CAPTURED OBJECTS
Prints by Devorah Boxer
Captured Objects: Prints by Devorah Boxer

Sandra Kraskin, Curator

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Sidney Mishkin Gallery
Baruch College, The City University of New York
135 East 22 Street, New York, NY 10010
PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Devorah Boxer's work is both timeless and contemporary. With close-up views, intricate details, and dramatic tonalities, Boxer captures her objects and gives them life. These objects, while seemingly banal, become heroic.

The Mishkin Gallery is delighted to present the exhibition Captured Objects: Prints by Devorah Boxer, which features a broad range of Boxer's work over the past three decades. Her masterful drawing, command of numerous printmaking techniques, and her eye for visual poetry combine to give her prints a unique presence.

I am grateful to the artist for her cooperation and assistance in organizing this exhibition. I would also like to thank Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien and Ryu Toyonaga for bringing Devorah Boxer's work to my attention and for lending prints to the show. In addition, Emily Ackerman, my curatorial assistant, deserves acknowledgment for her help with all phases of the exhibition, as well as the catalog.

It is also a great pleasure to acknowledge the support of Baruch College President Michel Wallerstein and Jeffrey Peck, Dean of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences and Vice Provost for Global Strategies. Their commitment to providing cultural programs at Baruch College has been essential to the success of the Mishkin Gallery.

Sandra Kraskin, Ph.D.
Director, Sidney Mishkin Gallery

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COVER DETAIL: Un guide (One Man), 1994
Etching, aquatint, and dry point, 22 x 16, 47 x 31 cm
Capturing Objects, Finding Poetry: 
Prints by Devorah Boxer

By Sandra Krasin

SIEVES AND DRILLS, POTATO MASHERS AND HINGES—printmaker Devorah Boxer captures and reanimates objects, transforming a variety of carpentry, electrical, and household tools into icons without erasing their ordinary quality.

Boxer achieves this by providing close-up views, intricate details, and dramatic or subtle contrasts of light and dark. Often, the objects represent an earlier era—frequently purchased at French flea markets, such as the brocante market at the Porte de Vanses in Paris—which adds a quality of nostalgia to otherwise stark forms. Enlarging and isolating the objects give her prints monumental scale as well. The objects are endowed with character, forcing viewers to take another look at the mundane things that surround us. “I try to catch a very precise reality that belongs to the object—a moment in the life of the object,” she explains.

A FOCUS ON THE OBJECT

Even though Devorah Boxer was born in Troy, New York, in 1953 and educated in the United States, she has lived and worked in Paris, France, since 1959. To appreciate her work in context then, one must recognize artistic currents in both countries, especially during Boxer's early years.

When Boxer left the United States in 1959, Pop Art was upstaging Abstract Expressionism. Pollock had died in 1956 in a tragic automobile accident, and that same year British artist Richard Hamilton made a collage titled Just what is it that makes today's
PLATE 2. Servus romane (Roman Lock), 2000. Black-and-white drawing, pierre noire, charcoal, white chalk, 55 x 78 cm

PLATE 3. Servus romane (Roman Lock), 2000. Etching, aquatint, dry point, soft ground, and roulette on copper, AP 2, 23.9 x 29.8 cm
homes so different, so appealing), which is considered
to be one of the earliest examples of Pop Art. This
avant-garde movement rejected abstract art and,
instead, showed a new interest in popular culture and
common objects, such as the famously appropriated
image of the Campbell’s soup can in Andy Warhol's
work. Borrowed from American advertising, Warhol's
Pop Art images are among the most famous works of
twentieth-century art.

Yet, when Boxer arrived in Paris, she was making
woodcuts and etchings with figurative themes, re-
jecting both Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art. By
the late 1970s, the figures were disappearing from her
work, and she was limiting her compositions to two or
three familiar objects, such as apples or boxes. Some-
times a single image of a transistor or a close-up view
of her hand would dominate an entire print.

Then, in the early 1980s, she enlarged her ob-
jects and moved them forward, closer to the picture
plane. Throughout the 1980s, Boxer explored the
form and texture of disparate objects in such prints
as Pauch-pit, 1980; Silo Package, 1981; Spaghetti, 1983; and
Myths (Drill), 1988-96. During the 1990s and into the
twenty-first century, her choices became more focused
on mechanical and electrical objects, kitchen utensils,
and carpentry tools.

INFLUENCES AND AFFINITIES
Certainly Devorah Boxer’s poetic objects seem the
opposite of Pop Art’s aggressive, commercial images.
Visually, her prints appear closer to Rembrandt’s etch-
ings than to Warhol’s prints. Boxer employs traditional
printmaking techniques like etching and aquatint and
rejects the flat, garish colors of advertising. The power
of her prints emanates from a detailed definition of
the objects and the drama created by her contrasts of
light and dark. Boxer develops complex images with a
variety of traditional printing processes, while Pop art-
ists like Warhol adopted more commercial techniques
and a factory production model. Yet, like Warhol, she
creates iconic images from the most mundane, utilitar-
ian objects.

Boxer’s focus on individual objects may also relate
to the French movement Nouveau Réalisme, which
has been compared to Pop Art. Named in 1961 by
Pierre Restany, this diverse group of artists, includ-
ing Arman, Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, and
Christo, rejected the abstract art of the 1950s and em-
braced the use of ordinary commercial objects.

Boxer’s influences and affinities can also be found
in the work of other modern artists. Her sold, care-
fully constructed objects recall those in Paul Cézanne’s
still life paintings from the late nineteenth century; how-
ever, the work of Giorgio Morandi, who was born in
1890 and lived until 1964, is probably the closest prece-
dent in sensibility. A painter and an accomplished
printmaker, Morandi is known for his simple still life
paintings and his etchings depicting a few three-di-
ensional objects—vases, bottles, and bowls—against
a shallow background. In his paintings, color is muted
and often monochromatic; in his etchings, Morandi
was dedicated to black and white. When de New York
International Graphic Arts Society requested a color
etching, Morandi complained, “Can you imagine they
wanted me to do an etching for them in four colors . . .
What a barbaric idea!” Morandi’s spare black-and-white compositions, commonplace objects, and
enigmatic forms provided a strong reference point for
Boxer’s work.

Boxer’s is a more contemporary sensibility. Re-
jecting the shallow space and cubist structure of Mo-
randi’s compositions in her recent work, she positions
an object up close to the picture plane and pins it
down, like a specimen on a piece of paper. She views
her world through a close-up lens, almost like a pho-
tographer. Yet, she eliminates any depth of field, plac-
ing her objects on a flat, indeterminate background—
sometimes she enlarges the object to effectively blot
out the ground.

PRINTMAKING AND DRAWING
Boxer earned a BA from Brown University to Provi-
dence, Rhode Island, in 1965 and an MFA from Yale
University in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1959. She
studied with the well-known printmaker, Gabor Pe-
terdi at Yale University Art School, where she had her
first experience with printmaking in 1956. Boxer also
studied color theory with Josef Albers and, during her
junior year, spent three months in Paris studying with
the well-known cubist painter André Lhote.
Later, in Paris, Boxer studied with master printer
Jacques Prélat at the studio of Lacourière-Prélat in
Montmartre and informally with her neighbor Jean
Pennequin, a master printer who had a studio next
to hers in Montparnasse. She recalls, “He was very
friendly and I, very shy. It was years before I dared
to knock on his door . . . It was he who taught me
to print.” Boxer also remembers watching Pennequin
print Picasso’s Bathsheba with 58 colors on seven cop-
per plates.

Drawing is a major element in Boxer’s work: She
starts with a drawing. Drawing catches and defines her
objects; it is an essential part of her process. The ele-
ments of the drawing are developed as she transforms
them into a print, and then a relaid drawing may also
follow the print or lead to her next subject. At the
start, the drawing is bold. Boxer’s assured line is loose
as she sketches her forms. In Serrure romaine (Roman
Lock), 2000 (plate 2), the image is three-dimensional,
and Boxer’s lines have energized it. When she creates
the print of the same object (plate 3), it is reversed
from left to right by the printing process and is trans-
formed into an icon. Her eye goes back and forth from
object to drawing to print, but the foundation of her
work is always the object itself.

OBJECTS AND SURFACES
Boxer’s print Shaker Brush, 2010 (plate 1), is animated
as if it is brushing a surface. Yet, most of the handle
of the brush, as well as the hand that may be holding
it, does not appear. The brush is the subject of the
print, filling the entire space and acquiring a monu-
mental scale. Without a narrative or even a setting,
this object becomes the protagonist of an unknown
drama. The individual strands of the brush are numerous and carefully delineated—not just masses of tone—and even the knots where they connect to the wooden handle can be seen. Although it is clearly documented with many details, this brush retains an aura of mystery.

In her print *Un troue (One Hole)*, 1994 (plate 4), a ruler is partially unfolded. But rather than lying flat, it has unfolded vertically, seeming to stand upright on a flat ground, while displaying its own shadow and other etched marks. The upright placement of this object emphasizes its function and creates a sense of movement. However, without a human presence, the isolated object remains a solitary, enigmatic form.

In *Charmes* (*Hinges*), 2004, the object occupies the entire picture space; there is no background, merely an unfilled slice of white on three sides to give the form definition. By removing it from its functional context—the hinge is not attached to anything—the artist reminds us of the beauty of its simple, familiar form. In prints like *Charmes*, Boxer begins with an object and transforms it into a subject.

**CONCLUSION**

Using numerous chemical and mechanical printing processes, including etching, aquatint, dry point, embossing, drilling, soft ground, and woodcut, Devorah Boxer produces complex translations of objects into the poetry of lines and tonalities. She is vigilant. Her masterful use of black-and-white tones—and the subtle gradations in between—defines each object's detailed surface and creates drama through the representation of its pared-down form. Finding beauty in the most humble objects, Boxer bridges the space between a traditional image and a contemporary icon.

3. Mason and Braun.
4. Ibid.
PLATE 5  *Mekik (Drill)*, 1988-96. Etching, aquatint, and dry point on copper, AP V/IX, 31.5 x 50 cm

PLATE 6  *Dev kiln IV (Ten Kiln IV)*, 1995. Etching, aquatint, and dry point on copper, ed. 1/20, 49.5 x 41.8 cm
Plate 7: Panels (Thumbtacks), 2000. Etching, aquatint, soft ground, and roulette on copper, ed. 5/15, 33 x 50.5 cm

Plate 8: Chassis de photograph (Photographer's Frame), 2000. Etching, aquatint, and roulette on steel, ed. 14/15, 46 x 31.5 cm
PLATE 11  Pieces (Clip), 2004. Etching, aquatint, dry point, and soft ground on copper; ed. 14/25, 27.8 x 19.8 cm

PLATE 12  Pinceaux (Brushes), 2004–06. Etching, aquatint, dry point, and roulette on copper; ed. 95, 65 x 48 cm

PLATE 15  Cesti endles (Alan Hinckley), 2000. Etching, aquatint, dry point, roulette, and spirit ground on copper, ed. 8/15, 41 x 33 cm

PLATE 16  Caster Needle, 2011. Etching, dry point, and rocker on copper, ed. 10/25, 50 x 33 cm
Selected Exhibitions and Bibliography

**Solo Exhibitions**

1984
Exposition Atelier, Paris
Galerie Barba-Boger, Zurich, Switzerland
1987
Galerie Berès (with L.-R. Berge), Paris
1989
Galerie Esther Hufschild, Zurich, Switzerland
1990
UNESCO, Espace ETA
1995
Galerie Nora, Jerusalem, Israel
1996
Carre Estampes, Luxembourg
1997
Le musée de l’estampe à Paris (with A. Delpech), Galerie Philippe Chauny
1997
Invitation (with J. Muten and K. Levin), Galerie Michèle Brouatta
Portes Ouveres, XIVème Arrondissement, at the house of
1998
19th Century Villers
1999
Villa des Roses, Bon-Colombes
2000
Atelier, atelier Louis-René Berge (with L.-R. Berge
and D. Neyrol)
2002
Le Toit et le Crayon, Espace Lherond, Paris (with S. Nagy and
M. Rouilly-le-Chevallier)
**Contraste III. 25 gravures sur bois (with three other artists),
**Xylos Museum und Werkstätten e V, Schwetzingen, Germany
2007
**Graveurs et Dessins, Galerie Mireille Basset d’Hausy, Paris
2003
**First place Haegawa Prize, Fondation Taylor, Paris

**Group Exhibitions Paris**

Salon de Mai (1985, 2007)
Le Trait (since 1987)
Salon d’Automne (1991 and since 2006)
Salon des Peintres-Graveurs Français (1997, 2005, 2009,
2011, 2013)
2009, 2009)
Biennale de l’Association Jean Chirac (1986, 2000)
Biennale du XIVème Arrondissement (1982)
Exposition de graveurs sur bois, Galerie Jean Attali (1989)
**Galerie Anne Robin (1999)

**Graves: Objet Divers, Conseil Général de l’Eure-et-Loir,
Châteaux
2006
Oeuvre-Geste, Centre culturel de l’Arcadou, Maubeuge
2008
De l’objet à l’oeuvre, Musée de la Gravure et du Dessin, Gravelines
AAWE, Fondation Mona Bismarck, Paris
2009
Nuit de la gravure contemporaine, Foir de Germain, Paris
2010
Galerie L’Ance Bleue (with C. Vieille, Marcjac (Gers)
2011
La Tannerie, Houdan (Yvelines)
2013
Galerie Étinculer, Paris

*Plate 17 Tomoi de moyon (Mann’s Sifter), 2011. Etching, aquatint, dry point, and rocker, ed. 9/20, 56 x 38 cm*
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PLATE 4
6. Renommée (Remembrance and Case), 1989
Etching, aquatint, and dry point on copper (left) and zinc plate
edm 9 x 30, 58 x 88 cm
7. 9. Deux faïencées (Two China Diners), 1991
Etching, aquatint, dry point, and drill on copper, ed. 5/10, 56 x 40 cm
10. Héritier (Flea Brush), 1991
Etching, aquatint, drypoint, and roulette on copper, ed. 25
H.C., 61 x 54 cm
11. Prêle-patte (Plant Master), 1993
Etching, aquatint, and drill on copper, ed. 6/35, 50 x 55 cm
12. Un mètre (One Meter), 1994
Etching, aquatint, and dry point, AP 4/6, 47 x 51 cm
Collection of Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga
PLATE 5
13. De kilo IV (Ten Kilo IV), 1995
Etching, aquatint, and dry point on copper, ed. 1/20, 49.5 x 41.5 cm
Collection of Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga
PLATE 6
14. Deux 121 (Two Scorns), 1996
Etching, aquatint, and dry point on copper, ed. 2/5, 26.7 x 19.5 cm
Collection of Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga
15. Amphore cassée II (Broken Amphora II), 1995-2001
Etching, aquatint, soft ground and roller on copper, ed. 12/20, 66 x 90 cm
Etching, aquatint, and dry point on copper, ed. 12/15, 50 x 65 cm

PLATE 16
Sept paniers à linge (Seven Laundry Baskets), 2012
Etching, aquatint, soft ground, and roulette on copper, ed. 5/15, 23 x 30 cm
26 Places (Clips), 2004
Engraving, aquatint, dry point, and soft ground on copper, ed. 14/25, 87.8 x 19.8 cm
Collection of Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga
PLATE 11

27 Panmello (Hinges), 2004-2006
Engraving, aquatint, dry point, and soft ground on copper, printed on Japanese paper, ed. 99, 85 x 48 cm
PLATE 12

28 Pinard (Folding Screen), 2006-2009
Engraving, aquatint, dry point, and soft ground on copper, ed. 2/25, 65 x 46.5 cm

29 Breeze bamboo (Bamboo Brush), 2007
Engraving, aquatint, and soft ground on zinc, printed on Japanese paper, ed. 8/20, 28 x 38 cm
PLATE 13

30 Eponge métallique (Metal Sponge), 2007
Engraving, aquatint, soft ground, and dry point on copper, ed. 15/20, 28 x 38 cm
PLATE 14

31 Serrure de Pêche (Praussian Lock), 2008
Engraving, aquatint, dry point, rockers, flower of sulfur, and soft ground, ed. 150, 50 x 66 cm

32 Omen (Indemnity), 2009
Engraving, aquatint, soft ground, and dry point, AP 1/8, 55 x 38 cm
Collection of Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga

33 Clope rouler (Allen Wrench), 2010
Engraving, aquatint, dry point, roulette, and spirit ground on copper, ed. 8/15, 41 x 33 cm
PLATE 15

34 Serrure romaine (Roman Lock), 2000
Black-and-white drawing, charcoal, white chalk, 65 x 56 cm
Collection of Dr. Alvin Friedman-Kien and Ryo Toyonaga
PLATE 2

35 Cartes Noires, 2011
Engraving, dry point, and rockers on copper, ed. 10/25, 50 x 35 cm
PLATE 16

36 Carte invisible (Hidden Hinge), 2011
Engraving and aquatint on copper, ed. 1/25, 65 x 50 cm

37 Eau Claire (Voy.), 2011
Engraving, aquatint, dry point, and flower of sulfur, ed. 1/12, 50 x 45 cm

38 Reine II (Withholding Pipe), 2011
Engraving, aquatint, and dry point on copper, ed. 5/10, 50 x 66 cm

39 Toiles de chanvre (Hessian), 2011
Engraving, aquatint, dry point, and rockers, ed. 9/20, 36 x 38 cm
PLATE 17

40 Soft points à longe (Spear Cloths-Pole), 2012
Engraving, aquatint, soft ground, and roulette on copper, ed. 5/15, 33 x 50.5 cm
PLATE 18

WOODCUTS

41 Pump-part I, 1992
Black and white on found wood, ed. 8, 47 x 67 cm

42 Echappé (Muffler), 2001
Black and white on found wood, ed. 10, 30 x 45 cm
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