

OKTTP

CLARE ROJAS

7.01.2010

Clare Rojas' journey can get a little complicated. This may be why she is trying to simplify her imagery. In these prints, she focuses on a few ideas, including the relationship between men and women, the eternal symbol of stars (and light) used in American quilting, and nature imagery used in stitching work. But viewer beware—there is always another layer of meaning. Interior spaces are a disputed terrain where men and women engage in countless battles over all kinds of injustice. Women's sewing circles were domestic places where women found

comfort and solace and a platform for politics. Even when you emerge into the garden, just beyond the boundary lays a beautiful but potentially poisonous flower. Clare can be disarming in her manner and style, but on the other side of the sweetness a fierce artist stirs.

—Kenneth Caldwell

Paulson Bott Press: Why did you focus on these images to work with as prints? Are they relating to each other in some way? Are they meant to feel more akin to an installation?



Clare Rojas: My vision is to have these go together as an aligned wall of prints.

Q: Why don't we start with this image entitled "See the Light." What is it?

A: It's a woman showing a man the light, or rather a direction that expresses her point of view.

Q: Well, good luck with that.

A: At least I can paint it happening. In my earlier work, my humor could be a little bit from the sharp side. I am trying to make it more G-rated for the masses. I started getting into the idea of sitcoms.

I really wanted to write my own sitcom, because the idea that a network could send any message they wanted into people's homes every single night would be the ultimate art.

I like the idea of creating an environment that I want to see. My sitcom. That's the only way to do it I think, to create your own world. That's the magic of art, you can do whatever you want.

Q: Tell me a little more about these forms and where they're coming from. In this picture, I notice that the male is clothed. In the past he has often been naked. Here he looks almost like a monk.

A: I tried to make him really innocent, the truest vulnerability, the open place where truly powerful people are.

(left) **SEE THE LIGHT**, 2009
Color Sugarlift Aquatint Etching;
Paper size: 30.5" x 36"; Edition of 40



Q: Innocent?

A: Yes. Like, “I’ll give you that. I’ll give you your innocence. I’ll let you have it. We’ll start there.” The naked man thing is really funny, but I am moving away from that form of funny. I’m keeping it as innocent as I can. On a daily basis we see really objectifying, oppressive images of women, and though it is not fine, it’s become the status quo. The second you turn that into a naked man, it’s not socially acceptable.

Q: Right.

A: I get “curated” nonstop. Some curators are just like, “We don’t really want those paintings.” I have so many naked men at my house because though most



like to laugh at them no one wants to drink their morning cup of coffee or tea looking at one.

I feel like in the past I’ve been giving away too much information, so I’m trying to simplify everything. Distill it, take away information, just stay on point.

Q: You are returning them to a sort of original state, but the only way to do that in contemporary culture is to clothe them.

A: You have to take the sexuality out of it. That is a starting point for a lot of oppression, sex, but it’s so complex. The second you put that in there, people just home in on it.

Q: Then you’ve lost the story, right?

A: Yeah.

Q: These forms don’t necessarily represent a specific table or something like that.

A: No. They’re just an interior.

Q: They’re just forms that fill the interior?

A: You know what, politics are in the house.

The light, and I don’t mean the light in a culty religious sense, just a more balanced representation of both partners’ perspectives and a shared equal respect.

The little speck of light is small, because I wanted it to be super focused. I wanted you to have to be pulled into this massive space, this big amount of darkness, and then want to focus on the details.



Here, with “Star Chart,” the eye chart, if you have really good eyesight, you can see the most light.

Q: Can you explain this eye chart idea a little bit more?

A: Yeah, it’s a measuring chart, like the ones someone would see if they went to the doctor and were getting a check up to see if their eyesight is healthy and strong. What’s your vision?

Q: What about the print titled “Boundary Lines”?

A: This is a more complex print. I learned about boundaries last year. I’m still learning about boundary lines.

Q: Visual boundary lines?

A: Social boundary lines—not everyone really is your friend even if they pretend to be. I think a lot of people connect to that.

Q: Is the figure you to some degree?

A: I think so.

Q: The fact that the flowers are poppies, is that significant?

A: Well, there was a whole series of these because I did a show at the Wattis Center about the *Wizard of Oz*. The poppies represented the poison in our life. I really identified with that. Just like poisonous people, poisonous imagery, poisonous poison. You’re just trying to protect yourself from it. Self-preservation, you know, no matter how alluring it may seem.

(left) **MADDY**, 2009

Color Hardground and Aquatint Etching;
Paper size: 22" x 18"; Edition of 40

(opposite page, top left)

STAR CHART, 2009

Color Aquatint Etching;
Paper size: 37" x 27.5"; Edition of 40

(opposite page, bottom left)

Clare Rojas in the studio.

(opposite page, right)

BOUNDARY LINES, 2009

Color Aquatint, Spitbite Aquatint & Sugarlift
Etching; Paper size: 43.5" x 35"; Edition of 40

Q: The stitched imagery, quilt imagery, the Native American or Russian doll imagery, it is familiar as some sort of folk art. Do you know where it all comes from?

A: I grew up in a house with Mom’s quilts everywhere—across from the cow field with green and blue and red barns. My dad is Peruvian, so he had all this South American folk art, like chairs and blankets. All that was just part of my background.

Quilts are full of icons that are used over and over and over again. Like the star, that’s just a pattern that people have used forever. It’s there for the taking. You’re supposed to use it. ✂



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BLEEDING HEARTS, 2009
Color Sugarlift Aquatint Etching;
Paper size: 22" x 18"; Edition of 40



FORGET-ME-NOT, 2009
Color Sugarlift Aquatint Etching;
Paper size: 22" x 18"; Edition of 40



TULIPS, 2009
Color Sugarlift Aquatint Etching;
Paper size: 22" x 18"; Edition of 40