



Cade Tompkins Projects

# ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

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Liz Lee

## ALLISON BIANCO

Beard and Weil Galleries, Wheaton College • Norton, MA • [wheatoncollege.edu/gallery.com](http://wheatoncollege.edu/gallery.com) • through February 22, 2017

The sea is the central character in Allison Bianco's *Atlantic Time* a collection of intaglio and screen printed works inspired by the Rhode Island coastline and defined by the artist's efforts to reconcile that present-day, real-life seascape with



Allison Bianco, *Leave Your Troubles Behind* 2015, intaglio and screen print, edition of 6, 18 x 32 inches, Courtesy of the artist and Cade Tompkins Projects

the more nebulous one that exists in her memory and imagination.

*The Sinking of Matunuck* is a panoramic triptych of the tiny beach community where Bianco spent her childhood summers. Here the meticulously etched landscape is augmented by the accidental nuances of the printing process itself; fingerprints become distant storm clouds, and wire brush marks become wisps of wind carrying flying debris across the sky. A screen-printed layer of glow-in-the-dark pink represents the real-life menace of rising sea levels that threaten to swallow the community whole, while the arc of a dayglo rainbow suggests a future much less grim.

Bright screen-printed overlays also reimagine the landscape in *Later that Day at Second Beach*, a series of six panels set on the cliffs of Middletown, RI. Here jagged, etched rocks and a

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bright orange sea sit below an aquatint sky punctuated by the loping arcs of pink fireworks. The scene looks backwards to Hiroshige's *Fireworks over Ryogoku Bridge* but somehow feels more like a futuristic landscape from a distant planet.

Hiroshige's influence is also present in *Leave Your Troubles Behind*, where a monolithic sun hovers over the Block Island shore. A googly-eyed sea creature is screen printed over the intaglio, hinting at the humor suggested by the piece's title -- a reference to the silly TV jingle used in commercials for the Block Island ferry. Similar creatures appear from the dark waters in *The Old Jamestown Bridge* series, a set of three prints depicting the destruction of the rickety structure that used to connect Conanicut Island to the mainland.

Conanicut Island also features in *Pouring on Jamestown*, but here the main focus is the massive deep blue sea, etched with currents and dotted with white foam that the artist created by experimenting with whiting powder, which is typically used as a cleaning agent. Here, and elsewhere in *Atlantic Time*, it's fitting that the ocean shares commonalities with the printing process itself. Both are rhythmic yet unpredictable, both full of surprises that occasionally wash up, disrupting the scenery.