

Petzel

ZORAWAR SIDHU & ROB SWAINSTON

Flash Point

March 7 – April 12, 2025
520 W 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *Flash Point*, an exhibition of prints featuring woodcuts, screenprints, and etchings by New York-based artist duo Zorawar Sidhu and Rob Swainston, opening Friday, March 7, 2025. The show marks Sidhu and Swainston's second exhibition with Petzel, and will be on view through April 12, 2025, at 520 West 25th Street. Presenting three new bodies of work, *Flash Point* represents both social and natural landscapes in the context of climate disaster, political activism, and global events.

Their series of large-scale, multi-color woodcut prints on fabric, titled *History is Present*, considers the age of the Anthropocene and the relationship between human impact and shifting natural geographies. Referencing canonical artworks, Sidhu and Swainston lend iconic visual allegories to lasting social conditions and humanitarian issues; for example, their "Raft" depicts contemporary displaced peoples and a history of forced migrations. Made using a custom-built press to accommodate the scale of these works, these monumental woodcut prints demonstrate a mastery of technique and process, with layers of tonal values building complex compositions.

Their second series, *War for the Union*, features mixed woodcut with silkscreen prints on paper, looking toward distinctly American political issues from recent history. Layered with appropriated images from news media wood engravings of the civil war, such as Winslow Homer's Civil War drawings for *Harper's Weekly*, this series suggests both the cyclical temporality of images in American journalism and a collective fear of a second civil war in our current climate. *War for the Union* depicts scenes from pivotal moments of civil unrest, including demonstrations following the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, 2024 pro-Palestinian protests on university campuses, the 2024 Republican and Democratic National Conventions, and the 2017 Charlottesville white supremacist rally. Through rigorous, vibrant layers of figures, rally signs, and geographies, Sidhu and Swainston slow down the processing of mass circulated images, the antithesis to our current barrage of news media.

The third series, a group of color etchings made in collaboration with the Columbia University Neiman Center for Print Studies titled *Spring Wake*, highlights environmental issues in various regions, rendering signposts of protest with native plants of the respective terrain. For example, "Japanese Lily" layers images of activists protesting the radioactive water released from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea, while "Fairy Primrose" depicts protests of the ecocide resulting from the ongoing Ukraine War—each indigenous flora overlaid atop the local environmental threat. Bearing an almost documentarian quality, these prints link political turmoil and climate disaster intimately with the depicted landscapes.

The exhibition title, *Flash Point*, defines not only the point of combustion, but also the instant at which a person or event flares up, suddenly exploding into action or being. Using woodcut printmaking, one of the oldest forms of mass communication and a means to propel revolutions, protests, and social movements, Sidhu and Swainston address structures of power and our relationship to hegemonic forces. The artists examine contemporary cultural conflicts through an unraveling of modern news media to reveal its canonical underpinnings, reaching back in time to consider how news images are represented, circulated, and consumed.

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About the Artists

Zorawar Sidhu & Rob Swainston, both living and working in New York City, are a collaborative art duo exploring the intersection of historical print processes with contemporary technologies. Their projects investigate the complexities of contemporary social issues by drawing from the history of print as the medium par excellence of social movements. They have exhibited together at the Hall Art Foundation, Reading (2024); University at Buffalo Anderson Gallery, Buffalo (2024); Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin (2024); Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, Portland (2023); Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington, Arlington (2023); The Patricia and Philip Frost Art Museum, Miami (2023); Syracuse University Art Museum, Syracuse (2023); United States Department of State, Washington, D.C. (2023); Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton (2023); among others.

Sidhu and Swainston's collaborative work is included in the collections of the Art Museum of West Virginia University, Morgantown; Hall Collection, Reading; Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, Portland; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin; and the Syracuse University Art Museum, Syracuse.

Zorawar Sidhu (b. 1985, Ludhiana, India) has a background in art history and fine arts. His projects recreate art historical artifacts using contemporary technology and historical materials and techniques. He has exhibited projects with galleries and museums nationally, including exhibitions with Marginal Utility, Philadelphia; Spring/Break Art Show with Field Projects, New York; Five Myles, Brooklyn; the Museum of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia; and the Museum of The Town of Vestal, NY.

Rob Swainston's (b. 1970, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania) work is informed by a dual academic background in political science and art. He is an Associate Professor at Purchase College and co-founder and Master Printer for Prints of Darkness. Rob has been awarded numerous residencies including Skowhegan, Marie Walsh Sharpe, and the Fine Arts Work Center. Solo and group exhibitions include Marginal Utility, Philadelphia; David Krut Projects, New York; BravinLee Programs, New York; Socrates Sculpture Park, New York; Smack Mellon, Brooklyn; Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Provincetown; Print Center New York, New York; Canada Gallery, New York; Queens Museum, New York; and the Bronx Museum, New York. In 2020–21, Rob was the Ludwig Foundation Professor for Printmaking at the Weissensee Kunsthochschule Berlin.

Coinciding with *Flash Point*, Sidhu and Swainston will be joined in conversation with Lane Sell, printmaker and owner of Shoestring Press, at the Brooklyn Fine Art Print Fair, on Friday, March 28, 2025, at 4pm, at Powerhouse Arts in Brooklyn.

Additionally, Sidhu and Swainston will be joined in conversation with Faye Hirsch, art historian and critic, for a curatorial talk on the prints featured in *Flash Point*, on April 5, 2025, at Petzel.

Petzel Gallery is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.