



## Manipulating the Media

**ARTIST'S EYE** Sandra Crisp, *Printmaking Today* Prize Winner at the Print International Exhibition, Wrexham, reveals how a course in digital imaging transformed her work

The themes of serendipity and working gradually over time have evolved from previous printmaking through to my current digital practice, which includes large-format digital prints and animated video projects. The lithographic or etching plate as a matrix is now replaced by the illuminated monitor screen and computer mouse, while my interest in the print as a multiple and a means for reproduction has continued through to contemporary 21st-century mass printing techniques such as inkjet.

Upon graduation in fine art printmaking from Wimbledon School of Art in 1993 I continued developing through etching, using digital printouts on acetate for transfer to photo etching. About ten years ago, themes relating to the contemporary world, such as the role of the media, were becoming increasingly important within my work. I completed a short course in digital imaging providing the shift in approach and process that I had been searching for.

Large-format works such as *5 Ways Filmstrip\_4* contain dense saturated layers of information from different sources such as downloaded and appropriated screen-based visuals, and my own photos and drawings. This is a meeting point of information from public and private sources. The overall grid-like structure is derived from a TV documentary *Five Ways to Save the World* about geo-engineering prototypes designed to save our planet from overheating due to climate change. Small visuals, which depict fine crystal discs called *Global Sunshades* designed to deflect the Sun's rays from space, can be seen repeated many times across the surface of the print when the work is viewed full-scale.

Visuals are continually erased and reworked until the work hovers at the boundary of disintegration and erasure. Information is reduced to a near-abstract mosaic: 'bits of data are set in motion and bits of life are captured.'<sup>[1]</sup> As with my other works in the same series, the image

addresses meaning, or loss of it; traces of figures and objects are just discernible but their exact origin or source has become blurred. A narrative seems to be present, but is totally fragmented.

I made a screen-cast of the TV documentary on YouTube and then imported this into video editing, extracting just a few seconds of footage. Then I exported this clip as a (.flm) Filmstrip file, which is 'a graphic file format that contains multiple images with the same size. More accurately, it contains multiple frames of an animation sequence'.<sup>[2]</sup>

I work with very large, layered, full-scale files. Zooming into the entire onscreen image gives me a good idea how the print will look full-scale. Proofs are created using the poster tool on a basic low-resolution desktop printer in my studio, stitching 16 x A4 papers together, but the detail seen on the monitor is not visible again until it finally reappears via a roll of paper through a high-resolution large-format printer.

Transforming work through different processes is at the heart of my practice. Rather than working within one particular programme, I cut and paste digital files between different image and video manipulation software; experimentation is the key to the balance between concepts and reaching unexpected outcomes. I am influenced by, and very interested in, new media practice, such as the new media platform Rhizome.org, and also how the experience of information bombardment we live with on a daily basis via the Internet, smart phones, etc. can be represented. By comparison with my previous printmaking practice, I find the lack of physicality involved in working onscreen increases the free-flow of ideas; it evokes a process akin to creating mind maps and directly following a stream of consciousness. The psychological connection with onscreen information is heightened due to this lack of tactile materials to work with. The prints become memory surfaces. In the future I would like to explore developments in printmaking such as transforming existing digital drawings into laser-cut etching plates, creating a full circle in my printmaking practice.

### Notes

- 1 Extract from an interview with Jane Boyer: 'Memory Surfaces' 2013
- 2 [www.compuPhase.com](http://www.compuPhase.com)

### Images, left to right

*[5ways] Filmstrip\_4* 2012 Large format inkjet print, 1100 x 1100 mm

*5Ways [To Save the World]* 2010 Large format inkjet print, 1100 x 1100 mm