

C. T. Chew

C. T. CHEW: COMPUTER DESIGNED SILKSCREEN PRINTS

BEHIND THE SCENES

My use of computers as artistic tools goes back to 1980 when I was invited to "try out" a Ramtek computer with IBIS illustration software. What a thrill! Immediately the images I composed on the computer began to invade my work. Now in 1986 I am devoting myself exclusively to artwork based on my many computer designs.

The equipment I use now is a Florida Computer Graphic's Beacon with IBIS software. This is a mini computer, one step up from micro computers like Apple and IBM PC. Many people imagine I do all the work by pushing keys, but in reality I still use a pen which draws on a digitizing tablet. So, what are the advantages to using a computer if it's all drawn anyway? My favorite is, I don't have to wait for the paint to dry! I love how the image looks. It is so bright, and the pure color fields lay right up next to each other. Composing on the computer is fast too. I never have to erase, but can just add color over, or flood areas with new color. Finally, a finished image can be reviewed with an infinite variety of color combinations. The resulting subtle or not so subtle changes are a constant fascination to me and help greatly in the refinement of an image.

In 1984 I first used a Tektronix inkjet printer to reproduce the images on the computer screen. This printer uses four inks, black, magenta, yellow, and blue sprayed through micro nozzles. These small prints are quite exquisite, but unfortunately the inks are not lightfast. As a result I have not been able to sell them to any except the very adventurous.

Early last year I realized how I could use this inkjet printer to separate out and print each color of one of my pieces. This would allow me to photographically enlarge them and then reprint them in a more traditional and stable form.

To produce one of these silkscreen prints each color separation is first photographed. The resulting negatives are used to

make much larger positives on clear film. These positives and ultra violet light are used to expose an emulsion adhered to the screen. Areas where the light doesn't hit the emulsion (blocked by the positive) "wash out" and will allow ink to pass through them. Finally each ink is mixed to match color samples taken from the inkjet prints or computer screen.

The first of these new prints, "Stamp World Life Cycle", was completed in December 1985. I am planning to finish a suite of six different prints by this summer.

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*Chew received a B.S. in Zoology from the University of Washington in 1969 and an M.F.A. in Video Art (U. of Washington) in 1978.*