

Woodcuts by Ann Conner  
Exhibited at Wilma H. Daniels Gallery

Brentwood 1-6, 2010

Woodcut

48.75 x 36.75 inches each

1. Brentwood 1
2. Brentwood 2
3. Brentwood 3
4. Brentwood 4
5. Brentwood 5
6. Brentwood 6

Park 1-8, 2002

Woodcut

50 x 38 inches each

7. Park 1
8. Park 2
9. Park 3
10. Park 4
11. Park 5
12. Park 6
13. Park 7
14. Park 8

Fleetwood 1-7, 2002

Woodcut

49.5 x 37 inches and 48.25 x 36.5

15. Fleetwood 1
16. Fleetwood 2
17. Fleetwood 3
18. Fleetwood 4
19. Fleetwood 5
20. Fleetwood 6
21. Fleetwood 7

# ANN CONNER WOODCUTS



## AGAINST THE GRAIN

Wilma H. Daniels Gallery  
Cape Fear Community College  
July X - X, 2013

## ANN CONNER WOODBLOCK PRINTS, Collaboration Katherine Brimberry

As Master Printer of Flatbed Press, I have had the pleasure of working with Ann Conner on four of her major projects which include the Madrone Suite in 1996, Park Suite in 2000, Westwood in 2004 and most recently the Brentwood Suite in 2010. I was drawn to her work in the mid-nineties because her woodcuts gave attention to the printed wood grain as well as carved curious contours of puzzle pieces in that same grain. These unusual woodcuts made me aware of the subtle relationship of the form to the whole. Ann's woodcuts held my attention with their content about placement, teetering balance and relationship of line, shape and ground.

I learned that Ann was influenced by a family collection of Asian prints, ceramics and textiles as a child. The intricate patterns that stimulated her imagination are not found in her woodcuts, but the sensibility of these Asian works are retained in the woodcuts with large grounds of natural wood grain and incised invented patterns. These woodcuts echo the similar sumptuous surfaces and delicate linear forms in Asian textiles and ceramic decoration.



Ann often designs her woodcuts using drawings that synthesize simple traced objects or automatic drawing methods. In the Madrone Suite, she refers to the edges of puzzle pieces. Using these designs she can transform the ordinary surface of plywood with organized or invented patterns. Working with serial woodcuts in this manner sets her work into context of post-minimalism.

The creative process for Ann is often divided into two parts: the development of her woodblocks through drawing and carving

and the production of the prints through proofing and editioning. Designing and carving the blocks is an individual endeavor. Ann works for months to develop and carve the images into the plywood blocks at her studio. She then works out the designs and patterns at full scale on paper and transfers them onto the wood. Using a hand-held Japanese carving tool she incises the lines or shapes that she intends to print as the white of the paper. After completion, Ann brings her large-scale blocks to Flatbed where Ann and our staff begin the proofing process on our large scale Takach press. Her approach to the creative process of proofing involves her, myself and our assistants in constant color proofing to search for the correct



combination of color and block and the suite as a whole. Decisions have been made in advance about possible papers and ink colors, but it is only when we start the proofing that Ann can make a final decision.



In 2009, Ann brought three large woodblocks to Flatbed which had been carved on both sides. These six carved relief surfaces were used to create the suite of prints now titled the Brentwood Suite. The large carved shapes of these blocks consisted of ovals, diamonds, circles and squares. They were arranged into structured patterns and configurations that have a mathematical logic in their placement. It wasn't until Ann identified the shapes as crafting pattern templates that I could identify

them in the everyday world. Her ability to see and use these “ready-made” shapes in a unique way was a transformative. She made the ordinary ready-made pattern heroic. The transformative concept was extended to her color choices as well. The Brentwood Suite was named after the middle to upper class suburban neighborhood of Los Angeles which is similar to many newly constructed city neighborhoods with contemporary strip malls, wide boulevards, familiar chain restaurants and closely cropped and manicured landscaping. The colors found in the architectural and landscape colors encountered there or in any similar neighborhood were inspirations for Ann's choice of colors. She isolated and printed the “fast-food” yellow, the ubiquitous swimming pool blue, coffee shop green and so on. I found myself finding her colors all around me in neighborhoods of Austin. Ann insisted that the ink we used in the prints be pure



and not mixed with white or other colors to change the intensity of the hues that are in the ready-made PMS oil-based inks. As we proofed, we found that some blocks' patterns seemed to call for lighter colors and others for darker ones. For example, Brentwood 5, which has a diamond configuration of scalloped diamond shapes was printed with an aqua blue that suggests pools, skies, and reflections. Ann's ultimate goal during the proofing was to achieve a group of prints that work separately and hold together as a whole. We were pushed to proof the blocks in many of the colors and arrange them in a salon configuration to determine how they worked together. There were 36 possible color combinations for Brentwood and the proofing took five days to finalize colors for each of the prints. I compare the visual result to what you might hear in a woodwind ensemble: six woodwind instruments with their own tenor creating their own distinct and complete voice that can be experienced in collaboration with each other creating a new concordant, harmonious voice.

*Katherine Brimberry*  
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