

PROOF

PAULA WILSON | NEW EDITIONS FALL 2016



Above: *In the Desert: Mooning*, collagraph on muslin from two plates, handprinted collage on muslin and inkjet collage on silk, mounted on canvas and wood, 69 ½ x 43 ¾ in, Edition 10, published 2016.

dreamlike suspension of disbelief. Printed muslin becomes wood beneath tapestry, with tassels cheekily parted and corners peek-a-booped. But no matter how convincing the imitation may be, Wilson reminds us that this is not a rug. In the monoprint collage *Tassel Rug*, the tapestry is composed of nothing but tassels—the symbol becomes the substance. *Sediment* pieces together a kind of aerial map from printed fragments—stained glass is born from bright and jagged things.

In Paula Wilson's work, everything is at play. Her subjects are mythic, reframed archetypes—they contain multitudes. Her project with Island Press comprises a series of collagraphs titled *In the Desert: Mooning* plus eleven unique works, many of them collaged from remnants of the edition proofs. In them, Wilson creates a parable in patternwork and glyphs, one which conflates ancient and 21st-century motifs. She works against convention and across media—printmaking, collage, video, installation—and is an incessant layerer. Her work resists the tidiness of categorization and its aloofness. Wilson's layering questions the very frame of representation: take her work seriously, but don't fence her in.

The Island Press edition explores gender, race, and sexuality, using the human backside as symbol and canvas. This gender-neutral form is a perennial trope in Wilson's work. She humorously inverts the body, top to bottom, back to front. Asses become faces, and the subject of the gaze perpetrates the gaze. What looks back at us? Which us is us?

It's fitting that this edition from Island Press is one of collagraphs. A hybrid process, collagraphy offers the layering possibilities of both intaglio and woodcutting, with the ability to collage plates together. Working with just two giant plates, Wilson creates an array of color, by inking in relief and a la poupee (where multiple colors of ink are wiped simultaneously instead of rolled). The layering process mimics the represented textures—wooden floorboards (which Wilson freehanded) or the thorny chaparral.

Inspired by actual throw rugs Wilson made, the collagraphs are faux rugs, suffused with a

Wilson is not so much the creator of these works but their omniscient narrator. These are images that speak. Frank, commanding, and sometimes, guffawing. In these prints, Wilson creates an origin myth, but the gods are made in our image. The Garden of Eden is the Luncheon on the Grass, which is a picnic in the sand. Anachronistic beach umbrellas shade the human figures from the blaze of the sun. Are the cacti prickly at the dawn of time? Even they erupt in blossom. Wilson offers us a rich tapestry. A celebration of liberation, of wildness. A questioning and inversion. Filled with idlers and idols, birds and booties. All of it, laying at your feet.

by Stephanie Ellis Schlaifer



Above: *In the Desert: Sediment*, 57 x 45 in., monprint collage with collagraph on muslin, 2016.



Above: *In the Desert: Mooning with Blue Flowers*, 48 x 45 in., monprint collage with collagraph on muslin, 2016.

ABOUT PAULA WILSON:

Artist Paula Wilson's work has been featured in group and solo exhibitions in the United States and Europe, including the Studio Museum in Harlem, Sikkema Jenkins & Co., Bellwether Gallery, Fredric Snitzer Gallery, The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Johan Berggren Gallery in Sweden, and Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw. She is a recipient of numerous grants and awards including a Joan Mitchell Artist Grant, Art Production Fund's P3Studio Artist-in-Residency at the Cosmopolitan Hotel in Las Vegas, and the Happy and Bob Doran Artist-in-Residence Fellowship at Yale University Art Gallery.

Wilson earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Washington University in 1998 and a Master of Fine Arts from Columbia University in 2005. She lives and works in Carrizozo, New Mexico.

IslandPress

CONTEMPORARY PRINT EDITIONS AND ARTIST PROJECTS

MORE INFORMATION islandpress.wustl.edu | islandpress@wustl.edu | 314.935.8051

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 is project-driven and collaborative, tapping into the place where the artist's creative research intersects with the all of the

possibilities of the print studio. Recent artist projects include editions with Radcliffe Bailey, Chakaia Booker, Squeak Carnwath, Willie Cole, Henrik Drescher, Chris Duncan, Tom Friedman, Ann Hamilton, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Nina Katchadourian, Shaun O'Dell, Lisa Sanditz, and James Siena.

Island Press was founded in 1978. Past visiting artists include Hung Liu, Jaune Quick-To-See-Smith, Joyce Scott, Juan Sanchez, Nick Cave, and many other great artists.

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