

EVOLVING IMAGERY

Peg Fierke and Robert Eagerton, both experienced artists who began their careers using traditional printmaking methods, continue their artistic development using computers as part of their process. As technology continually improves, the artists' skills continually expand. Melding their traditional art-making skills with digital proficiency, both Fierke and Eagerton have grown and evolved with the times, always probing their own creative responses further.

Exactly reproducible images for original art prints have traditionally been made using a variety of techniques. The three conventional printmaking processes, relief, intaglio and planograph, are differentiated by the method used to carve or draw the image onto a surface of wood, stone, metal, or another workable material. While relief prints are created by carving an image from a raised surface on the surrounding material, as with a woodcut, intaglio print images are scratched into the matrix surface, making a recessed design. To produce a planographic print, the artist draws an image on a flat surface with a marker that repels water.

Mezzotints are intaglio prints that are created by working from black to white instead of the common intaglio approach of working from white to black. A rocker is used to roughen the entire surface of a metal plate with tiny holes and burrs that will absorb large amounts of ink. The surface is then smoothed in areas that are to be white or lighter in tone, which causes them to hold less ink when the image is printed.



Peg Fierke



Robert Eagerton

While Fierke's mezzotints use a traditional intaglio technique, her non-etched intaglio prints use a more contemporary printmaking method which involves laminating photosensitive film onto a substrate, laying an image in the form of a dot-pattern transparency on top of it, and exposing it to strong ultraviolet light. The light hardens the non-image area, and subsequent processing in a weak soda ash solution develops an image that can be printed in the same manner as an etched metal plate. The elimination of traditional etching mordants results in a largely non-toxic and much safer way to make intaglio prints.

Egerton creates his lithographs, or planographic prints, by drawing the images on a flat stone surface with greasy crayons or ink. Water, which is repelled by the greasy marks, is washed over the stone plate followed by ink, which adheres to the crayon image. A tube-like press is then rolled over paper placed on top of the drawing to transfer the image.

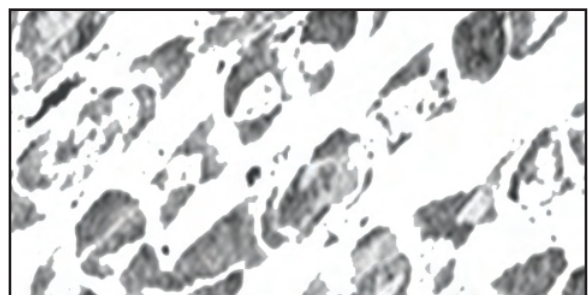
Though averse to set patterns, Egerton now often uses the computer printer in the same way he previously used the printing press. Just as he drew on stones or metal plates to make lithographs, Egerton may begin with a drawing. At a certain point he scans the image into the computer, often altering the work electronically. For example, he may decide to add a colored background, either digitally or manually, then scan and incorporate it. At times he will take a printed image and print another image on top of it. The process alternates between hand work and computer alterations. The final outcome, unless the works are designated drawings or lithographs, is digital.



Wave C
Peg Fierke
Non-etch intaglio, 3" x 9"
2003



Canyon-Mapped Cat
Peg Fierke
Graphite pencil, 30" x 40"
2007



Light Swarm (detail)
Peg Fierke
Digital print, 44" x 80"
2007

Eagerton and Fierke share a common approach to making art. Continuing a lifelong process of exploration, they let the process itself, rather than a preconceived end product, shape the imagery. But that is where a comparison of their artwork ends. Their individual strengths, concerns, and methods of exploration give the two artists very different results.

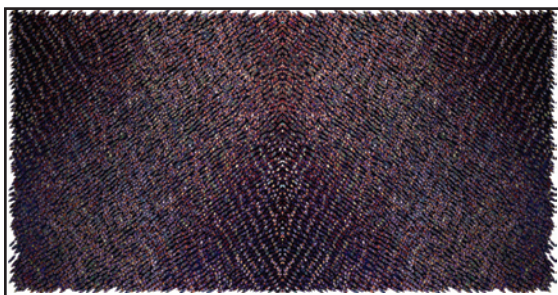
For several decades, Fierke has been creating paintings, drawings, and prints that explore the possibilities of layering visual fields of standardized units. She is attracted to simple forms conducive to integrated construction, such as elongated muscle cells, and uses the computer and computer printer to alter and manipulate hand-drawn and digital images. Typically working on several pieces simultaneously, she leaves room for further exploration by letting the artworks inform one another as she progresses.

Fierke explains it this way:

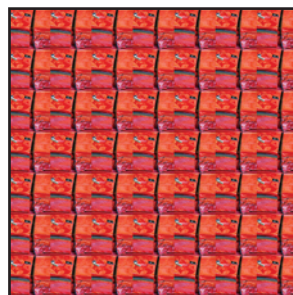
Sources of imagery represent a wide range of subjects chosen as much for their formal characteristics as for their potential as vehicles of cognitive meaning. Using one or more modules chosen from a series of forms I have selected and developed over time, layers composed of modular fields are positioned to interact with underlying or interspersed images... Where fields of similar but never identical modules randomly cross other images, opportunities occur for new "mutations."

This random factor becomes a metaphor for the way in which the phenomenon of chaos operates in evolutionary biology or even how chaos theory interprets any event in which infinitesimal variations become amplified over time/space to become very noticeable, creating a new, non-linear, and unpredictable self-generated order.

...I am attempting to derive images not only from a distillation and transformation of observed objects, but also from a body of empirical information about intangible phenomena. Some of these phenomena are readily observable in nature, such as the manner in which fields of similar but never identical modules, say a mass of smooth muscle cells or a stand of wheat, swoop and undulate, composing themselves into slightly irregular patterns. However, knowledge of some phenomena exists as speculative theories based on the detectable behavior of things, the material substance of which is beyond the capacity of sensory perception, even when that perception is aided. Many subatomic particles make themselves known through their actions even though they have never been seen by anyone. One can try to imagine what they look like and create hypothetical models extrapolated from their behavior.



Blue Swarm
Peg Fierke
Digital print, 44" x 80"
2007



The Last Full Measure of Devotion
Peg Fierke
Digital print, 44" x 44"
2007

While Fierke investigates the structural potential of tangible and intangible phenomena, Eagerton develops imagery using his personal responses to the natural world:

The simplest and most commonplace images can be very interesting to me. Certainly there are some images that are better than others in terms of what they generate in thought and reaction. I used to be very aware of that kind of thing – a list of things you could and couldn't use. One day it occurred to me that if I see something that really sparks (inspiration), then I'll use it. I don't care if it's a butterfly or a beautiful landscape.

Freed from preconceived notions of banality or sentimental connotations, Eagerton's depictions of various creatures and natural elements appear in different compositional roles. Dramatic visual ecosystems of skies, flames, or stark landscapes appear to float, bound by vividly colored lines or wide, marbled borders of abstract marks. A recognizable hand-drawn creature or photographed woman – often out of scale – swims, flies, or simply stares out from a surrounding unpredictable world. Isolated symbols appear within the natural environments, suggesting different, sometimes whimsical, food for thought. *High-Flying Bird* and *Star Shadow* both incorporate fanciful five-sided stars, like offerings from a kinder galaxy, suggesting deliverance from the overwhelming power of nature.

Drawing is very important to Eagerton, who uses this honed skill in all of his work, including painting. He now also integrates photographic images:

Since I was in art school I have been intrigued by photography but I never exhibited any of my photographic prints. Even using alternative photographic processes I was never able to achieve my intent. Finally, with digital imaging, I have been able to incorporate both my traditional printmaking knowledge and skills with my lifelong involvement in photography.

Although the viewer is never confronted by blatantly jarring imagery, succinct titles like *Beneath the Silence*, *Entrapment*, and *End of Time* reinforce Eagerton's more subtle visual cues. Unlike Fierke, who primarily uses a painting's title to facilitate her own image-filing, he agonizes over them, striving to indicate his own response without overdramatizing his message. Neither artist endeavors to influence social viewpoints with their work, but Eagerton's underlying sense of the natural world's vulnerability resonates in today's culture.

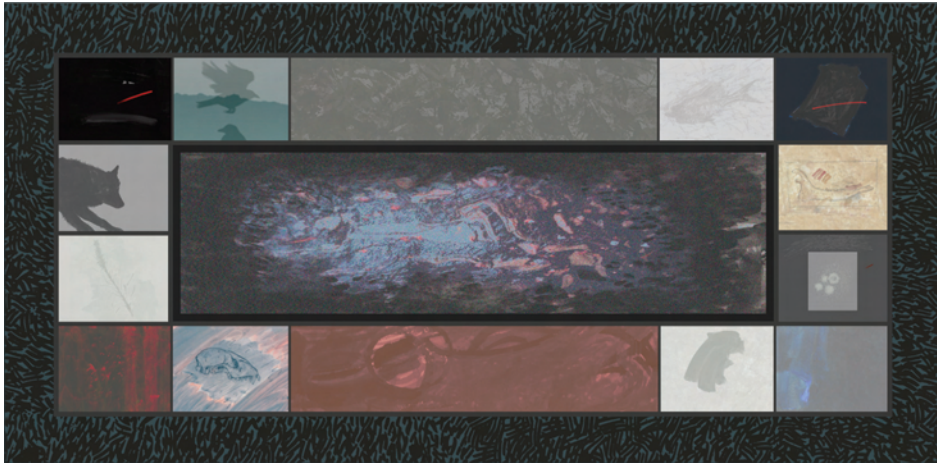


Beneath the Silence
Robert Eagerton
Pigment Print, 40.98" x 31"
2006

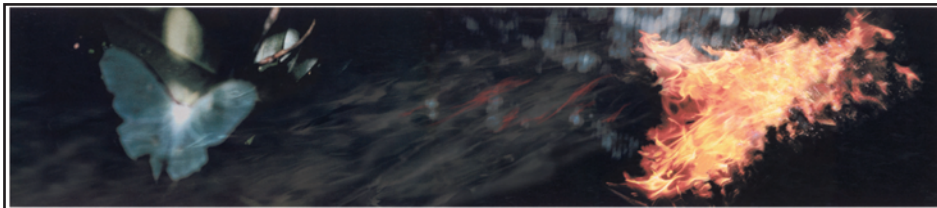


China Sky
Robert Eagerton
Pigment print, 32" x 40.19"
2000

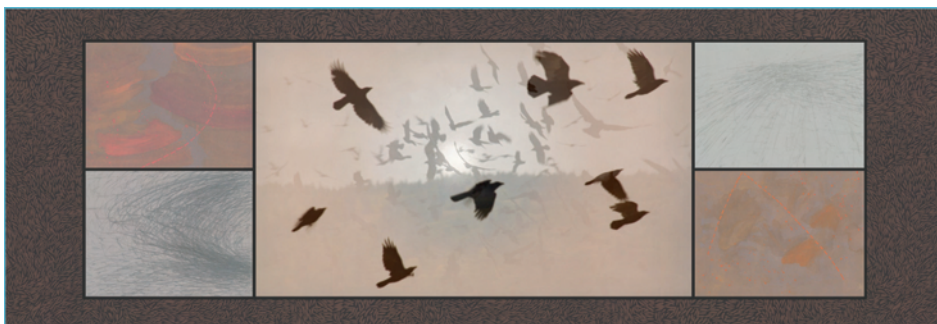
Peg Fierke and Robert Eagerton continually experiment with new methods and learn new techniques. Continuing their separate journeys in life and art, Fierke and Eagerton, both recently retired instructors at the Herron School of Art and Design at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, have used their involvement with technology to engage the next generation of artists. Their individual and combined efforts to constantly update their instruction, including the development of a digital course at Herron, have resulted in a print department with an impeccable reputation. Augmenting the influential teaching contributions of both artists are their significant bodies of work, which continue to reflect the rapidly changing technological advances in printmaking.



End of Time
Robert Eagerton
Pigment print, 31" X 62.50"
2007



Drift (Moth and Flame)
Robert Eagerton
Pigment print, 11.27" x 49"
2002

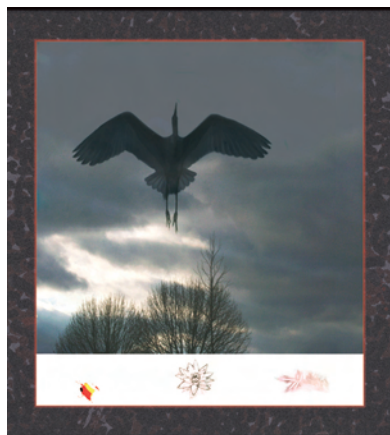


Van Gogh's Dream
Robert Eagerton
Mixed media, 17" x 49"
2007

Robert Eagerton earned his B.F.A. at the Atlanta College of Art, and attended the Vienna, Austria, Academy of Fine Arts as well as the Cranbrook Academy of Art's graduate program in Michigan. He is a professor emeritus at Herron School of Art and Design at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, where he taught for 40 years. Eagerton co-founded Transfigurations Press in Sarasota, Florida, one of the first printmaking workshops to specialize in printing hand-drawn lithographs, etchings, and fine-art photography. In addition to taking part in numerous juried and gallery exhibitions, he has served as guest artist at many schools in the United States, Canada, and China. His work is included in permanent collections throughout the country.

Peg Fierke earned her B.F.A. and M.F.A. degrees at the University of Illinois. She taught studio courses in painting, printmaking, drawing, and digital imaging, as well as a senior seminar in art theory at Herron School of Art and Design at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis from 1968 through 2007. Not satisfied with teaching art alone, Fierke has developed interdisciplinary classes in philosophy and physiology, worked in New York City, Europe, and British Columbia, and taught an advanced painting course in Ireland during her career. She has participated in more than 140 regional, national, and international exhibitions and commissions since 1968, and has been honored with more than 30 prizes and purchase awards as well as several teaching and research grants.

This exhibit was made possible with support from the Arts Council of Indianapolis and the City of Indianapolis.



Night Flight
Robert Eagerton
Pigment print, 33.69" x 31"
2003



Excessive Sensory Perception
Peg Fierke
Digital print, 44" x 44"
2007

PRINTS AND DRAWINGS BY
ROBERT EAGERTON

Beneath the Silence

Pigment print
40.98" x 31"
2006

Entrapment

Pigment print
31.86" x 22"
2007

Blind Crow

Pigment print
40.99" x 31"
2005

China Sky

Pigment print
32" x 40.19"
2000

Crow

Pigment print
40.98" x 31"
2005

End of Time

Pigment print
62.50 x 31"
2007

Migration

Pigment print
33.98" x 60"
2007

Fire Bird

Pigment print
17" x 50"
2001

Wild Fire

Pigment print
40.98" x 31"
2007

Journal

Pigment print
31" x 43.02"
2001

Drift (Moth and Flame)

Pigment print
11.27" x 49"
2002

Natural Acts

Pigment print
22.98" x 44"
2004

Recurring Dream

Pigment print
40.98" x 31"
2007

Night Call

Pigment print
40.98" x 31"
2006

Night Flight

Pigment print
33.69" x 31"
2003

No Exit

Pigment print
39.84" x 31"
1998

China

Pigment print
31" x 38.64"
2001

The Memory of Water

Pigment print
32" x 47"
2002

Wolf Creek

Pigment print
23.71" x 35.50"
2005

Death and Twig

Graphite and watercolor wash
48" x 36.75"
2007

Untitled

Mixed media
6" x 46"
2007

Leaping Frog

Mixed media
40" x 30"
2007

Van Gogh's Dream

Mixed media
17" x 49"
2007

High Flying Bird

Pencil drawing
31.50" x 40"
1980

R

Stone lithograph
27" x 36.50"
1981

Star Shadow

Stone lithograph
24" x 33"
1983

PRINTS AND DRAWINGS
BY PEG FIERKE

DRAWINGS

Cytophenocrysts

Charcoal
42" x 60"
1991

Pantheon

Colored pencil
44" x 30"
1994

Mountain Pyramid

Colored pencil
30" x 44"
1995

Garden

Colored pencil
30" x 44"
1996

Solitary Erratic

Colored pencil
30" x 44"
1998

Rock Wall #1

Charcoal
21" x 60"
1997

Rock Wall #2

Charcoal
21" x 60"
1997

Arctic Hallucination

Colored pencil
24" x 88"
1999

Dark Torso

Charcoal
22" x 17"
2001

Fusion of Two Low Entropy Systems
Charcoal
30" x 40"
2006

BC
Graphite pencil
22" x 30"
2006

Maine Triangle
Charcoal on canvas
46" x 48"
2006

Habitat
Graphite pencil
22" x 30"
2006

Emerging Hierarchies 1
Digital and marker
22" x 17"
2007

Emerging Hierarchies 2
Digital and graphite pencil
22" x 17"
2007

Choreograph for a Dog's Nose
Graphite pencil
19" x 13"
2006

Canyon-Mapped Cat
Graphite pencil
30" x 40"
2007

INTAGLIO PRINTS

Wave C
Non-etch intaglio
3" x 9"
2003

Sand
Non-etch intaglio
6" x 5.75"
2003

Human Trilobite
Mezzotint and soft ground
7.25" x 6.75"
2004

Homunculus
Mezzotint and engraving
6.50" x 8"
2004

W. C. Assyrian
Non-etch intaglio
6" x 6"
2004

Maine Gator
Non-etch intaglio
6" x 5.75"
2005

Fearful Symmetry
Non-etch intaglio
12" x 18"
2004

Inside/Outside
Non-etch intaglio and marker
6" x 7"
2007

Supine
Non-etch intaglio
4.25" x 10.5"
2007

Seven Falls
Non-etch intaglio
7" x 6"
2003

Tree Cage
Engraving
7" x 6"
2007

DIGITAL PRINTS

Visible Human Red
Digital wax print
11.25 x 16
1998

Lilliputian Landscape
Digital print
22" x 17"
2007

Narcissus 3
Digital print
18" x 9"
2007

Blue Swarm
Digital print
44" x 80"
2007

Light Swarm
Digital print
44" x 80"
2007

Gulliver's Fly
Digital print
44" x 44"
2007

Excessive Sensory Perception
Digital print
44" x 44"
2007

Waiting for Leopard
Digital print
44" x 44"
2007

The Last Full Measure of Devotion
Digital print
44" x 44"
2007