

Overview

ODILI DONALD ODITA



Deep Blue



Deep Purple



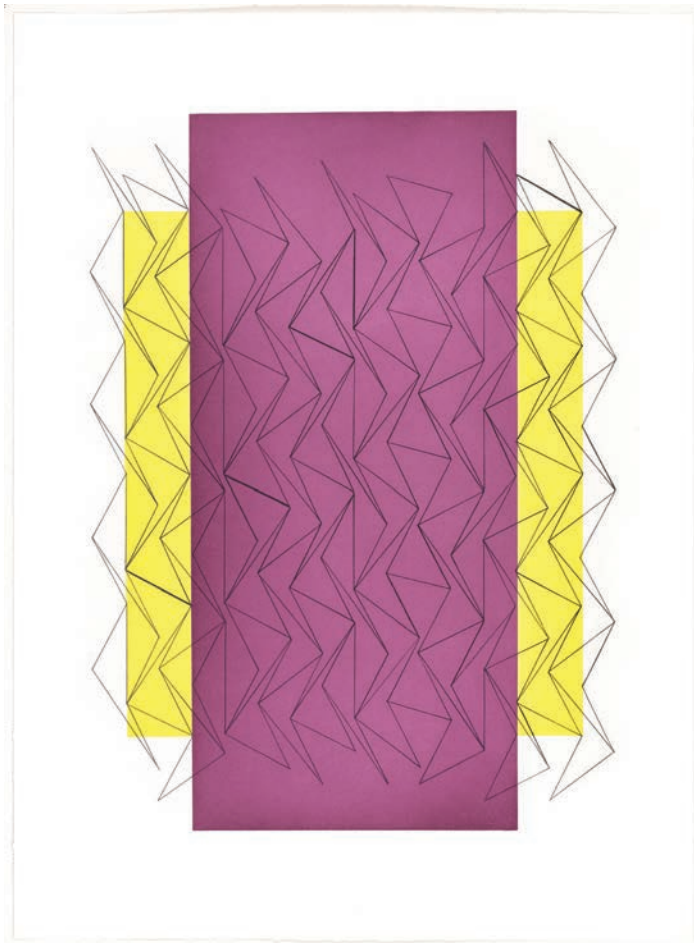
Deep Red

Odili Donald Odita, *Deep*. A set of three color aquatints. Image size: 17 x 13½" ; paper size: 23½ x 19½". Edition 10. All images printed by Courtney Sennish in 2022. Visit crownpoint.com for more information.

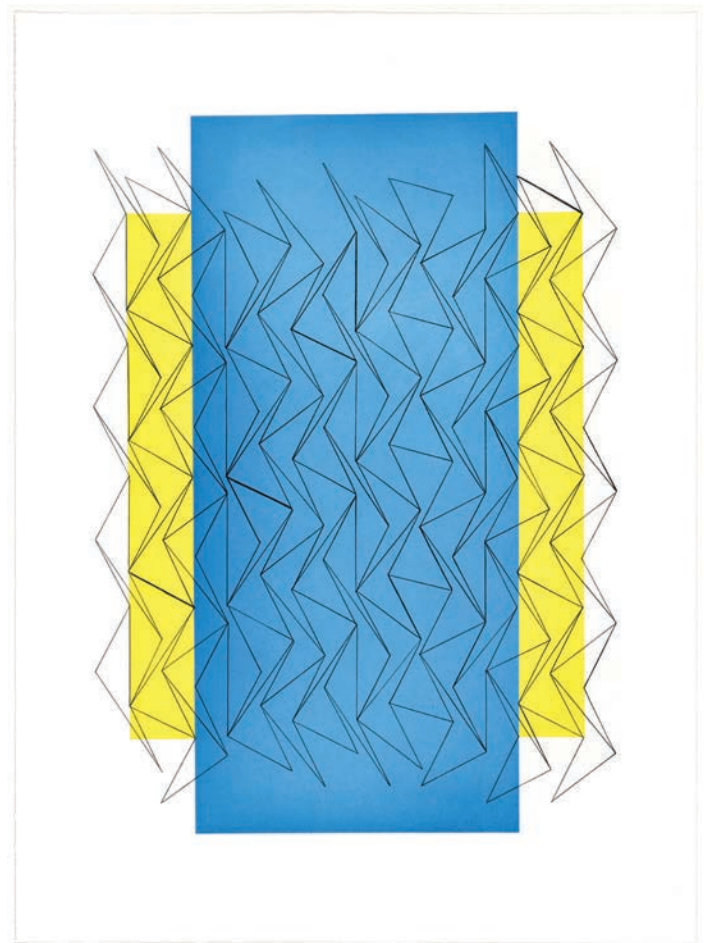
Odili Donald Odita is an abstract painter born in 1966 in Engu, Nigeria, who lives and works in Philadelphia, PA. In October 2022 he worked for two weeks in the Crown Point studio in San Francisco. In January 2023, Crown Point's director Valerie Wade emailed Odita with a few questions developed from conversations when in the studio.

Valerie Wade: Although you have worked recently with the print techniques of silkscreen and linocut, this project in etching introduced you to a new medium. When you were getting into the process, you observed that etching is primarily a drawing process. You first created a pattern or grid drawing on a plate, and you said you usually approach a new painting by creating a grid to map out the idea, and then start painting. Could you tell me something about how you developed the idea for this project?

Odili Donald Odita: I had selected in my mind some patterns that I am currently working on in my paintings, patterns that I have been wanting to investigate more deeply for some time now. I have been wanting to understand the spatial relationships that could be found within the structure of the selected patterns. I felt it would be a great opportunity to do this investigation at Crown Point Press.



Bliss (Purple)



Bliss (Blue)

Bliss. A set of three color aquatints with soft ground etching. Image and paper size: 31½ x 23¼". Edition 10.

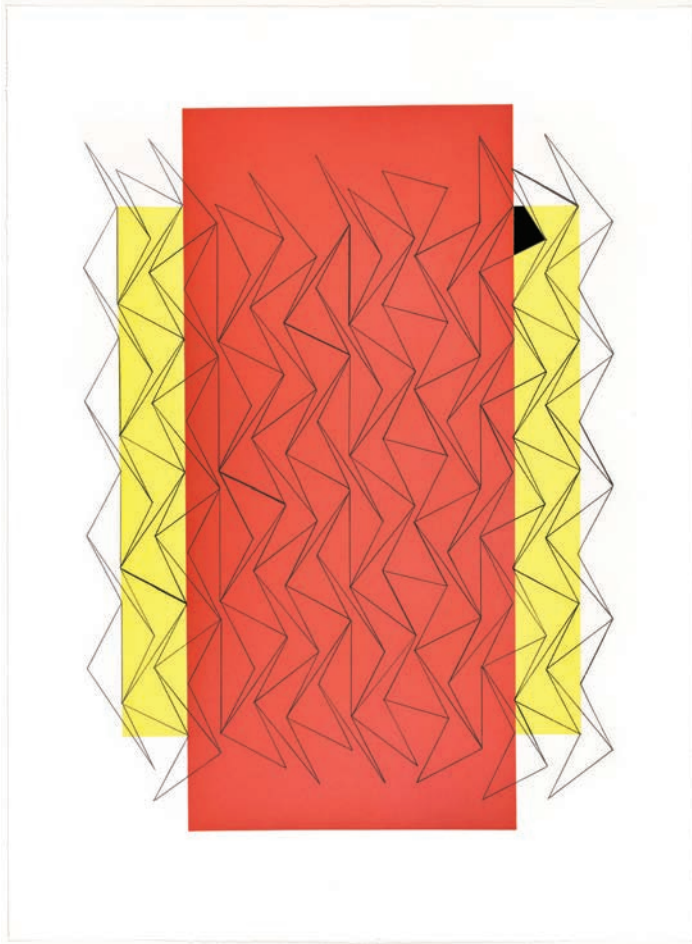
Line is something that has both a primary and secondary effect in my paintings, but it is not something that I often deal with as a subject or object. I wanted to see what I could discover by exploring this aspect in the printmaking process.

VW: You have said that in your work you are interested in exploring the way color has been used historically, culturally, socially and politically. You have mentioned as influences Joseph Albers' color theory, American and European modernism, contemporary conceptual positions, and the traditional colors, patterns and textiles of Nigeria. Your work is concerned with your experience of a dual identity: being American and being from Nigeria in America.

When you were ready to add color to your images, printer Courtney Sennish showed you the technique of aquatint and

you selected a variety of colors. In your paintings, the colors sit side by side and the interactions among them create a visceral experience. But, in the prints, you explored color in a slightly different way. Layering is one of the great characteristics of making an etching. In your studio, as I understand it, you hand-mix the paint so that no two shades are repeated. Could you talk about your choice of color in the prints?

ODO: First, the colors in the prints came out of the same psychology I utilize in my paintings. With the prints, I wanted to become more aware of how color sits on the paper and of how it is absorbed. I was playing with its saturation, vibrancy and depth. It was fascinating to see how one color would get absorbed into another color, and to see how it changed in this deepening. At the same time, I wanted to investigate the interaction of the color with the paper, where



Bliss (Red)



Odili Donald Odita in the Crown Point studio, 2022.

the paper plays a part in how we are to see and understand the color. And I let my surprise from the color experiments drive the results.

VW: What is the relationship of titles to your work? Do you create a title before, during, or after the work is completed?

ODO: I am always trying to center myself within the work as it is developing, and titles become a useful device towards this end. Titles are a means for me to be directive in how I am thinking and working and they help me to unlock the work's potential content during the process. Titles are not an end point for me, but a beginning, to explore the different ways that I am thinking and feeling while working. Titles can come to me at any point during the working process, and they can often change as I gain more clarity.

VW: You have completed many large scale wall works and installations for various museums across the country. A recent wall work, completed in 2020, "Procession" at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, for example, is massive, about three or four stories high. In comparison, one aspect of experiencing a print is the work takes you directly into a more personal space. Did you find the relatively small scale of printmaking a factor in the way you approached it?

ODO: I love paper and all its qualities. I think there is a certain intimacy that paper carries within its scale, and that feeling increases for me when I can engage with the special qualities that the paper might have. There's a sensuousness to it, the quality of the color and texture of the paper for example, and it is exciting to be able to work with this potential and to engage its possibility as a space to make marks of all kinds.



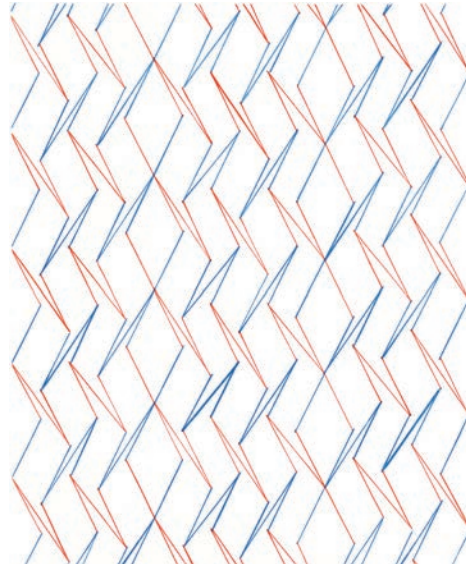
Net (Red and Blue on Yellow)



Net (Red and Purple)



Net (Red and Yellow)



Net (Red and Blue)

Net. A set of four color etchings. Each image measures 17 x 13½ inches on a 23½ x 19½-inch sheet and is printed in an edition of 10.

VW: Painting for some artists is a solitary activity, working alone and privately. Conversely, in your studio practice, you employ a team of assistants to execute your ideas for large scale projects. Did our directly hands-on studio environment affect the way you worked in the print studio with our printers?

ODO: It was great to be able to work with the master printers especially because they helped me to go through ideas and test-results quicker. I was able to quickly see how each

print worked out and to know where things might have failed. And the master printers were able to help me get to next steps, all through a continuum of a hands-on exploration and production of prints. This way of working was so direct for me and it aligned well with how I like to work in my studio.



Black on Blue. Color aquatint with soft ground etching.



White on Red (Burning). Color aquatint.



Smoke. Color aquatint.



Fire. Color aquatint.



Promise of Good Hope. Color aquatint with soft ground etching.

Each image measures 17 x 13½ inches on a 23½ x 19½-inch sheet and is printed in an edition of 10.

Crown Point Press

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In the Gallery

Open Veil

Etchings by Odili Donald Odita
January 13 - March 10, 2023



A publication

Odili Donald Odita, a monograph surveying over twenty years of Odita's career, will be released in February 2023 by Sternthal Books.