



MIDWEST PRESSED: WORN OUT

August 2 – October 13, 2013

Worn Out is a collaborative series of printed artworks made by Tim Dooley and Aaron Wilson, two Iowa artists and art educators working together under the name “Midwest Pressed.” Dooley and Wilson focus on themed bodies of work that highlight both the unique and serial nature of printmaking, or “making each print an individual and successful impression born from the language of the multiple.”¹ The prints involve intense layering of color and imagery, often focusing on clichés from pop culture. Their choice of subject matter mirrors the repetitive nature of the printing process. Some forms are inspired by images from television and the internet that bombard us every day—zombies, supernatural creatures, cute animals, and money (or at least the effects of its power). The two artists also play with art historical concepts that remain prevalent influences in the art world, from various styles of abstract painting to towering personalities such as Marcel Duchamp, Willem de Kooning, and Andy Warhol. The over-arching title given to these related series, *Worn Out*, nods to the inescapable nature of certain people and things in our cultural consciousness, as well as the artists’ mission to give them new meaning. “We try to identify subjects that are culturally worn out through ubiquitous use, and then we revive them through relentlessly printing them on top of each other until they reach critical mass. This transforms them until they take on an unexpected new life as works of art.”²

Each section in *Worn Out* contains repeated versions of a specific type of form. *Made of Money* appears at first to be a homage to early 20th-century Russian Suprematism, particularly Kazimir Malevich’s stark black and white compositions. However, the works are exactly as the title states—images created from the shapes of actual currency. Money itself is abstract concept, with physical bills and coins standing in for power and wealth. *Modern Zombies* layers the faces of some of Modernism’s biggest names such as Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, and Joseph Albers into disturbingly colorful monsters. Like the zombies that seem to be everywhere in pop culture at this moment, they retain a few recognizable features of once-familiar faces, but are ultimately distorted into a new creature. *Futile Gestures* and *Puppies vs.*

Kittens reference gestural abstract painting, the title of the former acknowledging the difficulty in finding originality in once groundbreaking techniques like those of Jackson Pollock, while the former transforms puppies and kittens (whose photos clog countless websites and facebook feeds) into multi-colored, painterly abstractions. The *M & M (Memento Mori)* works, printed on t-shirts, embrace the centuries-old tradition of depicting a skull as a reminder of death. They acknowledge the skull as both a clichéd, undying presence as a badge of supposed coolness and undefined rebellion (making the t-shirt a particularly appropriate vehicle), while suggesting it still retains some symbolic power, regardless of how often it is repeated.

Midwest Pressed's concept of multiplied, multilayered images created using the inherent repeatability of screen printing is impossible to disconnect from the way images enter and move through today's cultural landscape. Pictures and videos "go viral" by echoing across social media and e-mail, eventually showing up on television or reported in print. The artists call this imagery "pink slime"—a reference to a type of meat processing that came to the public's awareness via a viral image. Their work approaches this circumstance of our time light-heartedly in the *Neutral BFF* series. "BFF" references the texting shortcut for "best friends forever," and also stands for Bigfoot forever. Bigfoot never quite disappears from the public eye, signifying both a desire for a wild, unknown existence free from society's grasp, and as the comical character mocked in commercials or the invisible star of a popular cable reality show, *Finding Bigfoot*. "Bigfoot is both worn-out and impossible to wear out," says Dooley, "which is the hallmark of every project that falls under the umbrella of our *Worn Out* series."³

Laura Burkhalter, Associate Curator

1 Midwest Pressed artist statement, 2012-2013

2 Ibid

3 E-mail conversation with the artist, 6/16/2013



Futile Gestures, 2012, screenprint on panel.



Top: *M & M (Memento Mori)*, 2013, screenprints on t-shirts (detail).

Bottom: *Neutral BFF*, 2012, screenprints on paper.



Modern Zombies, 2012, screenprints on paper.



Above: In production image of *Puppies vs. Kittens*, 2013, screenprint on paper.

Cover: *Made of Money*, 2013, screenprint on Japanese paper (detail).

This brochure is published in conjunction with
Iowa Artists 2013: Midwest Pressed, organized
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Opening event

Gallery Talk with Tim Dooley, Aaron Wilson,
and Associate Curator Laura Burkhalter
Friday, August 2 / 6:30 pm
Blank One Gallery

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from the Art Center's website.

All images courtesy of the artists.



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