

Liz Chalfin
Iterations exhibition
Mitchell•Giddings Fine Arts

Liz Chalfin is well known in the art world for her pioneering work in green (or solvent-free) printmaking, as evidenced by the many invitations she has received to conduct demonstrations and give presentations both nationally and internationally. The studio she founded and directs in Florence, MA—Zea Mays Printmaking—continues to thrive and lead the way in green printmaking innovation and technology. Chalfin's own prints and artists' books are perhaps less well known but no less rooted in a deep commitment to sustainable processes, as this exhibition demonstrates. *Iterations* aims to close the gap between Chalfin's vision as a printmaking innovator and the resonance of her own aesthetic vision.

Chalfin's intention for *Iterations* was first to set a series of parameters or limitations for the work, specifically by using only pre-existing materials as printing matrices. She began with a series of figures etched from copper plates that were initially blind embossed on paper, then scanned and printed on polymer plates that were subsequently inked and run several times through the press. These figures—which reference Chalfin's longstanding drawing practice as well as her interest in collage—were devised in the early months of the pandemic and were, she explains, a way of processing the separation, distance and isolation that we all felt acutely at that time in our relationships with one another and the world at large.

As Chalfin worked and reworked the imagery in each print, the figures became more and more obscured and were often transformed by the printmaking processes into a series of abstractions that, while still recognizable as human forms, take on depth and

murk and shadow, all the while becoming more distant from the original source material. Process sometimes became subject matter, which is perhaps another way of stressing that Chalfin initially had no idea what a given print would look like when finished. From drawing to etching to digital photographic reproduction and manipulation to the multiple stages of inking and printing: all of these stages represent for Chalfin a visual reconstruction of memory, a subject that has fascinated her as long as she has been making prints.

The works in this exhibition are also literally unique in that none of the prints are editioned (as in most traditional printmaking) and are often printed on both sides of the paper. This meant a series of additional decisions in determining how the work was to be displayed on the walls of the gallery—front or back, right side up or upside down—that further drew the pieces in a more painterly direction than Chalfin has worked in previously. There is a luxuriousness in these prints, a richness of color and texture, an obvious visual depth and a mystery within that depth, all of which underscores the complexity of memories and the way we build or rebuild them.

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