920's in Minneapolis. Located in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District, the shop is a multi-faceted fine art printmaking studio specializing in etching, photogravure, silkscreen, relief, letterpress and offset monotype printing. In addition to contract printing and some publishing, Mallowney Printing also focuses on education with workshops, community outreach and internship programs.