

A town called Superinjunction!

Printmaking, once the sad, lonely, grey Aunt of the Fine Arts has been reborn through the rapture of computer and the possible. **Stephen Mumberson** makes a stand.

Once again, young printmakers can stroll in a cocksure fashion down the cultural parade knowing that printmaking is once again the fully loaded revolver of the visual arts, and can ride the big country of chance, invention and ideas. Horizons no longer seem corralled by the demonstration of print skills for their own sake or be enclosed by the canyons of traditions maintained by a priesthood of self-flagellants. Tattered posters of digital criminals are no longer attached to every tree or stump and the Marshall is an environmentally friendly chap who will hold your horse for you. There are still the happy hunting grounds of tradition where the great historical beasts can enjoy their practice among the safety of landscape, portrait and mythical coloured abstractions only occasionally obscured by early morning mists or by the great numbers within the herd. But out on the wild, dusty western plains of contemporary print there are shoot-outs, hold-ups and gold in the hills sung about in bars to printmakers as the practices of print lay claim to every opportunity and possibility.

When someone is described as a printmaker, no longer is it said in hushed tones or under covering hand as though to describe some embarrassing fact or disclosure deemed beyond the regular interests of cultured society. Print's long history with popular culture, the transient, the momentary and the everyday pretty events that crowd all our days, printmaking is no longer the debased subject as once judged in the past by those engaged on higher missions of the 'Arts'. The machine-driven, crafted use of



Stephen Mumberson *Superinjunction Shirt*

materials and electronic media has led printmakers into the forefront of interaction with the modern world soaked in fear, uncertain meanings and rapid change. We know a fact in a provisional state – any moment it may be proven wrong or shown to be misconceived – it is as though the world can only be described in a narrative scripted by several authors at the same time, none of which could be judged wrong or inaccurate but particular to their view in their context. The 1950s are often described as black and white but to those who lived through that time the colour that enters the mind is grey,

today, we have the colour in life but it is difficult to see the individual hues. Printmaking is a visual art whose practice has expanded the possible into the real in a way only dreamt of in earlier times. Its range of colours, like music, is tempered by shade and tone. Its structure is open and broad where the fusion of the digital and the traditional means meet. Though no longer the callow youth, printmaking has found its racing stripes and a loud Hawaiian shirt on its ride into town, tugging down the 10-gallon hat by the rim as the townsfolk fixate on the six-shooters on both sides of the belt.

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