

## FORWARD

I am honored to be chosen to review the dissertation, artistic and didactic achievements for Iker Begoetxea Arruti who is a PhD candidate at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wrocław: Faculty of Graphics and Media Art.

I have visited the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art on three occasions; in 2015, 2017 and 2019. My visits have lasted as long as two weeks during which time I have gathered a great amount of familiarity with the school and the high quality work that is done there. I have spent a lot of time in the graphics labs. I have presented slide lectures on my own work during each of my first two visits. I have participated in critiques and I presented a demonstration of printing multiple colors from a single plate. I have attended the end of the year PhD as well as printmaking and graphics reviews.

I believe myself to be quite adequately qualified to perform this review. I have taught Beginning Drawing, Figure Drawing, Introduction to Printmaking and Relief Printmaking for the past thirty-three years at Ball State University in Muncie Indiana. The Relief Printmaking course I have been involved with works primarily with wood and linoleum matrixes. One of the materials that my own work concentrates upon is linoleum, and this also seems to be the material of choice for Mr. Arruti.

### DISSERTATION:

Mr. Iker Arruti has written an extensive dissertation concerning the notion that he would like his artwork to stand on its own without the need for explanation, interpretation, or biographical information. He wants the work to be looked at without these other possibly extraneous issues. For this purpose he has enlisted what he calls the pseudonym, which he refers to in this case as the Ogrocadaver. Mr. Arruti has cited innumerable historical examples of the use of the pseudonym in various art forms including music and literature. He cites Voltaire, Prince, Bob Dylan, David Bowie, the rock group Kiss and numerous rap and black metal bands to name just a few of his many examples. Many, if not most, of the well-known artists of the Italian Renaissance such as Pontormo, Bronzino and Perugino were also known by nicknames or pseudonyms. Today we are familiar with artists such as Philip Guston and Marc Rothko who also changed their names, as well as Picasso.

Mr. Arruti laments the alienation of the public from the stance of many artists working today, as I do myself. He appears to believe that the geniuses of the past such as Leonardo and Michelangelo have been followed up with more modern figures such as Picasso or Pollack. Yet he states that musicians are probably more recognizable as the geniuses of today. This is likely true, and Mr. Arruti's extensive involvement with music as well as art would undoubtedly encourage anyone to draw the same conclusion. Pop music today is a much more vast and populist realm than fine art. The consumer can be just about anybody compared to the consumer of art experienced in galleries.

Although I feel I have been called on to primarily address the effectiveness of the prints in this thesis, the prints have occasionally been combined with the artist's text and musical composition to present an effective multimedia work.

## ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The artwork presented is ambitious and accomplished. The cutting and printing of the matrixes is masterful. The prints have impact through their large scale. Mr. Arruti has given himself numerous assignments and carried out extensive experimentation. He has tried changing the color and order of printing his blocks. He has incorporated screenprinting with woodcut, linoleum and digital elements. He has experimented with overprinting, underprinting, and various levels of pressure and ink application.

Mr. Arruti has done extensive experimentation to gain knowledge of the variables of printing from his linoleum blocks. He has cut the blocks with great care and precision in some instances and he has used what he calls impassioned rough cutting to see how this would impact the work in other cases. He has cut the positive parts of the image in some instances and the negative aspect in others.

The different nature of different papers has been exploited; some papers being more absorbent and others less so allowing the ink to sit upon the paper and gain a plastic shine or shimmer.

Color has been dealt with in many ways to learn about its different properties. Comparing the results of printing on different colors of paper has been one consideration. Printing gold and silver metallic inks on absorbent papers or upon an undercoat of white was considered to see which way achieved better effects. The amount of white used was considered. Extensive tests were made to consider vastly differing amounts of oil added to the ink to attain different transparencies and how those would affect color mixing, overprinting and blending. A vast range of gray, neutral and monochromatic printing was engaged in some instances. In others the intensity of different hues was exploited.

The use of text combined with imagery has been made an issue of consideration in some instances compared with no text in others. The nature of the font, or various possible styles of the text is given consideration as to how it will impact the effect upon the viewer. Even the notion of the implied sound of the words included as text in the prints has been considered for its possible impact upon the imagined ear of the viewer.

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES: EXHIBITIONS

Mr. Arruti has a long list of professional exhibitions dating back at least to 2010. This certainly makes it evident that a professional career has not only been begun but has been sustained. Among this list of many exhibitions are; selection for the 6<sup>th</sup> Graphic Art Biennial in Romania 2020, Exhibitions in Russia, Wiesbaden Germany, Estonia, Italy, Bilbao Spain, and Lodz Poland besides others.

Mr. Arruti was the subject of an interview/documentary for Basque Public Television. He has been chosen for a mural project commission in Chicago. His work has been used for design and packaging by the craft brewery Brew and Roll in Navarre Spain.

## TEACHING

Mr. Iker Begoetxea Arruti has taught Linocut at The Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw for the past three years, incorporating both basic and advanced methods. He has established both the goals and the tasks to be undertaken in the course. Due to the pandemic, Mr. Arruti has met the challenges of developing an online curriculum for the course far beyond the traditional ways of

teaching. This has included video clips, slide shows and animation among other approaches in this unforeseeable realm.

## CONCLUSION

Iker Begoetxea Arruti has undertaken a very complex, important and timely issue with his dissertation. That is; how our work reads visually on its own, without extraneous information, possibly misleading or confusing details and excessive and unnecessary explanations. Through a lengthy, complex and exhaustive dissertation he successfully explores and considers a history of points of view on this subject, from Greek philosophers to Hip-Hop artists of the current day.

Mr. Iker's body of artwork is impressive. It is involved, complex and substantial. It has great impact through scale, color, detail and iconography. The number of prints that Mr. Iker has produced and the exhibition record that he has established and maintained are no small feat. They are evidence of an exemplary artist's involvement and accomplishment.

By all accounts Mr. Iker's teaching has been formidable, yet during the pandemic he has gone beyond the call of duty and learned how to, and put into practice, an online curriculum of merit.

In my professional opinion Mr. Iker Begoetxea Arruti has certainly defined the criteria for earning the PhD in Art, and he has met the criteria with great success.

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