

PROOF

STACY LYNN WADDELL | NEW EDITION 2026



Stacy Lynn Waddell's residency and collaboration with Island Press and its community of students resulted in something totally new for her practice. Best known for meticulously researched, lovingly rendered historic references that are gilt by hand, the shiny surfaces of Waddell's works on paper usually belie complicated sub-narratives. In the five days of making that created *STANDING BACK VIEW NUDE SELF WITH OPEN HANDS ON BUTTOCKS* (2026), Waddell allowed the uniquely collaborative nature of printmaking to lead her, intentionally arriving without a planned project or determined materials. As the Prensky Visiting Artist in fall 2024, she was central to its making, but wanted to revel in the processes and possibilities of print, first and foremost. She asked a fresh question of her practice: "if I'm always appropriating, why not myself?"

The piece began with studio portraits of her nude body, posed in a stance that leans into the racialized histories and observational dynamics of image-making's diagnostic traditions, but with contemporary aplomb. Fragmenting her life-sized form through the tracing and production of individual plates, the print became what Waddell described as a "Frankenstein image of myself," where she is monster, doctor, inventor, subject, all in one.

The result is a powerful paper monument to the self, or to construction and collaboration. Each element of the artist's body, segmented and amalgamated, carries a different texture. Waddell's hair is patterned like waves and calligraphy, as the apex of her bodily edifice. Each leg is a column of grisaille, one veined and the other splotched with cellular evocations, while her arms thrum with lines and pooling forms, set off with her rings. Her feet evoke painterly gesture and pockmarked, composite materials like tabby

Above: *STANDING BACK VIEW NUDE SELF WITH OPEN HANDS ON BUTTOCKS*, 2026. Collagraph, collage, and embossment on Kizuki Hosho and Mulberry, on Hannemuhle Bright White paper. 77 x 46 inches. Edition 10.



(an aggregate of burned oyster shells and lime) that built homes and communities in the Carolinas for Afro-descendant families. In the Island Press studio, a variety of acrylic mediums were rendered on chipboard, then printed intaglio onto Eastern papers before their collaged assembly—more affective than descriptive of what a body feels like. Waddell's figure is stark, but not alone—a subtle halo of embossing surrounds her body, and her feet are posed above a field of embossed forms that echo the soft shape of her head. It is a relationship of subtle domination, or of standing on the shoulders of those that came before us—in this case, perhaps previous versions of how the artist views herself.



(details) *STANDING BACK VIEW NUDE SELF WITH OPEN HANDS ON BUTTOCKS*, 2026.

Waddell's self-portrait and its emphasis on her backside, also reaches back to her 2015 work *Goldenhot Butterfly Queen* (first seen by this author in Waddell's studio that year, and now in the collection of the Bristol Museum). In that tribute to Sarah Baartman—an African (Khoikhoi) woman taken away to Europe and exploitatively exhibited in London and Paris during the 1800s as the “Hottentot Venus”—gold and butterflies marked an homage to Baartman's besieged body. In *STANDING BACK VIEW NUDE SELF WITH OPEN HANDS ON BUTTOCKS*, Waddell is gray and seemingly weathered, like most monuments. She is turned away, perhaps in a quest for calm amidst the disruptive cacophonies of the digital age, or in defiance. Waddell reflects on her body—how she inhabits it, how it is aging—and presents this familiar subject to her, as a new monument for us.

Essay by Carmen Hermo, Lorraine and Alan Bressler Curator of Contemporary Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Stacy Lynn Waddell is a mixed media artist known for her meticulously researched and rendered works that consider authorship, visibility, and power structures in art historical narratives. Her works are often gilt by hand, built by layers of gold on canvas forming monochromatic bas reliefs. Waddell's exhibitions include The Studio Museum in Harlem, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the Weatherspoon Art Museum, Nasher Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum and Baltimore Museum of Art among many other venues. She is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (2010) and an Artist-in Residence award at Joan Mitchell Center, New Orleans, LA (2017), an Artist-in-Residence award at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, MA (2022-23), and a fellowship at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation, Umbria Italy (2022). In 2025, she was named an inaugural Artist-in-Residence at the Suzanne Fitzallen Jackson Foundation, Savannah, GA. She lives and works in North Carolina.

Island Press is a research-based printmaking workshop and publisher committed to education and innovation in contemporary print editions and artist projects. Visiting artists work side by side with the master printer and students in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis. The result is high-quality print editions of technical complexity created in a unique setting where artists and students share skill sets and ideas. Island Press was founded in 1978 and has collaborated with dozens of exceptional artists over the past 4 decades.

DIRECTOR Lisa Bulawsky | **MASTER PRINTER** Tom Reed

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