

is made with the processes of printing. And by asking what it might look like for individual printmakers to create work derived from identical source material the project considers printmaking and printmakers in relation to a world where content sharing and image reproduction have evolved significantly in recent years.

To be more specific, it was only 2009 when artist Hito Steyerl described the value and contemporary reality of the poor image.¹ At the time Steyerl was observing a pervasive visual language of noticeable degradation, incurred when images were reproduced for sharing across digital devices and the internet. Today, sharing images is unlikely to result in aberration. In the time since Steyerl's writing, light-speed reproduction of digitally liberated, high-resolution image information has become ubiquitous. Accompanying this, the technology of everyday display devices has improved to the point where the delivery of images, at typical viewing distances, no longer reveals the pixelated trace of reproductive processes. In contrast with Steyerl's visibly poor image, and as a result of intervening developments, it could be argued that the current reality of image reproduction is now characteristically invisible.

A progression towards invisible processes is also present in print production, as evidenced by the imaging capacity of desktop printers to rival photographic seamlessness. However, unlike the mass online migration towards invisibility, the material processes of printmaking often remain necessarily visible and characteristic. The mechanically required and visible dots of silkscreening, for instance, create a very different encounter compared with the same content produced using the barely perceptible dot of an inkjet. The tangible surface of prints may also reveal an architecture of production, as is the case with intaglio prints which, in addition to delivering an image, are often impressed with a narrative of process.

Given this context, the initial prompt (to create prints from a common source) invites deeper consideration. The Collective's experimental approach to printmaking offers a chance to explore not only the resulting artwork, but also the functional transfer of contemporary images. Questions arise around the meaning of related images where origin and authorship are ambiguous. And if, as described earlier, printmaking traditionally serves to share information across time, space, and consciousness, what is being lost when this process becomes less and less visible?

Participants

The current One Three Collective project involves Alison Kennedy, Andrew Gunnell, Belinda Reid, David McBurney, and Mark Dustin.

Amid the pandemic, early involvement with the project was slow and isolated. In 2021 when the collaborative idea was developing, print studio access and exhibition planning was restricted. Early collaboration was mostly a discussion of ideas via email and video meetings, with outcomes valued more in terms of community and connection rather than tangible artwork production.

The project has benefited from this gradual development, primarily by affording artists time to strengthen their engagements with print-informed practice. For instance, in 2021 part of Kennedy's research was awarded first prize in the Fremantle Print Award. Around the same time McBurney entered the Fine Art PhD program at Monash University, and through group and solo exhibitions Reid was able to refine and evolve techniques developed during recent studies. For Dustin and Gunnell, who hold lead roles in the academic print departments of the University of Melbourne's Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and RMIT University respectively, attention to printmaking also became more focused during this time. Despite restricted workshop access, Dustin's work was recognised in several national and international print awards, and Gunnell developed and successfully completed his final doctoral exhibition.

Another interesting move for the collective has been Kennedy's 2022 relocation to Paris. Even though the forced isolation of the past few years has ended, Kennedy's adventurous move to practice and study in Europe means that a physical separation will still be considered part of this project.

Collaborative benefits and outcomes Contingency is the obvious benefit of artistic collaboration. Working with another artist invites a universe of opportunity that may not otherwise be recognised. This includes a growing and trusted creative dialogue among participants, especially valuable in early project stages when ideas can easily be criticised or even broken. Ultimately this breaking is sometimes necessary to test for incoherence or impracticality. However, in an environment of creative trust, this breaking apart can also lead to unexpected relationships that elevate and strengthen a nascent idea far beyond its initial form.

Among the first outcomes for the Collective was Fountain, a two-person collaboration between Dustin and McBurney. The work was awarded a major prize in the Castlemaine Art Museum's 2023 Experimental Print Prize.

Installed at floor level, leaning against the wall, Fountain displays a looped moving image of a waterfall, presented on a pair of LED panels. The display panels are the type commonly used for digital outdoor billboards which, at gallery viewing distances, reveal a flickering matrix of image transfer.

Arriving at this unusual assembly of elements was the result of engaging the One Three Collective project guides. The common image for the collaboration was introduced to the project by Dustin, who for some time has been collecting and making prints from waterfall images that appear generically in online publicity and stock libraries. The display panels came to the collaboration via McBurney who had been observing the effects of remediating high-resolution images through low-resolution LED displays as part of his printmaking research. Within this collaborative juncture, the side-by-side display of both artists' print-informed work coalesced into the paired and reflected form of Fountain.

The statement accompanying Fountain credits One Three Collective as the artist and emphasises an experimental and collaborative approach as crucial for renegotiating traditional printmaking binaries such as ink and paper, matrix and substrate, artist and printmaker, and so on. What makes the work particularly intriguing is that, when viewed in isolation, Fountain would unlikely be considered or described in terms of printmaking. Instead of fitting neatly into a category, the work exists on an ambiguous threshold, blurring boundaries and prompting questions about when the syntax and visible processes of image reproduction become a print.

Current and future projects

The Collective is presently preparing for an exhibition scheduled for Spring this year at BlockProjects Gallery. Ideas for the show are developing and outcomes remain unknown. Even at this early stage, however, it is interesting to observe how much this project both informs and is informed by its collaborative process. As a means of both shaping and responding to the work, artists are contributing to a shared Instagram account and to OneThreeCollective.com.

In terms of future ideals, there is nothing rare about working collaboratively but

an objective glance at current world events reflects a different trend. The character of today's commerce and politics commonly displays an individualism where personal agendas and immediate gains take precedence over collaborative efforts. Collective work towards long-term, sustainable progress seems to be losing effectiveness and therefore popularity. On the level of metaphor, One Three Collective is a response to this fading state of collaboration. Considered in this context, the work of collectively negotiating a shared view into an exhibition of individual yet interdependent perspectives resonates with a deeper meaning.

In terms of a future for the Collective, the project inherently carries the potential for growth. In theory, any two-or-more artists interested in print-informed collaboration could produce a One Three Collective show. This open-ended quality has been discussed from the beginning of the project. Any one of the current participating artists may wish to reiterate the project at another time or place, with new or the same collaborators. However, given the project's open and unpredictable nature, perhaps an ideal future would be an invitation to an undisclosed One Three Collective exhibition—one that catches us all by surprise.

Note

1. Hito Steyerl, In Defense of the Poor Image, e-ux Journal, no. 10 (2009), 86-92. <https://www.e-ux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>

David McBurney is a New Zealand born Irish-Vietnamese artist and educator based in Naarm/Melbourne. He holds a Master of Contemporary Art from the University of Melbourne and is a Fine Art doctoral candidate at Monash University.

Alison Kennedy is an artist working in the space between technology, printmaking and other media. She is a recent graduate from the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music at the University of Melbourne. She currently lives in Paris, France.



(top)
Alison Kennedy, ICU, 2019, white ink screenprint on 30 industrial polyacrylic panels, 240 x 300 cm. Collection of Fremantle Arts Centre.

(above)
David McBurney, Mountain, 2023, screenprint and acrylic on cotton rag on wood, 102 x 70 cm, 1/2.

(right)
Mark Dustin, Stock RC-1900 (detail), 2023, screenprint on glass, 60 x 42 cm.

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