

Log Jam // Alison Judd, ARTsPLACE 2015

Review by Bonnie Baker

Upon entering Alison Judd's installation of *Log Jam*, you may well feel compelled to hurry through the constricting corridor of prints to make your escape. This would be a mistake and, as the common expression suggests, your loss.

The installation of *Log Jam* in ARTsPLACE gallery required Judd to adapt her presentation considerably from that of two previous installations- Working Title Press (2014), Southern Graphics Council Intentional (2015). Created during a residency at WTP, focus was on the making of hand-rubbed relief prints from basic lumberyard planks and only exhibited for a week in a large white walled gallery. "It looked kind of flat" explained Judd. For SGCI, *Log Jam* was mounted outdoor on the grey concrete walls of an underpass.

For ARTsPLACE, she wanted the installation to be much more of a physical presence in the space. On a temporary wall running nearly the length of the gallery, a multitude of 1 x 8 foot prints are laid one over another in seemingly random mound of logs. The free floating wall bisects the room at an angle and is physically unavoidable. Judd explains "the wall becomes an obstruction, something you can run into or stop you in your tracks." The log jam as metaphor.

Much of Judd's work is in sympathy with the writings of Jan Zwicky, a Canadian essayist whose book, *Wisdom & Metaphor*, was shortlisted for the Governor General's Literary Award in 2004. With her own love of language and for the richness of metaphor, Judd mined Zwicky's writings for "the nuggets that we can hold dear" while completing her Masters at York and beginning *Core Sample*, an ongoing series of layered monoprints.

In a prose piece, *Black Spruce*, Zwicky's description of physical reaction to change in the places that we think of being stable, unchanging or changing slowly, so we can come to terms with other loss, is one of those nuggets Judd carries forward into more recent installations *Living with a Landslide* (2014) and *Log Jam*.

Landslide responded to sudden change as manufactured by nature. Log jams occur spontaneously in nature but are more often engineered by humans. *Log Jam* in Judd's own words, is somewhere in between. Confronted with a wall of paper thin logs, we can sense pending change despite the inertia in the room. The jam may eventually break up, either naturally or again through human interactions but as to whether it will be abrupt and destructive or a slow sonorous dissolve, we are left, however uncomfortable it makes us, to reflect upon this knowledge.

I did wonder at the choice of the pale coloured inks used in the printing. Is the implication that the prints are just ghosts of actual planks— a mock up or fakery ? Between the sheer substance of the intruding wall and the weightlessness of the prints exists a dichotomy that isn't yet resolved in this current arrangement. Judd considers installation as still another creative act.

It would be easy to miss the less pronounced themes by concentrating too much on the individual prints. *Log Jam* requires our willingness to avoid the temptation to only appreciate the meditative beauty of the wood grain as recorded by the relief process. After all there are only ten variations.

It is the accumulated effect of layering Judd directs us to observe. "Trees have a way of witnessing the world that stirs our deepest sense of permanence and impermanence." Maria Popova¹ From Romeyn

Beck Hough voluminous catalogue of North American trees to Bryan Nash Gill's nuanced prints of cross-sections of trees, naturalists and artists have drawn their vocabulary directly from nature's raw materials. Now a century later, Hough's catalogue stands as a record of the vanished as well as the everlasting species.

All makers working with wood are familiar with the push pull quandary - in order to create, one must destroy the material one cherishes. Judd who wanted to work again with wood in creating *Log Jam* acknowledges the moral dilemma of consuming dressed wood for short lived art installations addressing the impermanence of our forest.

In future exhibits, Judd says she will have to give consideration to what happens to the installation materials once the exhibit ends.*

-9-

1 Maria Popova, June 19, 2012 brain pickings.org

*Materials used in building the wall for the ARTsPLACE exhibit will be recycled by Eric the carpenter.

Links:

Working Title Press

Southern Graphic Conference International http://web.utk.edu/~sphere/Pages/PPP_Judd.html

Jan Zwicky http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Zwicky

Core Samples <http://alisonjuddwork.com/section/364284.html>

Living with a Landslide <http://alisonjuddprojects.weebly.com/2014-living-with-a-landslide>

Romeyn Beck Hough https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeyn_Beck_Hough

Bryan Nash Gill <http://www.bryannashgill.com/gallery.html&gid=6>