

What is the Art Lottery?

In 2011, Centre[3] founded the Art Lottery with the idea that everyone is a winner: 100 pieces of art to match the sale of 100 tickets. The Art Lottery has become an annual event and, currently in its seventh year, it continues to excite participants with its lively atmosphere and prize-worthy pieces. One by one, tickets are pulled from a hat as on-lookers look to their wish lists in anticipation. Not only is this a fun and exciting event, the Art Lottery is an important way for Centre[3] and its participating artists to connect with its members and the local community. At the core of Art Lottery is the continuous commitment and support from its members and local artists without whom the Art Lottery could not happen.

Gallery preview June 10th 10 am – 4 pm
lottery on Monday, June 12th, 6 - 10

<http://centre3.com/home/art-lottery-2017-preview/>

Art is a lottery

Spring is the season when arts organizations in Hamilton start to raise funds through works donated in full or in part by artists. Artist/educator Matt McInnes contributed a print titled *House Fire – John and Picton*, to this year's Art Lottery, a fundraiser for Centre3 for Print and Media Arts.

The house fire that Matt commemorates in this work happened eight years before the artist turned his sketch into an edition of five serigraphs. Matt lived in the North End at the time and remembers that the house had been derelict for quite a few years before the fire. Symptomatic of the hardship slapped on the North End a few decades ago, the owners had been evicted. Rumours in the neighbourhood alleged that they continued to squat and/or party in the house and eventually set fire to their former home. Matt's serigraph shows the damaged house looking east from John Street, and the image on the print is very close to the sketch reproduced here.

What is special about Matt's approach to screen printing (or serigraphy) is that he does the artist thing of defying the medium that he loves, and skillfully pushing its limits. Screen prints are typically recognized for their even colour fields and large halftone dots that suited the style of pop art - Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Helen Frankenthaler and others. Unlike etchings that add aquatints for shading, and lithographs that can hold pigment as subtle as a watercolour painting or as gritty as a charcoal drawing, the screen print works like a stencil; either you block out part of the mesh, or you allow ink to push through it. Moreover, each colour requires its own screen. The name gives away its original material, silk, and the method was first developed in China during the Song Dynasty.

Matt's serigraphs employ the halftone dots, and he works with stencils. However, he also likes drawing right onto the mesh with a resist, and using fine lines and textures that are much more difficult to handle than larger shapes. A good commercial screen can yield thousands of prints, but Matt pulled an edition of only five of *House Fire – John and Picton*. While the image has colours that seem to blend, I would bet that he used only two screens, and that the blue/purple coloured spots vary slightly on each of the five prints. His deviation makes each print unique, even though an edition suggests that they are equal. Matt's work is proof that prints are not copies of an "original". Rather they are limited edition impressions pulled from a matrix created by the artist. In the case of etchings and engravings, that matrix is a metal plate; ink is transferred from a depression in the plate, as opposed to the raised parts of a relief print (wood, plastic, rubber). Collagraphs can be inked either "relief" or "intaglio", or both, as in a "viscosity print." Monotypes can be pretty much any surface on any medium, but transfer of the image from the plate to the paper is what makes it a print. Lithography is a most finicky and complicated process, in my humble opinion; it requires a serious grasp of chemistry and muscle (to grind, push and ink up the stone); and mezzotints are by far the most time consuming. Laine Groeneweg's fantastic juxtaposition of subjects such as a jellyfish and a peanut butter jar could be indicative of the artist's need to match the laborious process of roughing up the entire surface of a metal plate only to burnish and scrape out the light areas of the image. Check him out. Artists participating in the event are from Hamilton, Burlington and beyond, and donated works also include paintings, photographs and mixed media. A few more printmakers on my A-list include Hamilton's Robert Creighton (lithographs), Mo Steuart, Fatima Garzan (etching), Becky Katz (monotype), TJ Charlton (screen prints), Olga Wiczorek (relief and letterpress) and Toronto-based Sadko Hadzihasanovic (drypoint).

The fundraiser takes place at Earls Court Gallery, 215 Ottawa Street North, on Monday June 12, 6 – 10 pm, with a preview in the gallery on Saturday, June 10th, 10 am to 4 pm. Check out <http://centre3.com/home/art-lottery-2017-preview/> for a preview and more information.

Crown Point resident Ingrid Mayrhofer is a visual artist, printmaker and community arts practitioner. Look for her collagraph in the Art Lottery.

Image credit: Matt McInnes, *House Fire – John and Picton*, pen and ink sketch