

The Printed Reality

Curated by Paul Laidler

Ed. note: *The Printed Reality* is a collection of images generated by users of the photo-sharing website Flickr. Curated by Paul Laidler, the almost five hundred photographs in this virtual gallery document the very real ways that we interact with the printed image in our daily lives. An exhibition of projected images from *The Printed Reality* was presented during the 2009 Impact conference at the University of West England, where Laidler is a researcher. In the following pages, Mr. Laidler muses about his interest in photographic recordings containing print and ‘reality,’ and shares a selection of photographs from *The Printed Reality* group.

“To an ever greater extent our experience is governed by pictures, pictures in newspapers and magazines, on television and in the cinema. Next to these pictures, first hand experience begins to retreat, to seem more and more trivial. While it once seemed that pictures had the function of interpreting reality, it now seems they have usurped it.”

— Douglas Crimp, *The Postmodern Era*.

The invention and subsequent development of the printed image has changed the way in which we learn, see and describe the world around us. Our preoccupation with viewing the world through its image has created an environment of two-dimensional projections unfolding from three-dimensional beginnings.

Within the *Printed Reality* group, the interplay between image and object is not a seamless transition but one of artifice, theatre. Here the recorded image

functions as a backdrop, a stage prop positioned and presented in such a manner that we are readily accepting of its fictional role. The performance emanates through the recording of edges and folds, casting shadows and omitting reflections from an external world, a reality not of our own, but somewhat more representative of our own.

The Printed Reality Exhibition presented photographic works by seven different artists within a gallery installation setting. The exhibition was conceived as a way to begin addressing the era of Photography 2.0, by considering the image and exhibition in the electronic age.

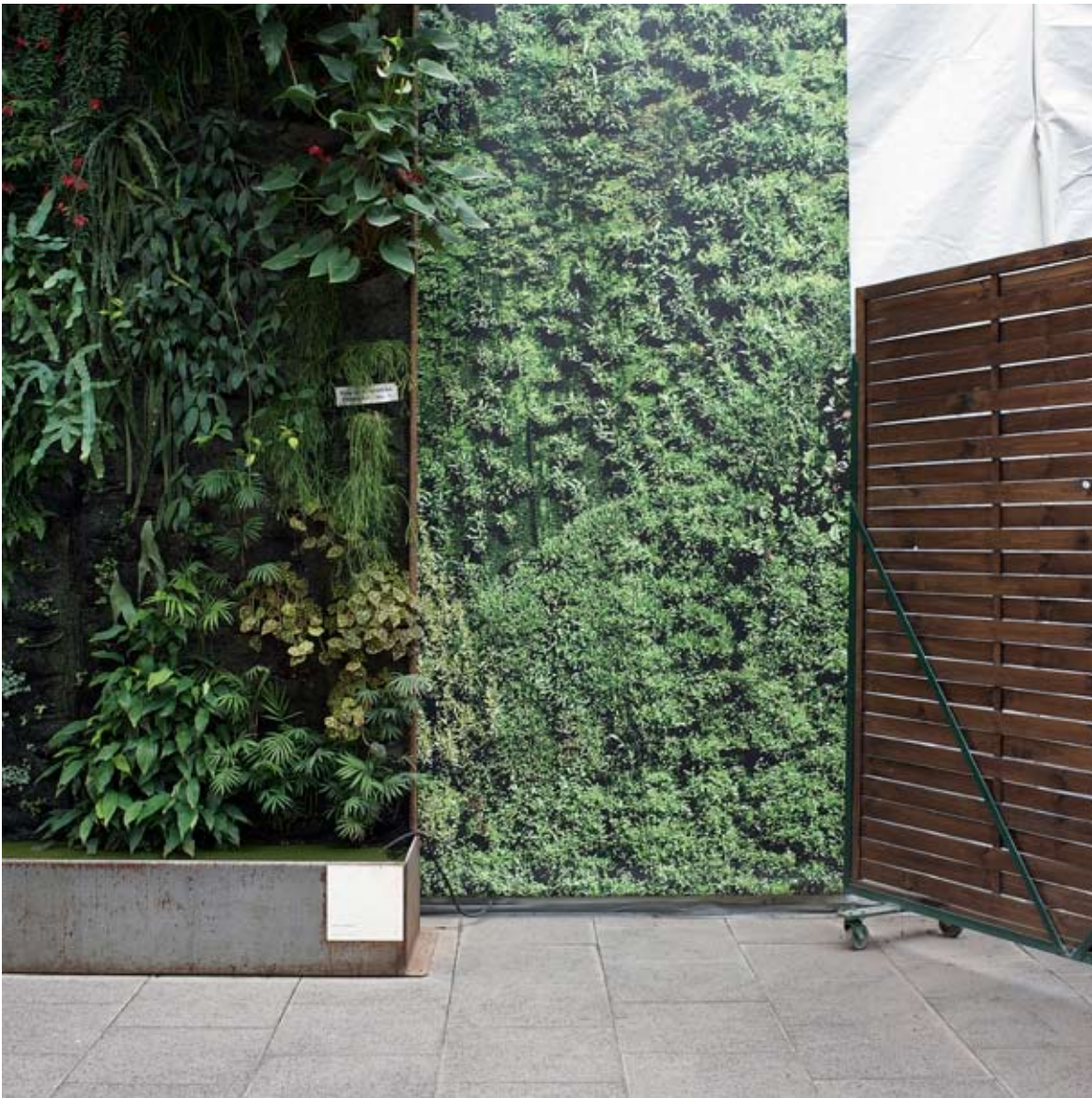
Within the context of a print exhibition, and as part of the physical-virtual gallery merger, *The Printed Reality* Exhibition dispensed with conventional and established printmaking exhibition formats. There were no artists’ prints, or any traditional hanging and framing methods in the show; all images were digitally projected across a ‘site’-specific structure situated in the gallery. The artists were invited through an online image-based community called Flickr, where the participant’s work commented upon print as image but with little or no concern for surface tactility, process, or materiality.

The structure in the exhibition was built as a site-specific installation; in this instance the specificity of the structure referred to a three square-meter section of wall in the gallery space. Prior to the exhibition, a series of photographs were taken of the gallery wall and printed on photographic paper using a wide format inkjet printer. The prints were mounted and draped onto rectangular card panels supported by the photographic paper packaging.

In keeping with many of the image construction methods from the Flickr group, the placement and angle of the structure was designed so that features of the real and photographic wall registered with one another. By erecting a three-dimensional form using two-dimensional descriptions, the installation forced viewers into specific vantage points dictated by the camera’s monocular vision, thus reiterating our image-constructed perception of reality and a momentary perspective of the two spaces converging.

The overlapping of the electronic image and printed presentation in *The Printed Reality* show was developed as a way to begin thinking about the transitions (physical and virtual) that are affecting museums, galleries and education—toward the production and presentation of digitally mediated artifacts.

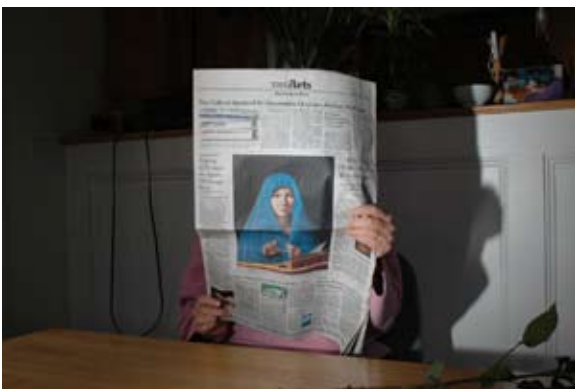
Paul Laidler is an artist and researcher employed by the Centre for Fine Print Research at the University West of England, Bristol. Paul’s research activity focuses upon the expanding field of digital print production and the technologies impact upon fine art print practices, making and collaboration.



Left:
Tropical
Sebastian Schramm
Flickr name: sinnen

Lower Left:
untitled
Nate Shepard
Flickr name: nshephard

Lower Right:
Image taken from *The Printed Reality* exhibition.
Projected Image:
Diana Alive! And on the Train to Newcastle
Andrew Pembroke
Flickr user: the_moog





Above:
*Diana Alive! And on the
Train to Newcastle*
Andrew Pembroke
Flickr user: the_moog

Upper Left:
untitled
The Action Painting Club
Flickr user:
The ActionPaintingClub

Right:
*Looking Into the Past:
Union Station Square,
Washington, DC*
Jason Powell
Flickr user: jasonepowell

