

Randy Garber

I grew up watching my father engrave impossibly small images and letters into precious metals. Bent over his engraving block, his intent focused through an eye loop, he looked as if he was praying. I held a special kind of reverence for those tiny lines and the tools he used to make them. I watched silently, yearning to have what seemed like an ecstatic experience of transforming blank metal into something else. I also grew up with significant hearing loss. In fourth grade in the public schools, I was taken out of art classes and sent to lipreading class.

Some thirty years after my first clear memory of my father working, I came to understand how I could express the complexity of these formative experiences. I became an artist and learned to make prints. I fell in love with intaglio printmaking. It is a process that gives me the chance to make those lines in metal that I once coveted, and to translate the experience and causes of hearing loss into a visual medium.

The presumed cause of my partial deafness was fevers that burned and destroyed nerve cells. Consequently, heard information is frequently distorted and requires considerable repetition to be understood. To express this in my printmaking, I cut, carve, and gouge my intaglio plates with acid and by hand to burn and maim the metal. Once inking and printing onto paper begins, I run the plates through the press repeatedly, to produce layer upon layer of information—alone each is incomplete; together they form a whole. I try to connect viewers to a world in which they must strain and come close to decipher and understand meaning.

Silence Takes Its Measure conveys repetition and replay of information, heightened self-consciousness, echoes and vibrations,



and microscopic attention to visual clues. Its symbols and metaphors are also intended to invite contemplation about women's roles as communicators in our society. As in most of my work, I use images that relate to the human body. The body suggests, quite literally, its own language of gesture and sign; and metaphorically, the actual and imagined worlds in which it exists. I repeat and alter the palette as well as the patterns to evoke connections between the physical and the psychological.

I use a variety of techniques in this four plate intaglio etching to capture the distortions and reinterpretation of meaning that inevitably take place every time information is conveyed. These techniques include photocopy transfer, soft ground, hard ground, spit bite, aquatint, and relief roll.

Silence Takes Its Measure

11" x 10"

Rives BFK

Four plate intaglio: stencil, photocopy transfer with ink-shellac lift, spit bite aquatint, line etch, and aquatint

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