



August 25, 2021

Evaluation of Doctoral Thesis:

EMBEDDED IN PRINT

Charlotte Biszewski, MA, PhD Candidate, Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design

IN THE DOCTORAL PROCEDURE IN THE FIELD OF ARTS, IN THE DISCIPLINE OF FINE ARTS AND ART CONSERVATION

To Whom It May Concern:

I received materials for the PhD assessment for Charlotte Biszewski in July 2021. I did not know her work previous to this reviewer request, so my evaluation is based solely on the materials provided. My evaluation is made from my standpoint as the Chair of Printmaking at the School of Visual Arts in the College of Fine Arts of Boston University in the USA, and from my personal practice and reputation as a multi-disciplinary artist working in installation, digital media, video and virtual reality, sometimes collaboratively with composers and other artists and technicians.

Charlotte Biszewski, was born in 1988 in Bristol, UK. She holds an MA in Multi-disciplinary Printmaking from the University of the West of England in Bristol, UK (2015). Her doctoral studies (In the discipline of fine arts and art conservation) were at the Interdisciplinary PhD Study Programme with English as the language of instruction, at the Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design in Wroclaw, and culminated with the dissertation entitled "Embedded In Print."

Assessment of Professional CV

Charlotte Biszewski's CV shows an artist of vision and inventiveness, a worker in print and new media. Her exhibitions reflect a substantive achievement within respected venues, and a desire and determination to work beyond the accepted venues to create a new stage for the activity of art in general and her work in particular. Her exhibitions include intercontinental activity, occurring in Norway, Japan, USA, UK, Estonia, Russia and Poland, and these exhibitions and installations display an active seeking out of new venues. That she puts her considerable energy toward developing this ability to engage audiences is an important feature of her involvement in print-related forms. These same forms are sometimes confined to expected norms, but Charlotte Biszewski breaks through those expectations to fresh and unanticipated exposures.

Her work since around 2016 has transformed with each new project. Notably her community work seems to blossom at this stage, a factor which is rapidly becoming an important feature of contemporary print. She folds new approaches into the refined, established technologies, enabling an enriched interchange rather than a rarified experience.

Works such as “Traces We Leave” from 2019 are particularly compelling. Not only has Charlotte Biszewski designed an inclusive invitation to neighborhoods around Bristol UK to participate with various individual experiences, but she has also engineered common human experience into an interactive form that can acquire the significance of permanence. The work is now permanently installed at the Bristol Science Museum, a venue that is actively supporting community involvement through interactive exhibits. Her artist residency in Integrated Design and Media at Tandon School of Engineering at NYU is another example of her achievement and her far-ranging thinking, her absorption of diverse sources and her capacity to combine areas of thought and inspiration. “Resonance of Waste” utilizes multi-disciplinary forms of papermaking, electronic sound and the elements of wastewater treatment to create an insightful innovative work from unexpected elements.

Charlotte Biszewski has been active in both solo presentations and group shows, exhibiting during the last decade in respected traditional venues such as Omsk State Contemporary Art Museum, Kochi Triennial of Prints, and Museum of Contemporary Art in Wroclaw, and in nontraditional venues such as Open Out Festival, in Tromsø, Norway, Bristol Science Museum, and Survival Art Space in Wroclaw.

Her awards include the Visegrad Scholarship 2019, the Rebecca-Smith Award for Fine-Art Printmaking and The WCA Doktorat Award 2019 for her PhD research project. In particular, in 2020 she received the Special Prize for heritage-led innovation from Ilucidare, an organization that seeks to demonstrate that cultural heritage is a powerful resource for strengthening international exchange and collaboration. This award recognizes her unique orientation between tradition and innovation, and her contribution to that thinking.

Charlotte Biszewski has been invited to give interviews and papers with important respected conferences, including most recently in 2021, a panel debate “What innovation can bring to heritage and how heritage can inspire innovation?” for Ilucidare - 6th Heritage Forum of Central Europe, at The University of Krakow. In 2020, she delivered the paper “Post-digital Accounts of Bookmaking” at The Material Body of the Book: between Tradition and Innovation at the University of Vilnius, Lithuania, and also “Innovation in unexpected places” for the Post-digital Letterpress Conference, the University of Porto, Portugal. Her respect both for tradition of letterpress and bookmaking and for innovation in those fields is internationally recognized as a valuable contribution, investigating the positive sustaining influence of change on traditional forms.

In addition, Charlotte Biszewski has delivered courses and workshops that have required her to be both a consummate technician and educator, and an insightful contributor to contemporary dialogue, in a variety of settings. She taught Erasmus courses during her years at Eugeniusz Geppert Academy of Art and Design where she utilized and shared her broad technical and creative skill. Through her residency at NYU she experimented with conductive ink, for a day-long workshop, and she also gave earlier courses at Spike Print Studio where she taught the art of incorporating digital technologies into printmaking practices.

Charlotte Biszewski has contributed significantly to and shared her deep knowledge of the field of print and book by delivering workshops, papers, and exhibitions at recognized national and international institutions and has also made a unique contribution by creating innovative and far-reaching venues.

Assessment of Dissertation Document and Installation

In Chapter 1 of her dissertation document, Charlotte Biszewski lays the groundwork for the many avenues of exploration that her project ultimately demanded. As an artist of complex and layered sensibilities, with a deep respect for technological process both historical and contemporary, this section is presented as diversely sourced and free-ranging. Divided into six areas of inquiry, Charlotte Biszewski does not attempt here to relate her various sources, but connects them through proximity on the page, and by example, in her practice.

This broad study of techniques and historical sources is crucial to the effectiveness of the thesis and the work. The range of her interests and sources has a complex resonance. Not all of the underlying ramifications and issues she considers are visible in the final works of the exhibition, but they persist as a supporting framework. For example, here she explains her intentionality in the use of specific materials and inks. This comes from a deep desire to act ethically and responsibly with regard to the environment. This concern convincingly authenticates her interest in the harmony of the spheres, and in a structural totality of balance.

In keeping with her stated goal of accessibility to the print community, Charlotte Biszewski includes many references for readers, including a link to an entire conference on “Next Generation Paper: The Future of Technology” given at the University of Surrey. Her interest in the future of the print community is shown by her participation in and contribution to public forums. These prolific references support the in-depth comprehension and distribution of her thinking and process.

In particular, her appreciation of the aesthetics of the digital milieu alongside the haptic qualities of the physical print/paper is one of the most notable qualities of her work and research. As she lays out the definition of electronic paper and inks, she emphasizes that mere digital novelty recedes in the face of vast digital possibility. Citing Paul Catanese and Angela Geary in *Post-digital printmaking: CNC, traditional and hybrid techniques*, important early experiments in technological process simply point the way into the “present-future.” Reliance on past models, however recent, are not in Charlotte Biszewski’s modality – she is continually mining the past but reassembling it digitally transformed to create a new future. She commands this connectivity of process not only with innate curiosity but also with empathy for methods and materials. Inventiveness combines with sensibility to construct an architecture of endeavor that invites future consideration.

The most insightful passage of this comprehensive chapter seems to be her view of the surprising and emphatic revival of the printed surface as an avenue to future technologies—of industry, circuits, and medical technology; the revival of the multiple, the physicality of process, and paper based computing. These invite an engaging and welcome new dialogue for print, with new theoretical issues.

In Chapter 2, Charlotte Biszewski begins to outline inspirations for her project content and its structural underpinnings. In considering her prior work, one may infer a strong impression that she is concerned with how the world works, and with contributing to the resolution of some of its most unsettling social and environmental imbalances, hence perhaps her personal interest in harmonious resolution (through mathematics, music, and science). She studies the roots of astronomy in mathematics and emphasizes its relation to the search for meaning and order in the human sphere. A point that I found compelling was her consciousness of the interconnection of paper, printed multiples, and the rapid development of science.

Her involvement with sound seems to have its source with the idea of the harmonious vibration of matter in various planetary forms, and continued with the discovery of the undertone of radio waves in

space. I applaud her inclination to collaborate with a specialist in sound composition in her installation, and also her study of the mathematics of harmonics. From the standpoint of my work with sound artists, it is important to acknowledge that there is an equal complexity of artistic sophistication in the aural sphere, comparable to that in the visual sphere.

In section 2.5, Charlotte Biszewski alludes to the parallel structures of collaboration between printmaking and astronomy – that each has relied on collaboration and communication. Each discipline reimagines the historical with the contemporary through digital process, in transition to a greater power and effectiveness. Many artists from Leonardo to Victoria Burge have been inspired by the close connection and cross fertilization of science and art. One such is the American sculptor from the mid 20th century Robert Smithson, who wrote “there is no escape from matter. There is no escape from the physical nor is there any escape from the mind. The two are on a constant collision course.”

In Chapter 3, Charlotte Biszewski has assembled her artistic influences and has gravitated toward artists in multidisciplinary fields who are observers of the physical and human spheres. These selections demonstrate an appropriateness of thought and an insight into the forms that complement her project works.

She presents an array of approaches, to interactivity, sound interactions, and transformed technologies. The conceptual positionings of these artists regard the natural universe with human proclivities of sound and touch, and each presents careful attention to elements of materiality and presence. With a few exceptions, Charlotte Biszewski also seems influenced by works that respect the mystery of discovery and avoid intellectual arrogance. Instead, the artists and works have a searching attitude that seeks to materialize the immaterial in a fascinating way – sometimes for the purpose of admiration, or for the recognition of the relatedness of forms, or for the revelation of larger existential truths. Interestingly, many of the chosen works and artists express elements of indeterminacy rather than intentional organization, particularly with regard to the aural aspects of the works. From a visual standpoint, many of the works presented are organized to have an impactful presence - but aurally are not thus perceived - especially the works of Nick Ryan, Peter Vance, and the Contours installation of Alicja Pytlewska and Fabio Antinori. This indeterminacy is sometimes the result of the generation of algorithms within a work, or the causal nature of the programming, but indeterminacy seems to be an element of Charlotte Biszewski’s interest in the physical. In quantum physics, indeterminacy is the fundamental condition of existence, supported by all empirical evidence, in which a free electron for example, does not possess fixed properties until observed and measured. Thus, observation seems to be a compelling factor in measuring the physical universe – a way to discover its existence.

Charlotte Biszewski’s supporting works listed in Chapter four lead to her final presentation and offer important components of her technical experimentation and goals for her PhD project. Beginning with the TransSiberia interactive book, she initiated the development of her electronic paper methodology (using ephemeral materials not associated with electronics), and showed her determined effort to make books speak. This forms the bedrock of her installation. Her Star Maps 40 experimented with an airy, lasercut space that reappears in the luminous suspended woodcuts of her installation.

Every part of her practice is layered and complex—each experiment is informed by the one before. However, rather than occurring in a linear progression, these experiments form a pyramid with a very broad base. The apex is her current achievement, and it points to a towering originality seldom experienced in the print world. From paper speakers to sound generated by proximity and touch, Charlotte Biszewski is a seeker of experience who easily envisions new forms and processes. Building from the series “The Resonance of Waste”, she emphasizes conversion. Industrial waste becomes

seaweed, seaweed becomes paper, paper transfers sound, sound speaks of industrial process. In her PhD work, transformation is a leading element. Sight is enlivened by LED light in the 2D representations of light in the heavens; human presence is transformed into sound.

For her PhD presentation, Charlotte Biszewski has created an accomplished installation of eight large suspended multimedia works. LED panels are combined with handmade woodcuts and sound that resonate with her prior works. Star charts illumined with embedded LEDs seek to create an experience for the viewer that is multifaceted—simultaneously tactile and inexplicable.

She presents a virtuosic range of elements and effects, referencing the physical world, science, and the unseen imagined elements of mapped heavens. Her theoretical framework engages the concept that all planets and heavenly bodies emit a harmony as they move through the sky that is just beyond human perception. The references to the number four and the concept of celestial harmonics are two elements that emerge from the historical treatises of early thinkers and the scientific observations of early and later observers of the universe (Pythagoras, Hasler, Kepler). Her interest in paper electronics and inks provides the technical underpinning for her wide-ranging and innovative vision.

Charlotte Biszewski has collaborated with American born sound artist Patrick McGinley, who developed the electronic sound accompanying this installation. Sound is an element that, when added to a space, creates an extended effect, much more immersive and attenuated than a silent work would be, and engaging a sensual/bodily component that engages various parts of the brain. It is of ultimate importance that the sound supports the artistic concept rather than functioning as an added element. McGinley's work is well suited to Charlotte Biszewski's purpose, as a representation of soundwaves that extend perception into the physical space of the work.

Charlotte Biszewski is interested in the limitless, and also how physical limits can be used to evoke the unfathomable. The careful layering of technological trial and error points the viewer toward wonder and imagination. She uses elemental materials—copper, paper, wood—with sophisticated electronic devices, such as LEDs, controllers, programs, and circuits, to evoke a sense of the physical that migrates between the tangible and the unquantifiable. The space incorporated in her suspended works reinforces this sense of intangibility, as the air between the works is activated by the movement of the viewer among the sheets and by the pervasive presence of sound between and around them. Her interest is thus in transformation of our sensibility, our expectations, and our experience.

Charlotte Biszewski pushes the interactions of matter to their limit, implying that there must be a point of harmonic continuation, where borders disappear. In her technical descriptions, she continually references times when her experiments blow up, or burn out, or otherwise transform. She is always looking for a point of balance where everything works. In her PhD project, she finds a poetic harmony among the possible, the impossible, and the imagined.

This fascination with a balance point foregrounds questions of human sensibility to environment. We seem to be in a time when there is a generally decreasing responsiveness to who we may be and how our place in the world may be understood largely due to the interferences of technology with direct experience and perception. Charlotte Biszewski presents a hopeful and determined optimism that the mysteries of existence have great importance, and are not only the true subject of art, but also an avenue to approach a keen awareness of our environment.

Christiane Paul is a theorist of new media. While she is mainly concerned with immaterial digital work, in a recent online interview she says “The terms post-digital and post-Internet describe a condition of artworks and ‘objects’ that are conceptually and practically shaped by the Internet and digital processes ...yet often manifest in the material form of objects such as paintings, sculptures, or photographs. The post-digital captures the embeddedness of the digital in the objects, images, and structures we encounter on a daily basis and the way we understand ourselves in relation to them...” Paul has used the term “neomateriality” to describe an objective practice that incorporates networked digital technologies and embeds and reflects back the data of humans and the environment. Charlotte Biszewski occupies this progressive territory of new media that borders on the material. In *Harmonics*, she has one foot firmly planted in traditional understanding of substance and physical process, while concurrently the evanescence of digital means powers her experimental quest and trajectory. An artist of persistent rigor, Charlotte Biszewski has created a body of work from disparate sources that is grounded in a central focus of understanding the world. Her curiosity and courage are unbounded. She is well on her way to reinventing the possible in paper, print, sound, light, and imagination.

It is my assessment that the work of Charlotte Biszewski fulfils the requirements of the PhD, and she should be awarded this degree. Based on reading and analysis of the concept, and the realization of her dissertation, and after taking into consideration the creative output, I recommend an academic Ph.D. title in the field of art, in the discipline of fine arts and art conservation be granted to Charlotte Biszewski.

“What our perception presents us with ...is an infinitely complex, whole envelope of the world and our being in it.” Robert Irwin, Being and Circumstance

Sincerely,



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