

Ingenuity: Thinking Creatively

Exhibition Essay

The Book in Common has become a community wide endeavor encompassing learning, dialog and a celebration of personal impact on society.

It is not unusual for the Turner Print Collection exhibitions to reference university and community themes as well as add depth to curricular programs. Past exhibitions such as “Due South”, “Trends and Traditions” and “Arcadia” were produced in cooperation with faculty members Dr. Matthew Looper, Dr. Yoshio Kusaba and Dr. Sarah Blackstone representing the Departments of Art and Theatre Arts. “Transcendence” earlier this year looked for the spiritual in subject and intent as guest curated by Pastor James Peck. Most recently “Splash: Large Scale Prints” was enlarged by the additional presentation by Professor Emeritus James McManus, an international scholar of contemporary art who was able to convey to all generations the importance and effect of what was emerging as a new aesthetic in the 20th century.

Last year’s “Resonance” was the first Turner Print exhibition linked to the Book in Common, “The Soloist.” Guest curator Dr. Russell Burnham, musician, composer, art lover and music professor, made this exhibition explore the aural and visual relationship. “The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind” has proved a fertile source for many topics and events. The VLS Museum of Anthropology focused its photography competition on the subject of wind and the University Art Gallery presented a global film series including Malawi. In addition there have been group discussion and forums exploring culture, politics, geography and class structure. What best suited the Turner Collection was to examine the creative process.

There are multitudes of definitions and applications in the study of the creative process and has significant literature as studied in cross disciplines including psychology, business, economics, education and sociology to name a few. One of the first published models by Graham Wallas in 1926 proposed a five stage evolutionary process that was a reflection of the ability to adapt to changing environments. His five-stage model includes: preparation, incubation, intimation, illumination and finally verification. Others studying the creative process have differing numbers of stages, or express process in formulistic terms. “Ingenuity” as an exhibition is not an exact illustration of any one theory on creativity, but as the curator I did notice my process of developing the exhibition my pattern did mirror many of the published texts. I looked for work that had a sense that the artist’s process of image developing was a component of the image making and for prints that as subject described response to the existence of invention.

The existence of apparent creativity is not limited to what might be defined as “art.” The creative process results in a new conception that has value. The dialog between form and function and its place on the hierarchy of artistic determination offers an abundant source of points of view, opinions and published research. For that reason the same creative process that leads an artist to sculpt, paint, draw or print led William Kamkwamba to his conclusion. Even if the windmill did not function it does not lessen the invigoration of the exploration. The fact the creative process did lead to successful verification is the same sensation an artist feels when they reach the place of knowing a piece is complete.

We are especially honored by CSU, Chico Professor of Civil Engineering Russell Mills for his reception presentation that further links the creative process of art, science and construction and the interdependency and relevance.

Catherine Sullivan, Curator

Turner Print Museum, 2011