IMAGES OF SOCIAL JUSTICE FROM THE SEGURA ARTS STUDIO
SEGURA REBORN AT UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

SARAH KIRK HANLEY
Joe Segura’s reputation as a master printer and publisher precedes him and for many his workshop is closely associated with the Southwest, specifically Arizona, where it was located for nearly three decades. In early 2013, upon invitation from the University of Notre Dame, Segura relocated to South Bend, Indiana. Along with the move came a new name, Segura Arts Studio (formerly Segura Publishing Company), a fresh influx of talent, a light-filled and well-appointed workshop space, and an expanded mission to enhance interdisciplinary learning for students and foster relations between the University of Notre Dame and the local community.

The impetus to relocate was a result of Segura’s long-term involvement with Consejo Gráfico (Graphic Council), a group of Latino-centered print studios based at the Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame. Talks began in 2009, and after a few years of planning and preparation the Studio welcomed its first visiting artist in August of 2013. Activist artist Claudia Bernardi, who had worked extensively with Segura in the past, heralded an auspicious beginning: her activities perfectly realized the triangular model that guides the mission of Segura Arts Studio, building connections between the Studio, the University of Notre Dame, and the community. In the Studio, Bernardi created a vibrant 15-color etching titled *Palabras de Arena (Words of Sand)*, part of her ongoing effort to call attention to hundreds of senseless deaths of women and children in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico; a terrible consequence of the rampant drug wars that have consumed that border town over the past two decades. As with all of her work, it embodies her intention to lend a voice to anonymous sufferers of political turmoil. Her talk on campus, titled “The Poetics of the Body: War, Memory, Art & Human Rights,” resonated strongly with the academic community, attracting an overwhelming turnout from faculty and students from all areas. For her community program, Bernardi spoke about her “Walls of Hope” project in which she collaborates with ordinary citizens to produce commemorative murals. Bernardi will return in the fall of 2016 for a second residency with the Studio.

The following visiting artist – Faith Ringgold – created a lithograph in the Studio; led a program with students and faculty at St. Mary’s College (sister school to Notre Dame); and offered a community children’s workshop titled “Quiltdoku,” which allowed each of them to contribute their stories to the final quilt-based work. Claudio Dichochea and Enrique Chagoya also spent time at the Studio in its first year, each of whom has built a stronger connection between the three entities of the Studio’s mission. Subsequent artists have further developed and strengthened the connection between the Studio, the University, and the people of South Bend.
Segura feels the Studio’s emphasis on community outreach and integration sets it apart from most university-funded print workshops. Assistant Director Douglas Franson, who grew up in the area and attended Notre Dame as an undergrad, notes that South Bend is “not traditionally a college town” – campus and community were separate for most of the history of the University. This has changed recently as University officials have made a concerted effort to invest in the town and engage with its citizens. The choice of the Studio’s location – a remodeled children’s hospital near the city’s West Side (away from campus) – speaks to this priority. Segura Arts Studio is only one of a number of resources in the building (called the Notre Dame Center for Arts and Culture) which also houses a small art gallery, classrooms for adult and after-school enrichment, a computer lab for children and teens, and the University’s Office of Community Relations. In similar manner, Segura’s history of promoting artists from underrepresented cultural groups is a good fit with the community, which has large Latino and African-American populations. The community has responded in kind, with an exhibition at the nearby South Bend Museum of Art and enthusiastic involvement in the Studio’s community and children’s programs.

In keeping with its mission to integrate with academic life at Notre Dame, the Studio also launched a program called “Social Justice in the Visual Arts” that engages incoming students in its activities. This initiative is integrated across every department that offers the University Seminar course for incoming freshmen. The studio works with professors to weave its activities into their curricula for the semester. This frequently involves a student trip to the Studio where they have the opportunity to participate in open discussion with visiting artists such as Sue Coe, Mark Klett, Hung Liu, Matika Wilbur, Maria Tomasula, and others.

As previously noted, Segura has devoted his life’s work to promoting artists from underrepresented cultural groups and this will continue at Notre Dame. He originally chose the raven as the symbol of his workshop due to its mythological role as messenger as well as its “acute sense of its environment,” both of which accurately represent his role as printer and publisher. In Arizona, budgetary restrictions necessitated that Segura look in his own backyard for talent and this meant working with artists of all stripes. This turned out to be a happy circumstance, in many cases: Luis Jiménez, James Turrell, and Mark Klett were all important to Segura’s development as a master printer (for further discussion see Cassandra Coblentz, Right to Print: Segura Publishing Company, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007). Due to the support of Notre Dame, geographical limitations will no longer be a factor; rather artists will be considered based on how well they fit with the Studio’s mission and Notre Dame’s emphasis on social justice. The process involves staff discussion but Joe makes final determinations. He compares the selection process to cooking an unctuous stew, “Each of them brings their own flavor, lending complexity to the mix. As time passes, it gets richer and richer.”

Though Segura has always enjoyed collaborative printing, his leadership role has taken priority at Notre Dame. Daily operations are fulfilled by Master Printer Jill Lerner, who helped design the new Studio, and Production Printer Jessica O’Hearn. Lerner has a long history with Segura – she worked with him at the Print Research Facility at Arizona State University and was one of the first printers he hired when he founded his studio in 1981. Since then, she has held master printer and teaching positions at Limestone Press, San Francisco; Graphicstudio at the University of South Florida; and the Ringling College of Art and Design, where she founded the Letterpress and Book Arts Center. O’Hearn trained at Lesley University, Tamarind Institute, and the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, and taught at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design, where she also managed the Printmaking Lab.
Together with campus facilities, the Studio is equipped to facilitate almost any technical need an artist may have. Lerner comments, “I like to say: Yes, I think we can do that.” All of the equipment from Segura Publishing Company’s prior location was moved to South Bend: intaglio, relief, lithography, photogravure, and monotype are offered in the workshop; on campus, artists have access to screenprint, letterpress, digital media, and other photo-based media.

In addition to its educational mission, the Studio intends to be financially self-sufficient within a few years, an initiative that primarily falls to Franson. With an MBA from Indiana University, he is uniquely qualified to address financial operations. He has worked with the University to build the Studio’s website, which includes an online shop, and has engaged the Studio in the print fair circuit. In 2015-16, they exhibited at three separate art fairs organized by the International Fine Print Dealers Association in New York, Miami, and Los Angeles. In 2016-17, they will participate in prestigious regional print fairs in Cleveland and Baltimore. Franson also organizes the daily business of the Studio to facilitate artist’s visits and programs, and serves as liaison to the Notre Dame administration and faculty.

One issue at the forefront of Segura’s mind is his legacy. He has worked long and hard to earn recognition for marginalized artists and feels strongly that this effort must continue. In an interview with Cassandra Coblentz, curator at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, he stated, “Every plan I’ve had has adjusted itself to the life I’ve lived. I’d just like to maintain and perpetuate what we do” (Coblentz, 48). The comment was made in the context of establishing an archive at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art but this impulse is also what prompted the move to Notre Dame. Speaking of his decision to relocate, Segura shares, “They have a real interest in continuing the work I have been doing for the past three decades.” In addition to facilitating the move and financially supporting the Studio during the transitional period, Notre Dame has published an online oral history interview with Segura (Amalia Malagamba, “Oral History with Interview Joe Segura,” June 12, 2007; University of Notre Dame Institute for Latino Studies iTunes channel, track 12, published April 9, 2010). Most importantly, the University established an archive of Segura’s work at the Snite Museum of Art that will continue to grow, including at least one impression of all past and future projects. By investing in Segura’s future, Notre Dame has put its resources behind a proven leader in fine print publishing and ensured that women and artists of color will continue to be well-represented in the field. Thanks to the University’s foresight, the printworld stew will be all the richer.

Sarah Kirk Hanley (www.sarahkirkhanley.com) is an independent print specialist and critic based in the New York area. She is a contributor to the journal Art in Print, an adjunct instructor at NYU, and a consulting expert for several art appraisal services and online retailers.

Another version of this article was previously printed in Graphic Impressions: The Newsletter of SGC International, Summer 2014. It has been updated to reflect changes since the original publication.

Terry Evans (American b. 1944), *Taconite Mining, Minnesota*, 2015, lithograph, 21 x 20.5 inches. Segura Arts Studio
lithograph, 32.25 x 23 inches. Segura Arts Studio
Faith Ringgold (American b. 1930), *Aunt Emmy*, 2005
lithograph, 30 x 22 inches. Segura Arts Studio
Emmi Whitehorse (American b. 1957), untitled, 2015 etching 30.5 x 25.875 inches. Segura Arts Studio

Claudia Bernardi (Argentinian b. 1955), Palabras de Arena (Words of Sand), 2013 etching, 33.75 x 26.5 inches. Segura Arts Studio
Claudio Dicochea (American b. 1971), *De Amore Prohibido y el Anarquista, el Emsee 2.0* (of Forbidden Love and Anarchist, the Emcee 2.0), 2014, lithograph, 24.625 x 18.5 inches
Segura Arts Studio

Sue Coe (British b. 1951), *Judgment at Noburger*, 2015
lithograph, 22 x 27.75 inches. Segura Arts Studio
Sue Coe (British b. 1951), *La Frontera (Border)*, 1997 lithograph 36.5 x 26.5 inches. Segura Arts Studio
GUEST CURATORS: JOSEPH SEGURA and JESSICA O’HEARN