

Jacob Noel's displacements

By Mette Klinkby Berndsen / Oby translation

Jacob Noel is a trained sculptor and graphic artist, who works primarily with drawing, photography and architecture. The exhibition *Displace me somewhere else* is a dialogue between prints on paper and the series of wall-mounted objects – illuminated boxes with intricate architectural laser carvings called *Moments 1-7*.

Arabesques

Noel's monochrome prints in red, yellow and black inks are hand-stamped onto the paper with an inked wooden block. The images are composed of repeated overlapping imprints of a single motif – the Bonsai tree – and take form in a calligraphic flow in which Noel works with rapid sliding motions that at once demands intense presence and slight absence.

In formats of 70x100 cm and 350x272 cm the Bonsai tree is repeated over and over to form hovering ornamented landscapes, empty and filled-in circles or vibrating structural imagery inked on paper. With arabesque technique (and trickery) the images call for dizzying close-up examination and tracing of the intricate chaotic patterns, but simultaneously bestow upon the viewer an overall meditative calmness.

The art of making Bonsai trees originates from India and China, and came to Japan in the 10th century. The tree symbolizes the infinity of nature in a tiny format, and plays a role in Asian Mysticism and several meditative practices. In Zen Buddhism Zenga (Zen art) is the artist's meditation that becomes the enlightenment of the viewer. Zen iconography often includes landscapes and circles to represent the Buddhist notion of emptiness. It is art of enlightenment and presence.

Moments 1-7

The series *Moments 1-7* consists of seven square plywood boxes in the formats of 50x50 cm and 120x120 cm. The boxes are illuminated from within so the light shines through the delicate laser carvings of architectural motifs. We are looking at shining drawings that merge architecture and sculpture. The boxes are painted a matte black and the glowing lines form hovering, slender miniature cityscapes and neon pictograms. The thickness of the plywood top makes it impossible for the viewer to see the all of the image illuminated at once. The viewer must therefore interact with the boxes, and literally move about to experience the full cityscape.

The architectural fragments carved in the boxes are a reminder of Noel's many travels, his architectural drawings and photographic journals of urban space. In his early work Noel plays with focus and diffusion as a way of showing how a one initially experiences new

places. The experience, Noel finds, is finding a tiny focal point in the surrounding chaos. When you arrive somewhere for the very first time your brain immediately tries to find structure in that, which is unknown, and tend to focus on a single point leaving the immediate surroundings blurry, diffused and unorganized. While this focal point can be intensely mindful and sensuous, the consciousness displaces the focal point's surroundings.

The series of prints and *Moments 1-7* examine presence and absence in different ways – through the alternating perspective of the myriad of Bonsai trees and the architectural collages – and use mental and physical displacements in both the making of – and viewing of the works.