



# Burn Freeze Locust Jones



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David Krut Projects  
New York, NY

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By Meghan Allynn Johnson

Locust Jones saturates his drawings with expressionistically rendered figures and broken phrases culled from various print and digital news sources. In his newest ten-meter long pen and ink drawing, titled *summermurderer*, he conveys the chatter of global media news reports as a crooked, schizophrenic heap. The drawing is the focal point of Jones' latest exhibition at David Krut Projects, titled *Burn Freeze*, and spans the walls like a panoramic timeline. Political moguls, endangered species, single-cell organisms and instruments of technological warfare are tangled together in this composition of brutal yet elegant hand-scrawled portraits and patterns pulled from print, television and radio broadcasts.

Jones interprets what is happening in the media, and on the planet, through the process of drawing, stating that:

*Putting it all down on the paper makes it clearer for me, it helps me to understand the big picture.*

For Jones the big picture is one full of political blunders, acts of violence, and an increasingly vulnerable ecosystem. In the spirit of the German Expressionists he renders these current events in a style that is brisk, direct, and laden with psychological dissonance. Drips, dots, and smears of ink on the surface of the paper read like buzzing static on the screen, maintaining an erratic transmission throughout the body of work, and providing the installation with a pace akin to newsflash broadcasts.

Jones builds a poetic vibration of utterances by pulling from his sources indiscriminately - even referencing more seemingly benign symbols from print media such as the daily crossword puzzle.

This motif is represented as a gangly, checkered pattern, which spreads throughout the space, often engulfing the figures. The pattern becomes like bacterial growth - changing shape and morphing into towers, helicopters, drones, or endangered animals.

Such is the case at the start of *summermurderer*, where checkered squares can be seen decorating the body of a rhino, then trailing their way through the full length of the composition. The recurring motif of the rhino began as a reference to Albrecht Durer's woodcut block print of a rhinoceros created in 1515, and was resuscitated for *summermurderer* after Jones' chance encounter with the news of the Western Black Rhinos recent extinction.

In *summermurderer*, the rhino is conveyed in a number of ways - as either powerful, held captive, militant, or murdered - symbolically collapsing and expanding according to its placement on the scroll. Jones' fluid recycling of this exotic animal reminds the viewer of the pliable usage of cultural symbols, and the fragile layer of truth in the

mediated space between the real and the fictive in the pervasive and cunning theatre of news media.

At the tail end of the scroll, a financial report cauterizes the scene in severe white ink. It becomes a final curtain call for the timeline, as well as a haunting caution - a last exclamatory reminder of the relentlessness of greed in the face of vulnerable economies and ecosystems. Much like the news itself, this dramatic touch prods at our innate sense of empathy, squeezing it until it drips, splatters, bursts, and falls away.

The initial bluntness of his work twists under the weight of its own mercurial logic, leaving holes and unfinished fragments. It becomes a view of the self within the larger picture - a blurred mirror in which we peer to attempt to rationalize the consequences of our collective actions. And through Jones' drippy, imperfect ink he re-represents the mass-media as a tenaciously seeping, and often pathetic beast, dragging itself through mysterious coincidence and error.

Also featured in *Burn Freeze* is a grouping of Jones' etchings and linocuts that were made at David Krut Print Workshop (DKW) in 2012, when Jones was invited for a month-long residency. There, he worked with Krut and Master Printer, Jillian Ross who together helped to expand Jones' knowledge of printmaking, as well as feed his interest in the politically charged site of Johannesburg.

These works inform Jones' *summermurderer*, giving insight into the history of some of his commonly used motifs, such as the rhino, the checkered pattern, exotic plantlife, and snarls of tangled razor wire.

The works Jones printed at DKW represent a complex view of South Africa, gained through both first-hand experience and news stories Jones had overheard while he was there. For these works, he culls from instances of injustice that span from a recent massacre of miners in Marikana, to incidents of local petty crime.

Working through the night, Jones compiled some of his first impressions of the city onto a large copper plate for his print entitled, *3AM*. Haunted figures appear through a tangle of marks in a flattened and expressionistically askew landscape. The buzzing marks represent Jones's state of mind during the bout of insomnia he experienced while adjusting to the city.

While travelling around South Africa, Jones gathered information from snippets of local news, researching neighborhoods and making site visits to the places he heard of. The composition for Jones' linocut titled, *Crackdown*, came from a news photograph taken during the 2012 Marikana Miner's Strike, in which gunfire erupted between the police and strikers, leading to the death of 44 people. While visiting Marikana, Jones noticed the plethora of razor wire surrounding the area. The slashing marks cut into the linoleum plate represent this physical feature in the landscape, and highlight the residue of what Jones described as an "uneasy calm" lingering at the site.

In his set of drypoints titled *Madikwe I, II, & III*, Jones turns his gaze inward through creating a series of self-portraits drawn from his own reflection in the copper plate. These drypoints build a psychological portrait of the artist - reflecting the rippling sense of anxiety that he experiences after every newsflash - becoming overwhelmed by the consequences of human error.

Locust Jones was born in Christchurch, New Zealand and currently resides in The Blue Mountains in New South Wales, Australia. His work is represented in public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia and the Centre. of Contemporary Arts, Christchurch. He has completed residencies in Seoul, Beirut and New York and in 2009, he was the winner of the Hazelhurst Works on Paper Award, and the prestigious Fishers Ghost Art Award.

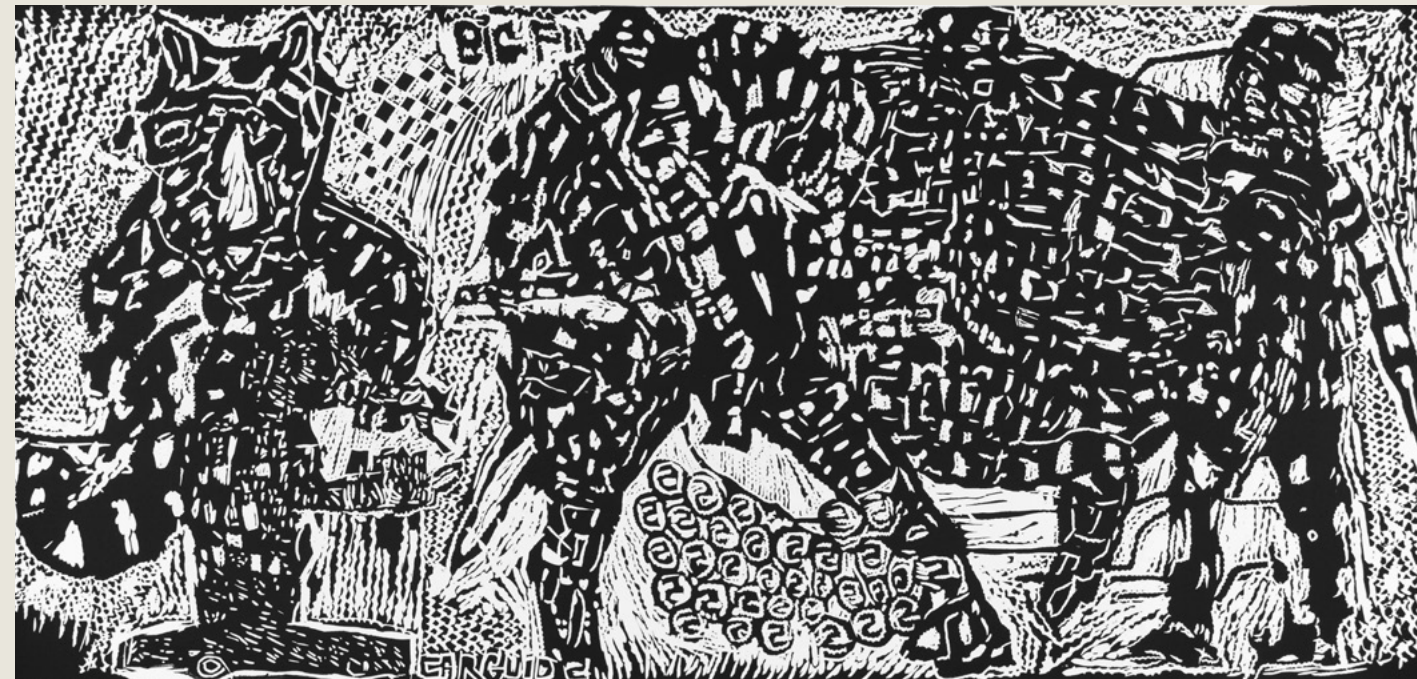






























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