

# WAYZGOOSE PRESS

## GRIT IN THE INK

*They are a team and describing one as a leader and one as a follower, one as a typesetter and one as an illustrator provides no insight into the richness and complexity of their collaboration*

Talking with Mike Hudson & Jadwiga Jarvis is especially interesting when you get away from the topic of the Wayzgoose Press. Then you get answers to the questions you really want to ask. What drives them to create such elegant print work? How does the work maintain its integrity as fine art in the face of the stigmatic craft label that is frequently levelled at those who exhibit technical prowess within their art practice? How does a press which operates in the rarefied air of the fine arts actually survive in a country and climate which many will argue is hostile to art and artists? Artists' pay is notoriously poor and as those of us who have studied in an Australian arts institution know, there are very few professional paths that extend outside of subservience to the gallery system and the arts education cliques.

The work produced by the Wayzgoose Press is stunning for a number of technical, aesthetic and intellectual reasons. It has a richness of printing and a consistency of quality which commands serious regard. And yet ... we are left to ponder on their relative obscurity within Australia, an obscurity which has denied their work the influence it merits. Being little known here is of little financial hindrance to them as their work is primarily sold overseas by a small number of high profile dealers. In this way Wayzgoose has found its own path and bypassed the parochial Australian art market and the

institutionalised arts sector. However, this fact is significant to artists, printmakers and private presses because so few printmakers or members of the public in this country have been privileged to see their print output.

Mike Hudson and Jadwiga Jarvis have been printing as The Wayzgoose Press since 1985, producing books, broadsheets and ephemera. They have also produced a biography of the press called *The Wayzgoose Affair*, a 180 page full colour offset-printed limited edition folio book of 500 copies which is essential to the serious scholar of Australian printmaking and private presses. The book covers ground which this article will not attempt to touch upon. Sadly, it does not provide any technical tips for the mechanically fetishist printmakers amongst us; I would like to see that book come from them.

The Wayzgoose Press has flown under the radar of Australian arts institutions and galleries. This is in part by reason of their sense of integrity. It has also ensured that they have achieved financial independence for their work. They have avoided the status quo methods employed by Australian artists for income and notoriety. This last point alone ought to make them of inestimable value to the current crop of budding artists in Australia and New Zealand as a lesson in not following conventional wisdom and still managing to succeed.



The anomaly of the Waygoose Press's success within the Australian private press field is hard to understand until you consider what came before. Then you learn that Mike and John Lennon hung out and drank together, that he also photographed notable musicians like the Kinks and Eric Burden, and was responsible for the photo of Eric wearing a hand grenade, used for publicity for the *War* album.

There's more. He also drank with the notable war photographer Donald McCullum, hit on Ursula Andress (unsuccessfully) and met Jan Tschichold (who he describes as something of a 'mincer'). More seriously, he was a photographer, graphic designer and a senior lecturer at the Hornsey College of Art in London for a number of years. Mike is one of those Londoners who like to chat with their boots on. He doesn't suffer rip-off merchants, art wankers, assorted fools or nitwits. He is also remarkably warm and forthright in conversation and when taken by his passions he will happily reveal amazing things to you about the world of the printed form, the engraved block and the bound book. He is the sort of person that when you go to the bar, you buy as many rounds as you can afford, just to keep him talking.

His teaching was during a period of social disquiet and intellectual agitation if not actual revolution. Mike hung

out with people who were, contextually, creators of work that exhibited extremely high standards and who reaped the benefits of their staggeringly successful careers. It is no wonder that he would seek to make his own way through the world and define his engagement with the art world in those same terms.

Jadwiga was raised under a communist regime during the height of the cold war. She immigrated to Israel and chose marriage to escape from a morally and personally insufferable compulsory military service. Working as an animator in the film industry clearly honed her hand skills: Jadwiga mostly does the typesetting, Mike the wood engraving and linocuts and they both conceptualise and design the works. They first met when Mike lectured and Jadwiga studied at Hornsey. Although they met and knew each other socially at that time, their relationship only came to fruition years later.

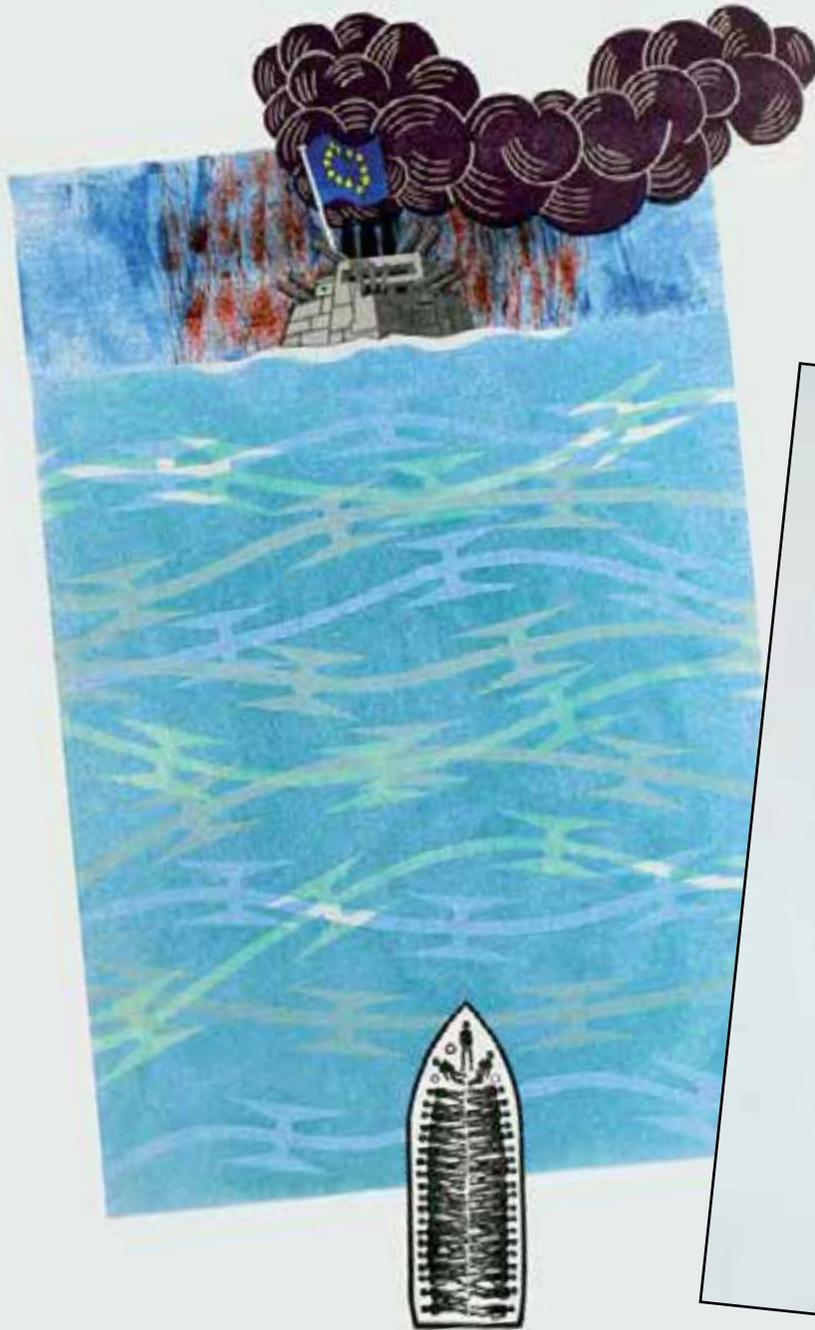
Watching them together is like observing two people who are as close to each other as it is possible to be. They are a team and describing one as a leader and one as a follower, one as a typesetter and one as an illustrator provides no insight into the richness and complexity of their collaboration. For a sense of that richness you need to look at their works and listen to them talk over a wine or a cup of tea.



*Inequality*  
Broadside #35, 2009  
Letterpress text  
Linocut illustration  
70 x 50 cm

lino-cutting tools





above  
**Dèjà vu**  
 Broadside #42, 2016  
 Linocut illustration  
 70 x 50 cm

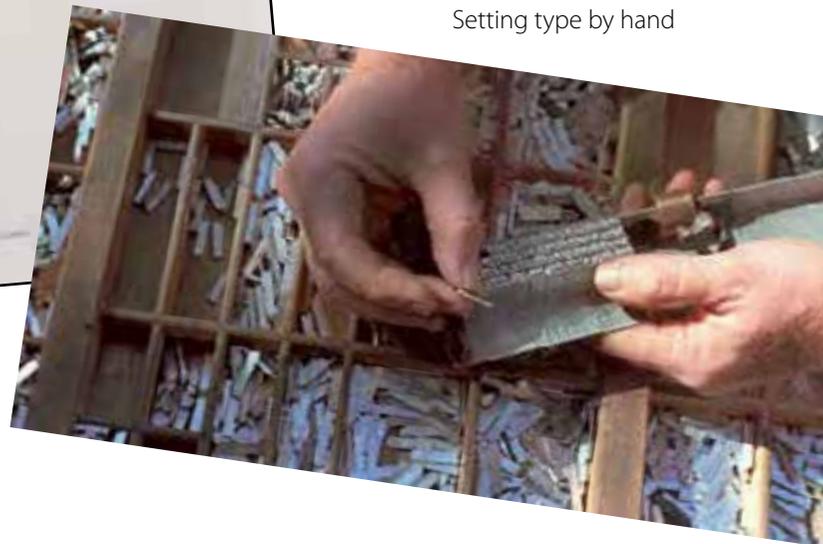
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**iShop**  
 Broadside #41, 2015  
 Letterpress text  
 Linocut illustration  
 70 x 50 cm

Chatting with Jadwiga, there is an unmistakable distaste for social injustice as well as empathy for those who are victims of governments and society at large. I suspect that growing up within the communist social system has given her an appreciation for the dissenting opinion. Jadwiga makes sharp, concise observations of the world, which can be extremely sharp, and concise. Her analysis of the abuses and pitfalls of power envelops her personality and clearly shapes the way that she engages. I suspect that many people in Australia and elsewhere might misinterpret this as some form of distemper, but it would be more accurate to see her as a woman who has never given up fighting against wrongs



*Euronomics*  
Broadside #38, 2012  
Letterpress text  
Linocut illustration  
70 x 50 cm

Setting type by hand



and who has never embraced the easy comforts of the middle class status quo.

There are many people who engage with the less appealing aspects of society – some choose economics, commerce or arms; some choose the gentler persuasion of the arts. All are searching for kindred minds, hoping to plant seeds in fecund soil. The printed sheet is the weapon of choice for Mike and Jadwiga in their offensive against what they describe as an unjust, unintelligent, consumerist corporate society.

Mike refers to their work as a form of time capsule and neither of them carries any illusions about the effect that their work might have on Australia or the world. Instead they seem quite indifferent to their local obscurity, which I feel is a shame. Here we have a private press that has produced many works of merit that actually relate to Australia.

They don't play esoteric philosophical games to appeal to the European and American pseudo-intellectual art markets. Instead of toadying to philosophical games like bored

teenagers looking for a gimmick to make them the next big thing, they have quietly engaged with what they see around them. They have refused to play the game and they are, at least at this point in time, in possession of the ball. They have based their lives in creating what they love most, engaging in the battles they most enjoy fighting and they have navigated very rocky shores to make that a self-sustaining project. They envisage that their works might provide inspiration to a future generation of artists who are more concerned with what is tangible and are less ego-bound.

Mike and Jadwiga argue convincingly that we are living in a period of extreme political opportunism and cynicism and that from within Australia they offer a dissenting voice regarding Australia and the visual arts. Although they work

within the somewhat esoteric environs of the graphic arts, they clearly are not subservient to it.

I am sure that there will be critics who will try to contextualise the Wayzgoose Press as a regional extension of the arts and crafts movement (or even as an extension of the more locally orientated Mechanics Institutes of the Arts). This represents a shallow understanding of the Arts and Crafts movement and an even shallower understanding of the imported Mechanics Institutes and their efforts to civilise the convicts and the underprivileged. Unfashionably polemical as this seems, I would argue that the Wayzgoose Press is a unique response to the nepotistic nature of the fine arts in Australia.

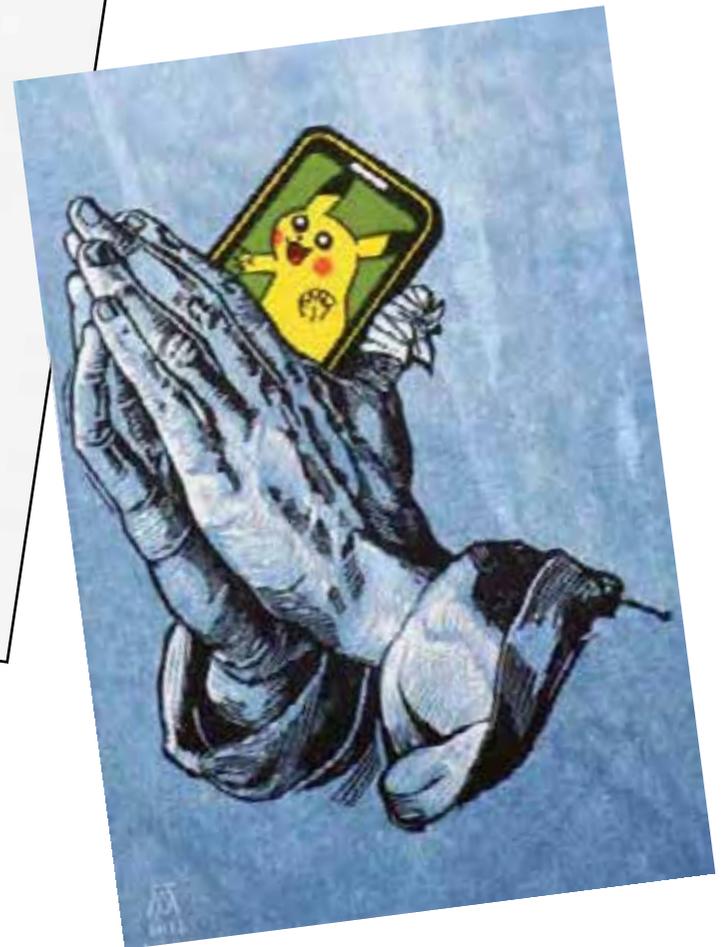
They are a uniquely industrial-era response to the Australian condition. In 2011 the Wayzgoose Press was still making art. Since then they have stepped back considerably, selling the bulk of their presses and equipment (although they still have the Western press which allows them to produce such large and perfect impressions for their spectacular output). The lesson of the Wayzgoose Press is that you can do more than survive if you recognise that the Gallery system and the teaching and lecture circuits are not there for the benefit of artists and that they can and must be bypassed to make



*Whatever happened to...?*  
 Broadside #40, 2014  
 Letterpress text  
 Linocut illustration  
 70 x 50 cm



left  
**Anarchy**  
 Broadside #37, 2011  
 Linocut illustration  
 70 x 50 cm



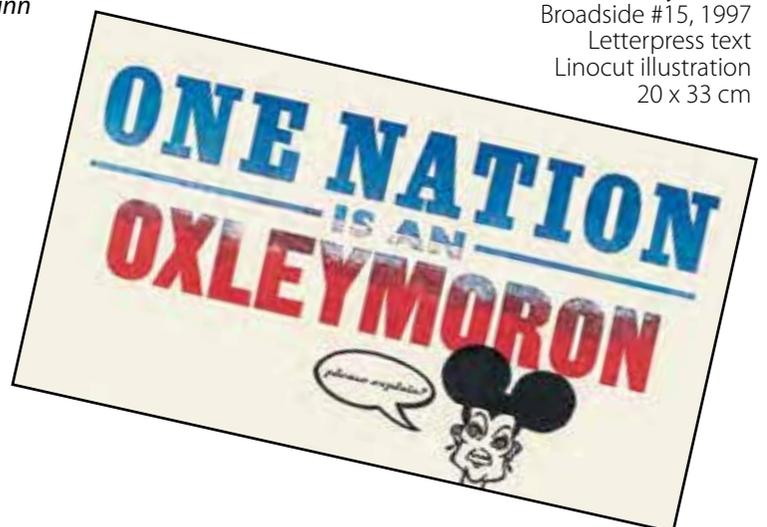
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**Sane judgement** (detail)  
 Broadside #43, 2017  
 Linocut illustration  
 70 x 50 cm

room for artists and the arts. It is a case of bypass or forever produce work which is subservient to that system.

The question which remains is why are they currently such a solitary voice? Why are they alone in engaging politically and aesthetically within the private press movement and the creative milieu in general? Implicit in this question must be an examination of Australian fine arts institutions and the methods and institutional models which we currently employ to “produce” artists.

Lawrence Finn

*aphorism doodle*  
 pen and ink  
 25 x 25 cm



**Oxleymoron**  
 Broadside #15, 1997  
 Letterpress text  
 Linocut illustration  
 20 x 33 cm

*EU-turn*  
Broadside #39, 2013  
Letterpress text  
Linocut illustration  
70 x 50 cm



Lawrence Finn is a fine artist/printmaker and occasionally literate person who produces artists books, prints and ephemera. He runs a fully equipped artist access studio and gallery (HipCat Printery) in Newbury Victoria. You can see more of the mysteries of his art by peeking at [www.patreon.com/hipcat](http://www.patreon.com/hipcat) or [www.hipcatprintery.com](http://www.hipcatprintery.com).

*The Wayzgoose Affair* was published in 2007.  
Copies are available from the Oz Arts website shop.