



**equilibrium**  
2011 SGC INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## ***Tempting Equilibrium: SGC International Juried Exhibition***

Shawn Bitters, Kristin Casaletto, Jack Damer, Sage Dawson, Kevin Haas, Daniel Heyman,  
Travis Janssen, Karen Kunc, Mario Laplante, Emmy Lingscheit, Taryn McMahon,  
Nathan Meltz, Erin Mitchell, Debora Oden, Dennis Olsen,  
Roxanne Phillips, Jon Swindler

I thank Washington University and the organizing committee of the SGC International Conference for the honor of inviting me to review and select the work for *Tempting Equilibrium: SGC International Juried Exhibition*. In fact, the title of the conference and the prospect of seeing work that I did not know also played a part. The title and its pithy explanation in the exhibition prospectus allowed me tremendous latitude in my deliberation. Before I began, I was hoping to see a wide range of work, both traditional approaches to print media and hybrids that pushed the envelope. I'm happy to say the members who submitted their work satisfied that hope.

Taking into consideration that this was to be a group exhibition with broad representation of the membership, I wanted to mix it up. For the cavernous space, largely unarticulated by architectural impediments, I primarily chose works that were large in size—but not all of them large in scale—in order to capitalize on the format and breadth of the gallery. Within this group are artists who employ printmaking in very traditional ways—**Kristin Casaletto, Karen Kunc, Daniel Heyman, Erin Mitchell, Debora Oden, Dennis Olsen**, and possibly, **Emmy Lingscheit**. Despite their more or less traditional uses of media, each of them has pushed the received notions of printed broadsides through ambitious scale, or by rethinking the use of tools. In this latter case, I refer to Dennis Olsen's odd portraits, which resemble metalcuts or *criblé*, a technique dating back to the origins of printmaking and experimented with more recently by such diverse artists as Rolf Nesch, Claire Falkenstein, and Arthur Deshaies (forgive me if I am wrong; they look this way in digital form, and Olsen calls them "intaglio-type print").

In their respective quests, all of these artists seem to be focused on reordering space, themes, even the social order. It was fascinating to me how many of them based their images on ancient stories of foreboding—the Apocalypse and Noah's Ark, for example—and related them to contemporary world conditions. **Jack Damer's** envisioning of the "Last Ark" is composed of a spent litho plate, making the cancelled viability of the matrix a secondary poignant aspect of his dark take on society. Others whose work speaks to notions of order or reordering are **Shawn Bitters, Sage Dawson, Kevin Haas, Mario LaPlante, Nathan Meltz, Roxanne Phillips, and Jon Swindler**. Among these artists' pieces, the support plays a significant role, sometimes as a spoiler—as in Mario LaPlante using a rolled canvas as a support for an image depicting slices of corrugated cardboard made digitally and suggesting a huge roll of toilet paper. While LaPlante's *The Roll* initially engages on a sarcastic level, Shawn Bitters' tender construction of something potentially cataclysmic, *Rockfall 4*, is rendered tenderly and in miniature, as if to suggest a model train version of an avalanche. Sage Dawson and Roxanne Phillips both use pattern to reference biological or organic morphology, in ways that show the affinity shared by paper and fabric—as carriers of meaning and as utilitarian materials. Like these former artists, in *Tree's, Hill's & Sky* Jon Swindler uses modules and repeating patterns to expand discrete bits of landscape information into a mural-sized composition that suggests an elliptical narrative. And, with *Billboard: Shell Station*, Kevin Haas deadpans with a familiar bleak image of an abandoned gasoline station, which by virtue of its presentation as an advertising



sarcasm-parenthesis opened by Mario LaPlante. All of this work appears to have been made with restraint and respect for the media, underscoring the notion that one can be effective at suggesting a broad range of textural meaning by suppressing tendencies to be slick or tricky (my printmaking professors called these tendencies “frivolous effects”).

Perhaps **Travis Janssen** has envisioned the most extreme rethinking of the matrix. His piece *Conversion* uses a real fan oscillating at its medium speed, and a fixed digital spectral light projection to cast a shadow of its “moving picture” on the wall. The overall effect seems to make a canny comment on what a matrix might be, while reanimating Marcel Duchamp’s fundamental questions about the relative nature of an object’s authorship and agency.

These uses of traditional and digital technology are, I think, completely acceptable manipulations and extensions of print media today, and more than fulfill the mission of *Tempting Equilibrium* organizers to imagine a world of printmaking that embraces possibility and points to exciting new directions for the future, and finally admit that digital matrices—such as those conjured by **Taryn McMahon** and Travis Janssen—can exist in real time and incorporate moving pictures and sound. Is this tempting or teasing equilibrium, or perhaps just provoking it?

Mark Pascale, Juror

Mark Pascale is curator in the Department of Prints and Drawings at The Art Institute of Chicago and adjunct professor of printmedia at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.



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## *Tempting Equilibrium: SGC International Juried Exhibition*

February 11, 2011 - March 19, 2011

Closing Reception March 19, 2011 from 4-6 p.m.

### **Exhibition Checklist:**

- Shawn Bitters**, *Rockfall 4: Scottish*, 2010
- Kristin Casaletto**, *Apocalypse*, 2008
- Jack Damer**, *Last Ark*, 2010
- Sage Dawson**, *Timeline*, 2008-2009
- Kevin Haas**, *Billboard: Shell Station*, 2010
- Daniel Heyman**, *Wounded*, 2010
- Travis Janssen**, *Conversion*, 2010
- Karen Kunc**, *Mirroring*, 2010
- Mario Laplante**, *The Roll*, 2009
- Emmy Lingscheit**, *Semiotics*, 2010
- Taryn McMahon**, *From The Happier Side of a Vast World*, 2010
- Nathan Meltz**, *The Chicken Coup*, 2010
- Erin Mitchell**, *Black and Blue*, 2010
- Debora Oden**, *All Apologies*, 2009
- Dennis Olsen**, *Samplings: Drago, Naveed, and Luke Lucas*, 2009, 2010
- Roxanne Phillips**, *Linked*, 2009
- Jon Swindler**, *Tree's, Hill's & Sky*, 2010

Photography by Stan Strembicki  
Brochure Design by Brandon Anschutz & Erin Mitchell