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BIG INK, big prints, big weekend • St Pete Catalyst

Bill DeYoung

4-5 minutes

Seventeen Florida artists, the majority from the Tampa Bay area, will participate in a one-of-a-kind demonstration of woodblock printing this weekend at the [Morean Arts Center](#).

The custom-built press from the New Hampshire studio BIG INK will be on site to print the works on some big paper – it can handle carved artworks up to eight feet in length, and four feet in width.

Most, but not all, of the selected works are smaller than that. But there are a few that will test the limits of the BIG INK press, which requires at least two people to operate.

Woodblock printing is an ancient art, used for printing on textiles – and in the creation of books – from as far

back as 220 A.D. China. At its most basic, it involves carving an image, a pattern – or words – using a small chisel or other tools. Ink or paint is uniformly and patiently applied, and doesn't cover the carved-out relief areas.

Whatever's carved out, therefore, doesn't transfer when paper, fabric or other media is then carefully applied to the surface. Just the inked areas.



“What’s unique about BIG INK is that the organization fuses the ancient art with the work of contemporary artists,” explains Morean executive director Howayda Affan. “And the experience itself really encourages teamwork. It’s sort of a choreographed experience, where multiple artists get to work together in teams. It’s an immersive, synchronized performance art type of event.”

Affan says BIG INK selected the participating artists.

“They submit small-sized samples of the work they’re trying to produce on a large scale,” she explains. “I’ve seen some artists’ works slightly change from what they were intending in the first place. But the overall essence of the work itself is the same.”

Although a few of the finished blocks have been completed, carving the rest will be part of the weekend experience.

BIG INK is on a 28-city, look-how-cool-this-is American tour. “We selected St. Petersburg because of its vibrant creative community, and the Morean Arts Center because of their 100-plus-year commitment to promoting the arts,” company director Lyell Castonguay said in a prepared statement. “The partnership furthers our mission to inspire greater appreciation for large-scale woodblock printmaking and extend its practice.”

There are prints from the other two cities on display now in the Morean gallery. “Some of them,” says Affan, “are really big.”

The events (11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday) are free.

It’s all part of the Morean’s own overall, education-

based mission. “It’s very important for us to try and engage the community in unique arts experiences,” Affan explains. “So bringing this to St. Pete is very important for us.”

**** Audience members are cautioned that the oil-based relief ink that will be applied to the artist-carved woodblocks does not come out of clothing.**

Participating artists:

Saturday, Sept. 28:

Rebecca Skelton (drawing) – rebeccaskelton.com

St. Petersburg, FL, 24" x 36"

Alberto Gomez (painting/printmaking) –
albertogomez.net

St. Petersburg, FL, 24" x 36"

Polly E Perkins (printmaking) –
<https://www.instagram.com/polyphemus.polly/>

St. Petersburg, FL, 30" x 60"

Emily Victory (painting) – emvictorystudio.com

Tampa, FL, 36" x 36"

Amy Allison-Turpin (ceramics) – sodadna.com

St. Petersburg, FL, 36" x 72"

Emily J Legleitner (printmaking) – emilylegs-art.com

Flint, MI, 40" x 72"

Sean Mick (painting/sculpture) – seanmick.com

Miami, FL, 40" x 60"

Ben Willmore (photography) – digitalmastery.com

Clearwater, FL, 40" x 96"

Sunday, Sept. 29:

Ali Norman (printmaking) – alinorman.com

St. Petersburg, FL, 24" x 36"

Lynn Foskett Pierson (mixed media) – lynnfoskett.com

Tarpon Springs, FL, 24" x 40"

Sarah Rigas (painting) – sarahrigas.com

Winter Garden, FL, 24" x 40"

Gordon Harlow (mixed media)

St. Petersburg, FL, 37" x 66"

Joseph Skinner (printmaking) – josephskinner.net

St. Petersburg, FL, 36" x 48"

Brandie Dziegiel (printmaking) –
brandiedziegielart.com

Clearwater, FL, 40" x 96"

Tin Lohr (printmaking) – <https://www.instagram.com/tin.tattoos/>

Cooper City, FL, 40" x 96"