

ARTIST STATEMENT

James B. Thompson: Rats of the British Aristocracy

This series of mixed-media intaglio prints, *Rats of the British Aristocracy* came about as a result of some work I had previously engaged in creating on a larger, diverse series of experimental prints regarding art and nostalgia in the age of technology. This conceit allowed me the latitude to explore the dichotomy of living and working as an artist in our 21st century global culture in an established medium more recognized for its traditional techniques than its celebration of new, experimental techniques and processes. I used a contemporary high-speed industrial drill as a tool to incise the printmaking plates, printed each plate just once for this series to produce unique original prints (rather than editioning the plates as is customarily done to create multiple images), and subsequently painted over the individual prints to create a series of mixed-media intaglio works. I was experimenting with the notion of creating a series but I wanted each work to be unique in an age in which exactly repeatable images can be rendered in multiples at the touch of a button on our desktops. I was also utilizing new technological tools not designed for printmaking purposes to work in a traditionally established medium. I then employed a combination of traditional processes to develop these images.

I had long been interested in the exploration of dichotomies so the notion of combining new and old processes to create a series of mixed-media works intrigued me. I also had an opportunity recently to live in London, England for several months and the idea that the British have turned their history into a heritage industry amused and intrigued me as a visual artist exploring art and nostalgia our shared visual culture. For this reason, the juxtaposition of the experimental prints and the images of the Norway Brown Rat (creatures not often mentioned as a significant part of the heritage of British culture, though they had a tremendous impact on the overall history of Britain) – a species that made its way into England where it spread plague, pestilence and wreaked economic and social havoc on the country – seemed appropriate to me. The titles of the individual mixed-media prints also lent some humor to the endeavor.

Francine saw these prints in my studio recently and asked me to exhibit them at her fine art gallery during this, the celebration of her 77th year on our planet, and I could not have been more delighted with the possibility of yet another new layer of meaning. It just seemed so appropriately serious and joyful to introduce these unique pieces to her established audience of supporters and patrons.

James B. Thompson

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