



Bethany Irons' Interview with Jennifer Printz
for the Pleat Gallery January 2019 Exhibition *Between Here and
Everywhere Else*.

1. Please describe your work both visually and conceptually.

My work is an interplay of drawing, photography, and paper surface. I intentionally select paper surfaces, some of which are antique and others new or handmade, for how they interact with the media in which I am working. The older paper used for the work shown at Pleat, is smooth and feels luxurious under my pencil, but is not very absorbent causing inkjet to pool and create subtle patterns on its surface giving photographs a texture similar to the craquelure of an old painting.

Once printed, I layer drawing on top of the inkjets of photographs I have taken. Controlled passages of graphite, either rendered with the most delicate of hand or densely pushed into the paper to create a dark void, seamlessly merge with a photographic backdrop of the sky to create new illusions of space and form. A single line across a vibrant rose sky suggests the edge of a three-dimensional space. Flat planes of mirror-like darkness reinforce the flatness of the picture plane from which a thunderhead cloud dramatically springs forth.

Conceptually my work engages with both physics and contemplative practices and how these disciplines try to understand and explain the universe in which we live. In many ways, my work also focuses on observation as it combines the mechanized viewing process of photography with the slower more nuanced seeing of hand drawing. When combined they remind of us how as observers we affect what we see, even if it is only bringing our assumptions to the act of observing. Ultimately my intention for the work is to create a beautiful contemplative moment, a pause for the viewer with the gentle question, is it so?

2. What motivates you in terms of your art practice?

My entire life I have been a maker. I return to the studio again and again because of a love of the act of making. That is what guides my practice – love of making, of materials, and the loving focus of drawing. This extends through to my goal of making generous art that gives the viewer a hushed, dare I say loving, moment of beauty.

More and more I feel as if the barriers between my art practice and the rest of my life have been eroding away and what I am trying to do outside of the studio is similar to what I am doing within. My practice has become more meditative and I work hard to act from my inner knowing with my creative pursuits and daily activities. Agnes Martin's directions to artist and others conveyed in her writing *Beauty is the Mystery of Life* reflects on this. *"Take advantage of the awareness of perfection in your mind. See perfection in everything around you. See if you can discover your true feelings when listening to music. Make happiness your goal. The way to discover the truth about this life is to discover yourself. Say to yourself: 'What do I like and what do I want.' Find out exactly what you want in life. Ask your mind for inspiration about everything."*

3. Who are your influences? What role do they play in your work?

My earliest influence was my extended family, a clan of Southern mountain women who were makers first out of necessity and later from a desire to create beauty in their lives and homes. At an early age my great aunts and grandmother taught me to sew, cook, to be proud of the tangible things I made my own hands. Like the thousands of tiny stitches in the quilts they hand pieced, my work gravitates towards laborious processes that impart an intrinsic energy of the creator into the finished product.

Along with this energy, elegance and a refined simplicity are also something I strive towards in my work. Many of the artists I am most inspired by push their work towards

minimalism and in doing so delve into spiritual concepts and concerns. The drawings of Agnes Martin, the lyrical landscapes of Yves Tanguy, and the merging of art and the meditative experience in the work of Mark Rothko are a few that immediately come to mind. I am also influenced by the work of Hilma af Klint and Emma Kunz who were early pioneers in abstraction which they blended with their own mystical practices.

4. How has social media impacted your studio practice?

I have thought a lot about this question and at this moment I do not think social media has affected my studio practice or my work directly. I try to put my phone away while in the studio something that is , of course, much easier said than done.

Social media, however, has given me a greater community and a platform for exchange that is amazing. I love seeing the creations of artists around the world and exhibition highlights from museums and galleries I adore, but due to geography can't easily visit. I appreciate all of those who take the time to see my work and read my posts. So surely my work has grown stronger in a more indirect way from being part of this dialogue.