

TIGER STRIKES ASTEROID

Susan Bricker and Amy Beecher

HANDS OFF // HANDS ON: AMY BEECHER AND SUSAN BRICKER

By MATTHEW SCHNEIER

The work begins with the hand. For Amy Beecher, whose luminous prints are created by inkjet, this can seem a contradiction in terms. But the forms that are mediated by technology begin as intimately as possible: As sheets of paper, crumpled and crushed in Beecher's hands.

Scanned, colorized, manipulated, digitally poked and prodded, the finished results bear traces of their origins but are multiplied—potentially exponentially—into more than their beginnings. Translated from the physical realm into the digital, the shapes and textures of Beecher's are flattened, repackaged into graphics that are infinitely replicable and transmissible. Floating on their pristine white backdrops, they are pedestaled on digital plinths. We're used to this presentation from outside of the gallery. Hers is the vague white space of Web browsing and digital advertising.

In the argot of eBay: Buy It Now! What began as a singular physical impression of a discrete tool—the crumpled paper, the artist's hand—has been digitized into a glyph that is infinitely extensible, permanently salable. The unraveling spool of continuous print that hangs in the gallery underscores the point. It's a ticker tape of art. The intimacy of the small-scale gesture explodes into the grandiosity of the large. From a single sheet of paper, you could paper a wall.

With Beecher's prints, the rules of edition-making do not apply. There are no screens to degrade, materials to devolve. A button-click will recreate them endlessly. The result is a feast, one in which beauty is divorced from the exquisite. Rarity is stripped of its conventional virtue. No reason not to have seconds.

"I like that it's hands off," Beecher says of her process, which it is and it isn't. It begins with the hand. But it ultimately outpaces the hand's reach. Its moments are frozen, but timeless.

Susan Bricker's work, on the other hand, is time-full. "I see each painting as an idiosyncratic moment that needs to be treated with specificity," Bricker says. Her sculptural paintings—assemblages, really—are histories of time spent. They are created over months, accruing material and changing shape. They are palimpsests, revealing nearly geologic layers. They eat time, half-digesting moments until they become their own moment, a fossil or a relic unto themselves.

Like creatures trapped in amber, Bricker's materials sometimes maintain themselves even as they are incorporated. Watermelon slices, citrus, ice cream wrappers—pop detritus as pop nutrition—float throughout. But they are only the most recognizable forms. Bricker uses paint itself as pop culture, sculpting forms that, as she says, anthropomorphize in her hands.

Unlike Beecher's forms, hers are primarily physical, embodied, and insistently three-dimensional. They bear her handprints—sometimes literally. Are they personal histories to Beecher's universal declamations? They can be. They speak with wit and candor of intimate experience, but are not simply legible or comprehensible, any more than Beecher's prints are advertisements for anything but themselves. But as they evolve materially themselves—sagging, stretching, curling their paper—so they are also adaptable to Bricker's continued whims. They need never be done. They are never removed from the artist's reach. And yet they touch us as well, extending their arms and watermelon rinds.

Each in their way, Bricker and Beecher tantalize: Beecher with ubiquity and eternity, Bricker with physical immediacy and proximity. They click and they sculpt. Together, they offer a banquet.

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