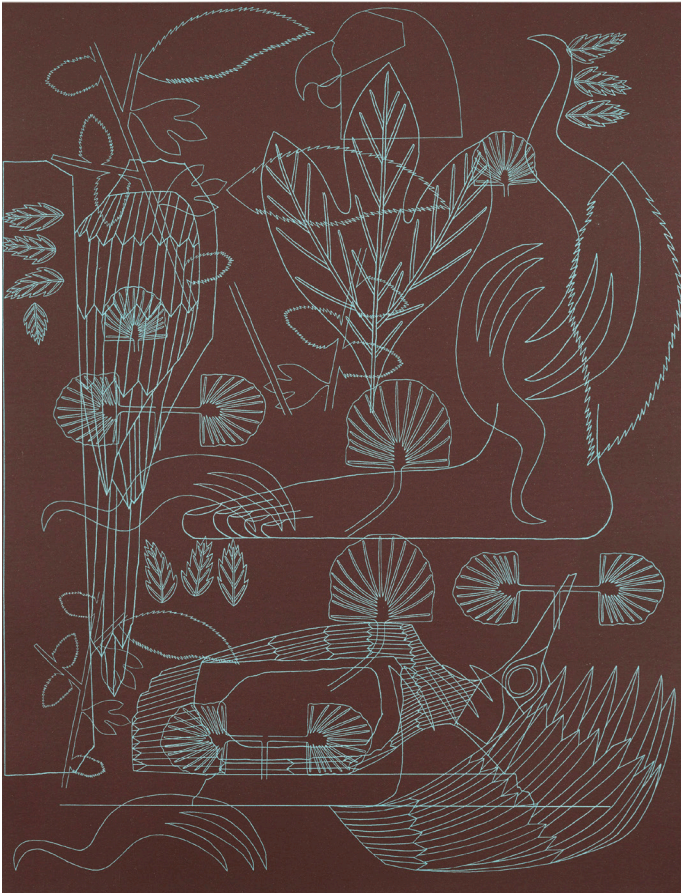


PROOF

SHAUN O'DELL | ISLAND PRESS NEW EDITIONS 2024



Above: *Parataxonomoonelegy*, relief, 23 x 17.5 inches; *Urpflanze Gist*, etching, relief, silkscreen, and chine collé, 23 x 17.5 inches.

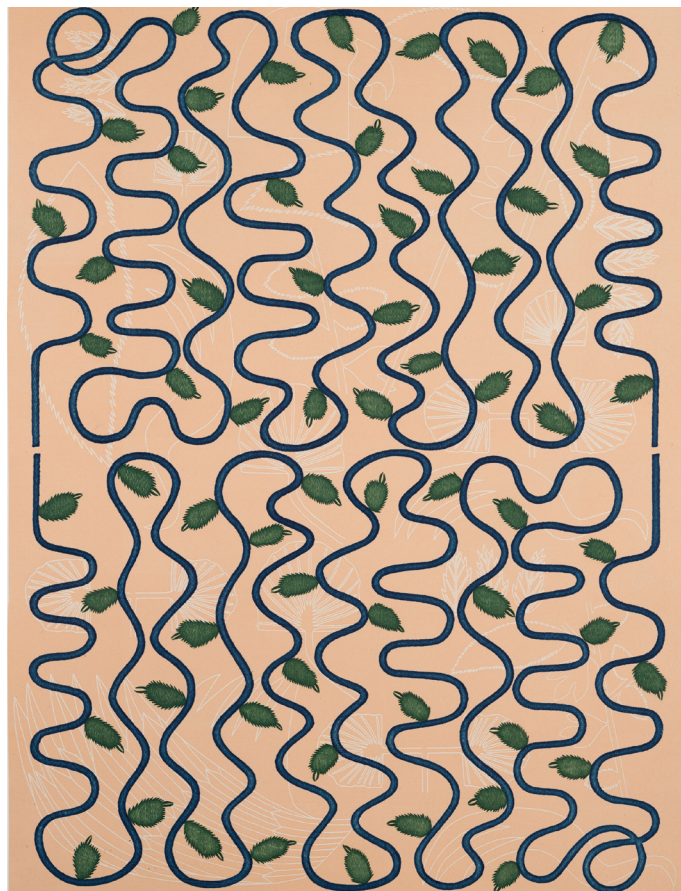
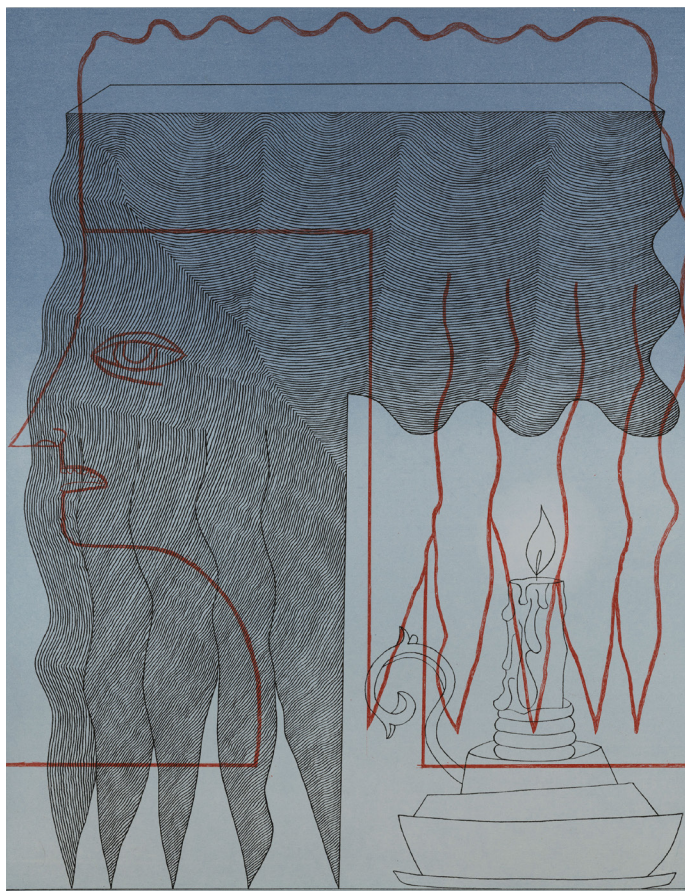
For decades, artist Shaun O'Dell has created drawings, videos, music, and prints that explore the intertwining realities of human and natural orders, foregrounding the destructive legacies of manifest destiny. Working within a hieroglyphic lexicon of abstract and figurative marks, O'Dell investigates the colonial histories of his ancestors to reveal the imperial roots of modern-day ecological change. In his second collaboration with Island Press, titled ***Cartophantasms from the Tongues Above***, O'Dell forensically catalogs the relics of a pre-colonial North America, mining the lost narratives that haunt these trodden lands.

The project's investigative iconography highlights flora and fauna indigenous to the Cumberland Plateau region, namely the Carolina parakeet and cocklebur plant in *Parataxonomoonelegy* and *Cocklebur Resonance*. The ghostly profile of a European colonizer in a coonskin hat is illuminated by a burning wick in *Cold Candle*. Stray outlines of faces and limbs are charted on a green map in *Urpflanze Gist*, while a floating hand presents the cryptic text: "E. I GOT HEAR RICHLED TOOK THE PARAKEET."

The project references Christopher Gist, a surveyor who was hired by land speculators under The Ohio Company in 1750 to map out areas of present-day Kentucky. Cartography has always been a lethal tool available to those commodifying indigenous land, allowing settlers to advertise a region as 'uninhabited' and ripe for 'development.' O'Dell's formal processes – precise linework and flat, diagrammatic forms – cleverly mimic mapmaking to underscore this significance. These lands, which were already populated by Native Americans, would be seized and sold to other European settlers under the guise of westward expansion. Go West, so say the Tongues Above. Go West.

Together, the prints illustrate a more specific anecdote: the double-edged story of Gist's pet parakeet from his expedition journal, *Tour Through Ohio and Kentucky* in 1751. In certain passages, Gist lists resources he perceives as profitable:





Above: *Cold Candle*, etching and aquatint, 23 x 17.5 inches; *Cocklebur Resonance*, relief and etching, 23 x 17.5 inches.

rye, cherries, chestnuts, turkey, bear, buffalo, coal. In others, he boasts crudely of his wasteful negligence: “killed two bear. ate tongues...killed a bison. took tongue.” Yet in the same text Gist tenderly mourns the death of his parakeet. Perceived as crop-eating pests, Carolina parakeets were hunted en masse by colonial farmers. Collectivist by nature, the birds would flock and grieve their fallen counterparts, making the lingering mourners easy targets for the farmers’ next shot. As a result, the Carolina parakeet, the only parakeet indigenous to North America, would be totally extinct by the 1920s, 170 years after Gist’s survey.

The Carolina parakeet is one of many specters that haunt North America. The twisted contradictions of its fate encapsulate a certain blindness once described by environmentalist Wendell Berry: “Seldom have [colonizers] looked beyond the enclosure of [their] preconception...Blind to where they were, it was inevitable that they should become the destroyers of what was there.” Yet, where there is an ailing blindness, there must exist a healing sight. In memoriam to all that was destroyed – people, lands, animals, ecologies – Shaun O’Dell offers *Cartophantasms from the Tongues Above* for what lingers in the wake: an ode to phantoms, a beacon of vision renewed.

by **Grace Earick**, writer and cultural worker based in Houston, TX

ABOUT THE ARTIST:

Shaun O’Dell received a BA from the New College of California, San Francisco, in 2002 and an MFA from Stanford University in 2004. His work has been exhibited widely in the US and internationally. He has won numerous awards and honors including the Tournesol Award (2009, Headlands Center for the Arts) and a Diebenkorn Teaching Fellowship (2006, SF Art Institute). His work is included in a number of permanent collections, including the Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY), the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York, NY), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (San Francisco, CA), and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Houston, TX). O’Dell lives and works in San Francisco, CA. He is represented by Inman Gallery, Houston, TX and Halsey McKay Gallery, NY.

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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