



ARTS

"Ryan Cronk: Migration Wisdom, Chalk Lines, Tracings, and Undertow"

This solo show explores new existential threats in sharp analytical prints and layered chaotic collage

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"Ryan Cronk: Migration Wisdom, Chalk Lines, Tracings, and Undertow"

Co-Lab Projects N Space, 905 Congress

www.co-labprojects.org

Through Oct. 8

Standing in the shadow of *The Wave*, Ryan Cronk explores the new existential threats in sharp analytical prints and layered chaotic collage.

One of the most well-known Japanese works of art, Hokusai's woodcut *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, depicts an intimidating fractal-like wave threatening nearby boats. Having studied under a traditional Japanese papermaker, Cronk comes by such influences naturally. However, he updates the motif by centering the type of awe traditionally reserved for uncontrollable and unpredictable forces of nature on modern industrialization and our thirst for energy.

The N Space exhibition layout is always a bit peculiar, with its long narrow hall (one side all glass) and small separate exhibition rooms, but the curation of the space ties Cronk's works together remarkably well. Down the main hall, the indecipherable chaos of the large colorful collages produces a near-visible question mark over the heads of their viewers. It seems impossible to get to a comfortable viewing distance given the small hallway and the size of the works. Thankfully, these concerns subside when entering a separate exhibition space. The back wall is filled with a grid of exacting monochromatic screen prints on glass. These pieces begin to untangle the chaos of the collages – images of gas wells, oil platforms, and nuclear disaster presented alongside pattern and serene images of nature. Turning away from this grid, the viewer again sees the large collages, this time through a wall of glass and at a distance previously inaccessible. Somehow it's easier to grapple with the abstract works, and connections begin to form between these paper-based works and the glass grid.

The keystone to the exhibition is a diptych of blue ink screenprints on glass titled *Interdependence*. On one side is a simple textile wave pattern printed on glass; on the other, a schematic of a nuclear reactor. The reactor in particular seems incredibly well-ordered, but on approach one sees that the lines are interrupted by the shadow on the wall produced from a steeply angled light shining through the glass. Like Hokusai's *Wave*, order becomes fractured into a frightening and unpredictable threat – however beautiful.

Still, I have to wonder how meaningful those collages would be separated from the exhibition, and if the aesthetic appeal or craft involved is enough without the supporting role of the glass screenprints. Regardless, when viewed together, the exhibition far surpasses the faults of purely decorative forms. The cramped moments of tension that the collages produce balance the removed analytical screenprints to build an overall effect of tempered fear while looking at the precursors of disaster. It's a successful strategy to employ in this contemporary adaptation of an enduring theme.

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