

Debra Luccio Introductory Talk
Australian Consulate General, New York City
Opening Night Reception: March 18, 2010
Stephen Fredericks
President of the New York Society of Etchers

When Debra Luccio first approached me with the idea of providing a brief talk tonight I immediately accepted her invitation. Nothing, it struck me, could be timelier in terms of current events in the print world, or more relevant to recent professional activities of my own.

I am an American artist-printmaker, and great enthusiast.

The record of monotype print making prior to the 20th century is comparatively small. However the technology to produce monotypes has existed for a very long time. Some of history's most talented artists including William Blake, Degas, Pissarro, Mary Cassatt, William Merritt Chase, and Whistler all worked in the medium in one form or another with considerable pictorial success.

In fact, many artists we recognize today as the best of their respective generations were among the few who practiced and mastered monotype in their day. Personally, if she keeps it up, I think, Debra Luccio will be recognized as one of these artists.

Several years ago a number of my peers began working seriously in monotype. Bruce Waldman, a co-director at the New York Society of Etchers, was not only making monotypes but starting to teach it to his students. Another colleague, Andy Hoogenboom then took up the art. And quickly it seemed, the medium spread throughout area workshops, college art programs and to private studios.

I became intrigued and began to wonder what an exhibition of monotypes and etchings might look like side by side. I asked my constituents for permission to develop this idea into a show. The result was our landmark Etchings and Monotype Exhibition at the National Arts Club in November 2009. That same show, now on exhibit in Haifa, Israel, coincidentally includes the work of two international guest artists, Debra Luccio and her husband Marco.

Now, about Debra's work.

Debra's art work is beautiful, at times provocative and always pleasing to the eye. It is also highly autographic in nature but in ways far less obvious.

When we first encounter Debra's large prints we are immediately silenced by their commanding figures. Her dancers strike breathless poses and contort themselves in dramatic repose. Debra's monotypes make us feel good about ourselves and love what she does. There is an intensity, drama and passion just below the surface in Debra's prints that speak directly to the subconscious. The mind's eye sees this immediately. They nudge us into our own dreamscape where we, too, are unwittingly carried away. Tension, conflict, desperation and mortality are all present in her work. But, it is with narrative and technical mastery that Debra also succeeds in distracting us from inquiry, and thus shields herself in a cloak of privacy.

That is only a part of the story. Her dancers, precision performers themselves, are but metaphors of the struggle for perfection and perhaps even survival. The subtle passion with which the artist renders her subject belies a deep identification with the pressures they are under. The dense layers of color and texture, the physical scale of her artworks, and the complexity of her compositions reveal an intricate and nimble personality, as well.

So, before you leave tonight I encourage you to take a closer look at your favorite images and ask yourself. What it is about them that really grabs you. And what does that print tell you about Debra.

The artist's signature works are, of course, her ballerina's. Take *Hermia* (2010) and *Hippolyta's Dance before the Dream 3* (2010). In both, she portrays the gravity defying gracefulness of the modern ballet dancer, but in two strikingly different scales and formats. In both she employs a difficult compositional device which she had mastered, pairing the triangulated form of her subjects with the rectangle and square.



Hermia (2010)



Hippolyta's Dance before the Dream 3 (2010)

In *Four Dancers* (2008) and *Spin 2* (2008), Debra sets up a high level of physical tension between her subjects and amplifies it with the powerfully contrasting lights and darks of her palette.



Four Dancers (2008)



Spin 2 (2008)

In *Reach* (2008), Debra has created a complex linear composition that succeeds in making a solid, but enigmatic statement. In *Luke* (2007), we see an image in which the artist's hand has touched every aspect of the finished work of art. Here Debra has deftly trimmed the print by hand and created a unique dialogue between the subject, space, and the paper she has given him to roam.



Reach (2008)



Luke (2007)

Lastly, do not overlook *Dancer in Blue 2* (2009), and *New York Dancer 2* (2007).

These unique monotypes, technically referred to as cognates, reveal a host of technical insights to the monotype process itself, as well as a few more rare clues to the artist's way.

And with that, I give you now to Debra Luccio.



Dancer in Blue 2 (2009)



New York Dancer 2 (2007)