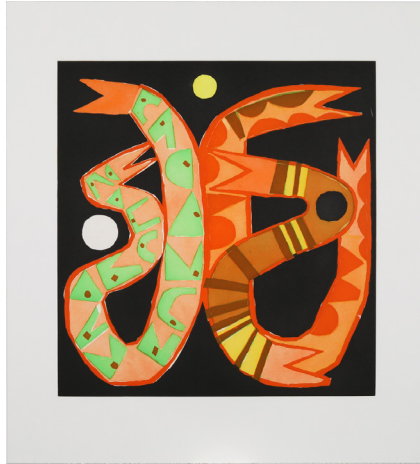


Wingate Studio



Two Headed Trio, 2022
Four plate aquatint etching
on white BFK Rives paper
Image size: 19.75 x 18.5 inches
Paper size: 27.5 x 24.75 inches
Edition of 30
Printed and published by
Wingate Studio

Meghan Brady

A conversation between artist Meghan Brady and Wingate Studio director and printer James Pettengill about her most recent edition *Two Headed Trio*.

J: You have quite a history at Wingate— starting as an apprentice, becoming a full time printer in the 90's, and then returning to make your own work with the press in 2005. It's been over 10 years since your last project with the studio; what did it feel like to be back in the shop?

M: This makes me think about time. Being back at Wingate brings up something that I think about in my studio: the assumption that we are always changing as people. While there are big pieces of us that change, I am equally interested in the parts that stay the same. Revisiting a place that was meaningful for me divides my sense of self into old and new. The chapters I have spent at Wingate in the past have coincided with big life transitions - at the very end of college, just after graduate school and then, later, when I was pregnant with my first child. Returning invites me to encounter my old selves - I wonder what they can teach me now, and I try to be kind to them.

In terms of painting, there is a thru-line that holds. In the studio, I try to create the ideal circumstances for discovery, meaning that I spend a lot of time trying to throw myself off of the clear path to an easily resolved image. This is not out of some nihilist tendency but more as a way to build a fertile ground. I simply do not want to know where I am headed when I start out. Coming back to Wingate, it is clear to me that this core aspect of my work is unwavering. It's innate like handwriting, or maybe it reflects some essential principles of painting that I hold close somewhere in my unconscious. All I know is that it is part of myself that is not under my control.

It's tempting to be rigid in thinking about past and present, but really we live in both places in our minds. I know some painters talk about how we are always making the same painting but in different ways but I am not sure I believe that at all, at least for myself. I do understand that I am after something, chasing something that I have always been chasing, ultimately trying to land somewhere that is direct, logically balanced, inviting, open, hopeful all the while presenting as both discovered and inevitable.

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J: There's a dance in the print shop between the inputs of the artist and printers and the variability of natural elements. Unlike a digital process, our work is governed by the environment. Temperature and humidity affect the way the acid bites, or the way a covering ground is removed by a mark. The whole point of dusting plates with rosin dust is that it's an organic process, and not a controlled dot matrix, and because of that, every aquatint is different.

It's interesting to see how the artist navigates this tension within the process. Some attempt to administer control, turning towards the calculated mathematical aspects of etching, while others embrace the unexpected results, giving into the process. I am curious about how these conditions influence how you develop an image?

M: To me the print shop feels like a place of extremes. All the familiar drawn out actions of the studio play out like saturated, fast-paced moves in the shop. It's as if the artist table in the print shop becomes my small studio but it's more communal and full of interactions than my regular space. As a team, you and I have to put words and qualifiers on decisions that are usually cloudy unspoken actions in my head. And then there is that tense moment of truth when the print is peeled off the press bed and tacked to the wall! It's not just me deciding where to go next but maybe two or three people standing shoulder to shoulder. So, yes, it is a strange and familiar place, which is a kind of fertile ground.

J: In the print shop, we have an imperative to create a finished product in a relatively short time period—how does that play with “throwing yourself off the clear path to an easily resolved image”?

M: I come to printmaking as a painter, meaning I have a basic trust that the process will be forgiving and enlightening. You and Peter, as the printers, work hard to set up the process to mirror my studio. The possibility that nothing is permanent and that the plates can be re-worked into something new is an important mindset when I am in the print shop - maybe the most important.

All these elements, plus the inherent wild cards of intaglio that you mentioned, become pressures and constraints on the final print. I know Wingate well and I knew what I was in for. To prepare, I made a bunch of drawings in my studio before I left for Wingate— simple line drawings made with charcoal or ink. I tried to step back from the work that I feel tangled up with and to consider the paintings in a graphic way. One of my challenges is that I want my paintings to be absolutely everything. Drawing for Wingate gave me a chance to be an observer in my own studio. When I got to Wingate, I translated one of the drawings as the key plate for the print and I immediately fell in love with that drawing-print. The image is clear but complex.

Maybe making a print is a way for me to separate out the moves that make the image stronger from the moves that are unnecessary. Making a print is a distillation, or maybe even a digestion, of ideas that float around the painting studio and are difficult to harness. The print is pulled from the layers of the studio and becomes a present snapshot in time. It is one that I can hold onto, and that's a lot.

Meghan Brady received her BA from Smith College and her MFA from Boston University. She was the 2017 recipient of the Ellis Beauregard Foundation Grant and a 2018 Hewnoaks Summer Fellowship, as well as a 2019 MacDowell Colony Fellowship. Recent exhibitions include The University of Tulsa, Tulsa, OK; Steel House Projects, Rockland, Perimeter Gallery, Belfast and Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME; Steven Harvey Fine Art Projects, New York, NADA House, Governors Island, Anderson Gallery, Buffalo, Mrs., Maspeth, and a residency/exhibition at Tiger Strikes Asteroid, Brooklyn, NY, which received a mention by The New York Times. Brady is included in a current exhibition at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art, Rockland, ME, and had her first solo exhibition at Mrs. in September 2020.