

Know Your Artist, Know Your Art

Carbondale Arts believes in the power of art and we know you do, too. There is a deep connection that happens when you purchase a piece of art, and getting to know the artist makes that connection even deeper. Carbondale Arts hosts over 10 art exhibitions every year. Find some art you love and dive in.

We have launched a “Know Your Artist, Know Your Art” campaign, as Carbondale Arts works to build relationships between artists and patrons. Inspired by the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model of Investing in local food, this Community Supported Art movement promotes the investment of local artists making a living in and around the newly established Carbondale Creative District, where Carbondale Arts makes its home.

October 9 - November 9, 2020

Saiopor Chris Hassig



At the Carbondale Arts R2 Gallery
in The Launchpad (76 S 4th Street)
carbondalearts.com | 970-963-1680
Now open weekdays 10am - 5pm

Chris Hassig Biography

Chris Hassig is an artist from Carbondale, Colo. This is the first exhibition devoted primarily to exhibiting his 20-year fictional mapmaking project. Mapmaking and its imaginative possibilities have been a constant interest in his art practice since the seventh grade. The featured work depicts the city of Ralesis, capital of a fictional country called Saiopor. It's a work that's meant to be appreciated aesthetically, but more so meant to be read close-up as a springboard to an imagined city of the mind. It's also a vaguely utopian vision at odds with the current state of the world--one that can be appreciated as a subtly surreal escape or as a constructive fantasy of a future kind of city. Most of the work was created using an open-bite copper-plate etching process sealed to panel with resin. Chris' previous exhibitions with Carbondale Arts have featured intricate drawings of grass and abstract drawings inspired by geology and landscape. Chris is a champion of the Carbondale Creative District as an artist, KDNK DJ, community member, and volunteer.

Chris Hassig Ralesis V Conceptual Statement

Maps are more than mere imagery. They are an incredibly efficient system for conveying visual and narrative information in a non-linear manner. They do not have to follow one storyline, series of events or perspective, but can contain multitudes. Maps often strive to appear official, impartial, unemotional, and impersonal, but at the same time maps do have authors. As much as mapmakers may attempt to transcend human fallibility, maps reflect the biases, the tools and technology, and the worldview of their creators. They can be deliberately skewed to tell a story, but will tell one about their creator regardless.

Maps attempt to be all-encompassing, but they are inevitable simplifications. One of my previous projects depicted grass in exhaustive detail. It was akin to a map of a tiny part of the earth. Yet, even in that work simplification and systemization was unavoidable. The famous adage "the map is not the territory" is one of my favorites. That leap from what's visible on the page and the inferred territory is where maps catch fire in my imagination.

We should discuss imagination, for these are not maps of measurement and observation, but maps of imagination. These maps exaggerate the bias of their creator, because they spring entirely from my imagination. At the same time they are recognizable, familiar almost. This is because they lean heavily on a lifetime of enthusiasm for mapmaking, for observing, exploring and understanding landscapes, both natural and human constructed, for investigating the making of maps and the ever evolving ways of representing the world, and for educating myself on utopian planning efforts--human attempts to do better by the world. For the purposes of this project, all of that accumulated investigation and attention to detail are just a part of the research towards a richer imagination.

These maps, no matter whether they are read for their imagery, color, and form or maximal informational richness, thus are a shorthand for an imagined world, or part of it. Translating that vision as best I can, or better yet, giving you the tools to construct your own imagination based on the available information, is an ever unfinished lifetime project.

Chris Hassig
7.24.20

Chris Hassig

Ralesis V Technical Process Statement

This work is the continuation of a 20-year mapmaking project that began in 7th grade. Ralesis is the capital city of Saiopor, a fictional country that first took the form of a sketchbook. The sketchbook was a hobby, an obsessively reworked testing ground, an outlet, a learning tool, and a work of art. I found it useful for absorbing and reimagining ideas that I found as I followed my deep interests in the history, techniques, and goals of mapmaking, urban planning, architecture, anthropology, sustainability, and art. Ralesis began as a spread in this 9 x 12" sketchbook, probably around 2007. I almost immediately found that the amount of detail I aspired to was simply impossible in such a small format.

I long considered Saiopor to be a personal side project, too idiosyncratic to make into a publicly digestible artwork. Instead I focused on highly detailed and patternized drawings of grass as I began to pursue art in earnest. In 2013 I began an apprenticeship at Mixit Print Studio in Somerville, Mass. to learn the craft of copper-plate intaglio printmaking. After other experiments focused on creating intaglio prints from my Grass series, I unexpectedly found mapmaking to be the most appropriate and satisfying use for my newfound copper-plate etching techniques.

After some experimentation I developed an unusual process for creating map etchings. Most intaglio printmakers cover their plate with a continuous ground--a temporary acrylic or asphaltum-based coating that resists the effect of the ferric chloride bath which is used to etch the lines in the copper plate and maintains a white background for the final image. Instead I used Sharpie markers, by which I could draw negative (i.e. white) space. However, the Sharpie is much weaker at resisting the ferric, so it required a painstaking

layering of four or five coats of Sharpie for each street or park that reads as white in the finished print. I used normal ground to cover the largest areas of white.

With the city streets drawn in Sharpie, I then came back in with an etching needle to write street names and labels (backwards) through the Sharpied areas. The labels then read as black or colored in the finished print. The rest of the copper plate (mostly areas of water and the blocks of the city) were left as raw copper exposed to the ferric for what's called open-bite etching. The open bite etching creates an unpredictable and messier result, as can be seen in the varied ways different sections of the water appear with the open-bite etching. I like the way the open bite process offers a loose wabi-sabi contrast to the very controlled drawing of the city and heightens the role of serendipity and nature in the piece, as in any city.

This project often remained at low ebb as I pursued other projects, but through five separate stints at Mixit, as well as a ten-week residency at Anderson Ranch in Snowmass Village, Colo., the map slowly grew from one 18" x 24" copper plate to eight in 2013, twelve in 2016, and twenty-four in 2019. This is the fifth version of the map, the first in yellow. The fourth, a twelve-panel version of the map in black and white is currently on view at Walker Fine Art in Denver through November 7. The third version, a light black and white eight panel version with hand watercoloring, was shown at the Art Base (Wyly) in 2015.

This is the first version to show all 24 plates and the first that was printed with four plates per sheet of paper. Because the size of four plates (48" x 36") did not match the paper size (44" x 30"), the edges of this map are slightly cropped from the full 24-plate dimensions. The two center panels each contain two sheets of paper that were cut to match and

Chris Hassig Ralesis V Technical Process Statement (continued)

carefully spliced together. Look for a subtle zigzag cut that extends up the middle of the map.

Finally, I built and gessoed six custom panels to fit the paper. There are no plates covering the four corners of the map, so those sheets were torn down, and the panels built in an L shape to fit. Before mounting the paper, I undertook a marathon five day session to plot and sew all of the city's subway lines, which can be followed around the map and generally connect the most important squares and monuments of the city. Once the paper was mounted I sealed the surface with a layer of UV resistant resin and removable/reapplicable UV protective conservation spray varnish.

This project would not have happened without the help of many mentors and friends. Catherine Kernan taught me almost everything I know about printmaking and intaglio in particular at Mixit Print Studio. In Jerry Gretzinger I found a fellow map geek and mentor who gave me confidence to believe in this project. Jill Hoy, Jon Imber, Jane Goldman, Aurora DeArmendi, Andy Taylor, Elliot Norquist, Chris Gill, Dick Carter and Caio Fonseca offered invaluable advice and inspiration. My parents tolerated me living like a bum out of their back shed and dad was my #1 studio wizard in the final run-up to this show. Thanks to Brian Colley and Kirk Robinson for their patience and work mounting the show. Thanks to all my friends, family, and Carbondale community for generally keeping my head above water as I pursued eccentric projects like this one.

Chris Hassig
9.4.20

About our R2 Gallery Sponsor

This exhibition is generously sponsored by Kat and Pete Rich who are super awesome supporters of the arts and are constantly inspired by the power of creativity here in our community. Thank you, Kat and Pete!!

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to David Thickman for gallery preparation, and Kirk Robinson for gallery installation assistance.

R2 Gallery Committee Members

Staff: Brian Colley, Staci Dickerson, Amy Kimberly

Board Liaisons: Nicholas DiFrank, Leah Swan

Non-staff: Kristi Close, Gayle Embrey, Lindsay Jones (Chair), Vanessa Porras, Kirk Robinson, Laura Stover, David Thickman

These committee members work with the Gallery Manager to choose exhibitions each year. Interested in learning more?
Email brian@carbondalearts.com.