

ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

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SPOTLIGHT REVIEWS

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New England College Art Gallery/Henniker

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JAMES BAILEY: WORKS ON PAPER; RICHARD BROWN LETHEM: HEADS AND MASKS; FARID HADDAD: SELECTED WORKS ON PAPER



James Bailey, *The Seven Deadly Sins – Lust*, relief print, 12 x 12", 2003.

Bailey shows a series of successive pressings of one image, demonstrating how the relief reduction process adds layers of color to create a completed image. In addition to some other prints demonstrating the contrast between black and white and color applications, is a series depicting the seven deadly sins. These successive emblematic images, in a cartoon-like style alluding to Basquiat and others, offer a satirical take on the follies of modern life. In each, a frantically overwrought being is surrounded by, or interacts with, glyphic symbols suggesting the sin *du jour*—dollar bills, war planes, phalli, pollution, SUVs, and so forth. The medium seems appropriate to these images, with their dependence on line and color.

Sharing the second floor, in Gallery Two, are two series by Richard Lethem. The first consists of India ink drawings on paper in a vocabulary alluding to Mayan imagery, and depicting, for the most part, masks and mask-like faces. Loosely

drawn and very expressive, many evoke the realm of unconscious motivations, guilt, repression, and hidden terrors—and of their eruption into consciousness. The other series consists of thirty-five expressionistic, sometimes Fauve-like, small format paintings of heads. Each depiction has a unique personality, and viewing them one after another in one visit is a bit like people-watching at a sidewalk café—we get an impression, but the inner reality remains inscrutable. Some, such as *Young Woman*, communicate a sense of tragic strength; while others, *Man in Winter*, for example, are wistful. *Man with a Prominent Nose* suggests layers of complex motivation. The proximity of the masks and faces invites consideration of how color adds to the artist's expressiveness, and of the differences and similarities between the two façades—masks and faces.

Although presented as a teaching aid for New England College students, the exhibit of James Bailey's relief reduction prints in Gallery Three complements the two shows in adjoining galleries. First,

These three exhibitions of works in series offer the opportunity to consider the nature of repetitive imagery and to view one series in the context of another. The overall impact of the three shows is heightened by the fastidious installation, which in every case is perfectly appropriate to the particular series and its contents.

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James Bailey, *X-Ray*, relief print, 14 x 18", 2006.