

# DAYBREAK



## IF YOU GO

**What:** "Pulled and Pressed" print show; also on display is LAA's 25th annual associate artist show and sale

**Where:** Lyme Art Association's Goodman Gallery; 90 Lyme St., Old Lyme

**When:** Jan. 20 through March 10. An opening reception for both exhibitions will be held Sunday, Jan. 29, from 2 to 4 p.m. at LAA. Gallery hours are Wed.-Sun., 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment.

**Cost:** Admission is free; contributions appreciated.

**More info:** Call (860) 434-7802 or visit [www.lymeartassociation.org](http://www.lymeartassociation.org).

"Two Crows," color woodcut by James Reed.

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# Cutting-edge art

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By AMY J. BARRY  
Special to The Day

**A**t a time when the backlash against the intangibility of technology is driving up sales of tangible items such as vinyl records, books, print publications, and even board games, it's no surprise that printmaking is alive and well.

This painstaking art and craft is being celebrated in the Lyme Art Association's "Pulled and Pressed" juried exhibition, opening on Jan. 20. The show features original contemporary representational hand-made prints by LAA members of all levels, members of the Stonington Printmakers Society, and several renowned printmakers invited by Helen Cantrell of Old Lyme, who juried the show.

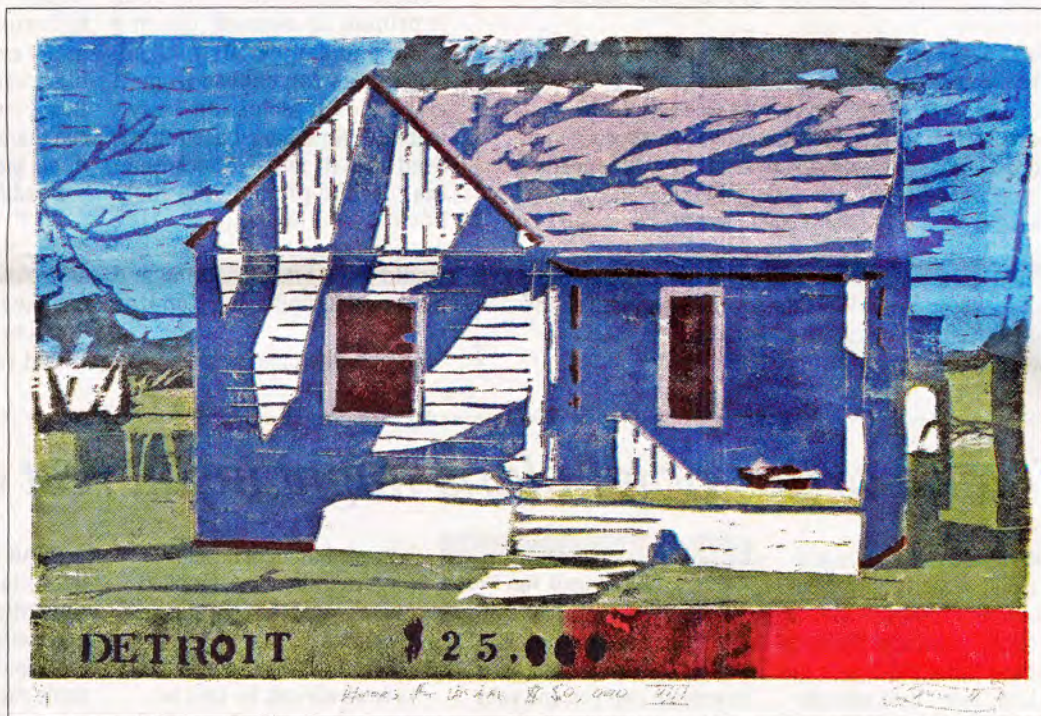
"Contemporary printmaking is really booming; so many contemporary artists are making prints," Cantrell says. "These are not reproductions but hand-drawn, carved or etched on a surface and then hand-inked and rolled through a press by hand by the artist or a master printer. Sometimes the artist makes an edition of seven or 10, but each is slightly different, and all are considered original pieces of art."

Cantrell, a painter and a printmaker whose work includes large-scale woodcuts, recently won awards at the Boston Printmakers 2015 Biennial and Highpoint Center for Printmaking's 2016 international show. She has one large color woodcut in the show, "Cats Blue Black."

"It's a refreshing relief for people to work directly with their hands," she says. "There's something very satisfying about transforming a piece of wood, for example, into a new image. Prints are so direct; they're like drawing to me, whereas I sometimes struggle with my painting. At least the prints I respond to are very direct and graphic, and the artists I invited have very expressionist, flowing kinds of minds. There's something about the ink and paper that kind of sparkles and is very fresh."

Cantrell also enjoys the collaborative aspects of printmaking.

"It's an old-fashioned, medieval workshop kind of feeling if you're working with others — groups like the Stonington Printmakers — who are all hanging out together," she says.



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"Detroit" (from series "Homes Under \$50,000") by Nina Jordan; color woodcut.

## Invited artists

Cantrell points out that the printmakers she invited to exhibit in the show are all nationally known artists with whom she has worked and/or greatly admires.

Lyell Castonguay teaches at print studios throughout New England and is the director of BIG INK, an ongoing collaborative project with a giant traveling press that invites other artists to make large woodcuts. He creates narrative woodcuts that incorporate transparent colors and complex, hand-carved patterning.

"He is the Johnny Appleseed of big woodcuts and helping other artists make them," Cantrell says. "For the last five or six years he's been doing very large woodcuts of birds — which are a little ominous because they're so large — looking you right in the face."

"Lyell is a little more precise and surreal in how he

composes his woodcuts than other artists," Cantrell adds. "He uses many layers of color, perfectly registered. He really fine-tunes his prints."

James Reed was the master printer at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk where Cantrell, who lived nearby in the late 1990s, began taking classes.

"I got hooked, I fell in love with the whole process and atmosphere," she recalls. "I was (Reed's) printer's assistant for awhile and I learned so much from him, from just observing."

Reed, now owner of Milestone Graphics in Bridgeport, is also an accomplished artist whose personal work is featured in many corporate collections, as well as the New York Public Library and Metropolitan Museum of Art. He previously taught at Lyme Academy College of Fine Art.

On exhibit at LAA will be pieces from his recent series, including bold black-and-white studies of crows,

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## FROM GI

flowers and churches.

"Jim was at an artist residency at I-Park (Foundation) in East Haddam and he didn't know what he was going to do," Cantrell says. "He saw these black birds hopping around outside his window and did color washes and drawings, and then went back to his studio and made woodcuts of them. He's been doing them for the last five years.

"He has a very German expressionist, loose drawing style," Cantrell notes. "Sharp, shattered, rough strokes, but very sophisticated at the same time."

Cantrell also met Nina Jordan at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking, where Cantrell continues to do a lot of her printmaking. Jordan is a painter and printmaker based in New York City. Her work is in the collections of The New York Public Library, Yale University Art Gallery and The Getty Museum. Several pieces from her ongoing series of color woodcuts of houses taken directly from real estate ads, titled "Homes for Under \$50,000," will be in the show.

"Nina picked these homes because they were very cheap, bank or mortgage foreclosures, highlighting the sadness that



"Cats Blue Black," color woodcut by Helen Cantrell.

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these little houses were up for sale because people lost their jobs and could no longer afford them," Cantrell explains.

"I just love these and how the (images) are kind of rough and sharp and you can see where the knife gouged into

the wood," she says. "It's (also) kind of like the German Expressionists of the 1920s—a sympathetic view toward something that's not rich or fancy."

Cantrell is looking forward to the opening of "Pulled and Pressed."

"I think it's going to be a real treat for people to see this work," she says.

"Good art transforms and all these artists transform reality in some way and make you see the world a little differently."