

NEW EDITIONS

Alyson Shotz

By Sarah Address

Sequent (2013)

Portfolio of five color aquatints with collagraph embossing. Images 11 1/2 x 11 3/4 inches, sheets 13 3/4 x 13 3/4 inches. Edition of 20. Printed and published by Crown Point Press, San Francisco. \$6500.

Sequent II (2013)

Series of four color aquatints with collagraph embossing. Images 25 3/4 x 25 3/4 inches, sheets 30 1/4 x 29 3/4 inches. Edition of 10. Printed and published by Crown Point Press, San Francisco. \$3500 each.

Topographic Iteration (2013)

Pigment print on Japanese Masa paper, crumpled by hand, 40 x 84 x 21 inches. Variable edition of 6. Published by Carolina Nitsch, New York. \$12,000.

Sledgehammer/Glass/Light (2012)

Six archival pigment prints on self-adhesive polypropylene film (each suite includes an archival set and an installation set). 40 x 30 inches each. Editions of 10. Published by Graphicstudio, Tampa, FL. \$6000.



Alyson Shotz, one of four from the *Sequent II* series (2013).

In her widely exhibited sculptural and photographic work, Alyson Shotz employs mathematics as source material and metaphor. She is particularly fascinated with topology—the study of shape and the properties that remain constant while enduring deformation—a concern that can be seen as particularly relevant to print processes (drawing to template to ink layer to paper) as it is to topology. At the November print fair in New York, three new print projects with three different publishers were on view in different booths. They did not resemble each

other in any obvious way—two sets of delicate geometric aquatints at Crown Point Press, a vast silvery-gray crumpled paper relief at Carolina Nitsch, and self-adhesive photographs of shattered glass at Graphicstudio—though all play with light and space, sequential steps and repeated transfers.

For the two aquatint portfolios with Crown Point, *Sequent* and *Sequent II* (2013), Shotz began by folding paper and running it through the press, then elaborated the image by inking the folded sheets. The ink would offset, registering the differences in pressure caused by

the sheets' folded layers. The next step was to fold freshly printed aquatints and send them through the press, then to place those sheets on a background plate inked in a different color; the folding made some parts of the paper thicker, which meant greater pressure was put on those areas in the press, and a kind of topological map of the object emerged. These experimental prints became prototypes for the final aquatint plates that reproduced the forms and shades on a single surface. Over the course of the five prints, the folded form becomes more complex while retaining

Alyson Shotz: *New Editions*

Page 2



Alyson Shotz, *Topographic Iteration* (2013),

its luminosity. As the folds grow more intricate, the image hints at the possibility of emerging, origami-like, into representation—a cup, a crane—but no recognizable image takes shape. The forms float like a wireframe animation, spinning in space so that all angles are seen. (The original folded papers were used to emboss the finished prints, leaving a ghostly impression of the image's backstory.)

The tidy, restrained act of folding is one way to investigate the topological properties of paper; the haphazard act of crumpling is another. Though similar in principle, the metaphorical implications are quite different. *Topographic Iteration* (2013) began with six images of crumpled paper, the universal symbol of creative frustration (this image persists, even though most discarded ideas these days are simply slid into that little desktop icon of a wire basket). The “iteration” of the title suggests repeated attempts—the growing mountain of crumpled paper in the bin, perhaps—but also of the staged and layered process of making. To begin, Shotz crumpled a seven-foot-long sheet of paper, photographed it to capture the way light reflected off its chaotically faceted surface, and printed the image on a new sheet the same size as the first. She then crumpled these pigment prints by hand, so

that real peaks and valleys interrupt and augment printed peaks and valleys with dizzying complexity. The result is monumental, physically impressive and moving. While emphasizing the specific tactile presence of paper, these also suggest a landscape of the mind.

In another recent print project, *Sledgehammer/Glass/Light* (2012), the disrupted materiality is not that of paper, so endlessly forgiving, but of glass. Struck by the beauty of a growing pile of shattered windshields at a body shop near her studio, Shotz began collecting them. At Graphicstudio in Tampa, Florida, she started a new collection, harvested locally. (Though already smashed when acquired, some required further damage, which was accomplished in the parking lot behind the shop. Shotz photographed them in a studio: “The light shot through the glass cracks like a fluid.”¹ The evident violence and recklessness embedded in the windshields is counterbalanced and enhanced by the painstaking care of their representation, careful lighting and carefully attuned space. “Our photographic setup was almost an autopsy, a sort of scientific study of the types of cracks in the various shattered windshields.” The patterns of breakage and the attendant redirection of light are frozen by the camera’s lens and recast in print as flat gray planes. As in the other

two print projects, we are looking at radical deformations that do not change the material in question, but instead reveal its more essential properties: the resilience and flexibility of paper; the beautiful fractiousness of glass. Folded, crumpled or shattered, these three sets of work articulate both change and continuity. ■

1. This quote and the next are from email correspondence with the author.