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Get ready, get set - Print

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November 11, 2007

In 1879, Edgar Degas created a print of his friend, Mary Cassatt, and her sister visiting the Louvre. The print signified the revival of the monotype, at that time a 200-year-old technique of creating an image with ink or paint on a flat surface, then pressing it onto paper.

The fascination with directly imprinting on another surface to create a one-of-a-kind monotype has held through to the 21st century.

In what could be called "monotype boot camp," the Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk is holding its annual fundraising Monothon today through Nov. 18.

This is the ninth year for the Monothon, and the center is inviting artists, monotype enthusiasts and anyone who wants to learn about printmaking from master printers. Participants will work uninterrupted for a five-hour stretch to churn out as many monotypes as they can. The goal for each artist is to have one finished monotype to be exhibited and sold at the Monothon Auction and Party Saturday, Dec. 1.

Last year, 140 prints were created for the auction, says Anthony Kirk, the center's artistic director and master printer. "The Monothon brings a lot of the community to our center to see prints. People can purchase an original piece of art at a modest price."

Artists, or their sponsors, pay \$250 to work the five-hour session with a master printer



Old works on a monotype during the Center for Contemporary Printmaking's Monothon 2006.
(Contributed photo)
November 11, 2007



Alan Soffer experiments with color on a monotype during Monothon 2006.
(Contributed photo)
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and a press assistant. The center supplies the artists with as much paper, paints, inks and other materials as needed. Some "monothoners" who can't get enough of the creative art form have signed up for a double session.

To date, about 100 people have signed up to be in the upcoming Monothon; Nov. 18 is set aside for ages 12-17.

"Last year, we had about fifty kids here working for the five-hour sessions," says Kirk. "There is usually about five or six students working with one master printer. Last year, we chose one print made by a younger artist for the auction."

Artists who are passionate about printmaking are attuned to the process of working and re-working the surface only to marvel at the layering effects of the fresh imprint when the paper or canvas is lifted from the press. The art form allows for artists to use just about any materials to create the monotype.

For the Monothon, most artists average nine to 10 prints, says Chris Shore, the center's workshop director.

"They can turn out as many prints at a time, but some artists like to work on one, doing multiple passes. That way you get layers upon layers of ink or paint. The variety of techniques within what we consider a monotype hugely vary."

Shore explains that the center will have four areas set up for the Monothon. "We can have a maximum of ten artists and master printers and five press assistants."

Shore also says that master printmaker and artist Ron Pokrasso, who started the Monothon nine years ago, will come from his Sante Fe, N.M., home to help artists.

"We have a bunch of master printers on staff. Some are home-grown who have been working here for many years," explains Shore. "Some are coming from New York City and New Jersey."

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The Center for Contemporary Printmaking, on West Avenue in Norwalk, produces monotypes and other types of print including intaglio, lithography, silkscreen, woodblock printing, paper works, book arts and digital arts. Entry forms for Monothon 2007 are available from the center: 899-2999 or www.contemprints.org.

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