







## Prix de Print No. 8

### Cartier Window by Stella Ebner

Juried by Faye Hirsch

This iteration of the *Art in Print* Prix de Print has been judged by print scholar Faye Hirsch. The Prix de Print is a bimonthly competition, open to all subscribers, in which a single work is selected by an outside juror to be the subject of a brief essay. For further information on entering the Prix de Print, please go to our website: [www.artinprint.org/index.php/about#competitions](http://www.artinprint.org/index.php/about#competitions).

Stella Ebner, *Cartier Window* (2014)

Screenprint, 25 x 36 inches. Edition of 5. Printed and published by the artist, New York, NY. \$1,600.

Before us is a shop window with a jewelry display. To either side, festoons of pine or tinsel hint at Christmas. Above is the brand: a logo unmistakably readable as Cartier, despite its being cut off at the top. Like any fancy Christmas window on Madison, this one includes a gimmick: a video, one presumes, of snow leopards—tinged with pink, like a glacier under a winter sun—bounding through an ice-blue background. Whether belonging to several leopards, or just one, the swiveling profiles at the left and the cropped, bounding pose of the creature in front suggest startled motion. Turquoise and violet shadows enhance the fluidity of the leopard action, as slightly off-register shadows and cartoonlike sparkles give the jewels before them vivacity and allure.

Visiting the artist's website, we discover that the print is part of a new series (designated "*Coming soon . . .*") consisting of nine screenprints. One of these presents an awards ceremony in which a woman is receiving a trophy from a man in a suit. The figures' heads and shoulders are cut off like the Cartier logo, and our viewpoint is from way below, as if we are members of a press corps below the stage. The shiny trophy is obscured by the blinding reflections of camera flashes, and the only object in full view is a large bouquet of flowers to the left of the action—again, seen from below, not unlike the famous still life by Caravaggio. Among the other prints in the series is a darkened, uninhabited interior of a Japanese restaurant, its only decoration a brightly lit screen decorated with the reproduction of an *Ukiyo-e* woodcut. In another, a man in shorts with his head cropped off lies on a sofa near a coffee table on which a partly finished jigsaw puzzle depicts Van Gogh's *Starry Night*. For its part, *Cartier Window* brings to mind early lithographs by James Rosenquist or works in various mediums by Wayne Thiebaud—especially his woodcuts of a cake and candy apples produced in the 1980s at Crown Point Press in Kyoto with Tadashi Toda, a master of *Ukiyo-e*.

I must continue this Prix with a disclaimer. I am a colleague of Ebner's at Purchase College, where we both teach. I had no idea, however, that she had made *Cartier Window* when I saw it among the blind entries. Call me stupid, but I

thought to myself, "Gee, this is similar to work I have seen by Stella Ebner. Is this way of creating screenprint, with effects like *Ukiyo-e* woodcut, gaining traction among printmakers? Is it right to select it feeling that the artist might be copying her style?" In the end, I couldn't resist its seductions—and of course it wound up being by Ebner. So, for this Prix, selected in all fairness, I overcame a certain ethical ambivalence to indulge my sheer pleasure in the winner. And, as it turns out, I was able to speak with the artist directly about her process.

Having grown tired of the lengthy time required by woodcut, the effects of which she loves, Ebner has developed a method of making screenprints that produces the painterly effects and oddities of registration that can happen in the *Ukiyo-e* manner. I asked her how many colors she used for *Cartier Window*, and she responded by showing me 36 Mylars, each a different size or shape, each representing a different layer of the print. She reuses colors, but in layering them (in a way reminiscent of woodblock painting) she creates varying densities of transparency or opacity, subtly altering her hues in the process and creating a color-based sense of depth. Thus, in *Cartier Window*, the leopards do indeed appear one in front of another. And throughout the print, we feel a dramatic recession into pools of color, even as the image remains fundamentally flat.

Ebner pays homage to numerous art historical sources, but there is something



Stella Ebner, *Cartier Window* (2014). Detail below.

quite contemporary in these scenes—all combining, the artist informs me, the flawed memory of real things seen and pure invention. Their contemporaneity lies in their focus on modest spectacles: low-level awards ceremonies; high-school sports events; historical reenactments; the ads and milieus of consumer culture. In every print, we are asked to question the way we receive images—the secondary, tertiary or umpteenth-iary ways they are delivered to us. That message of compromised origins feels especially appropriate to the medium of prints, even as the handwrought quality of Ebner's versions provides a delicious palliative to our relentless, lens-based culture and its phantom effects. ■

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