

NEW EDITION

## Emil Lukas: Bubble-Up

By Benjamin Levy

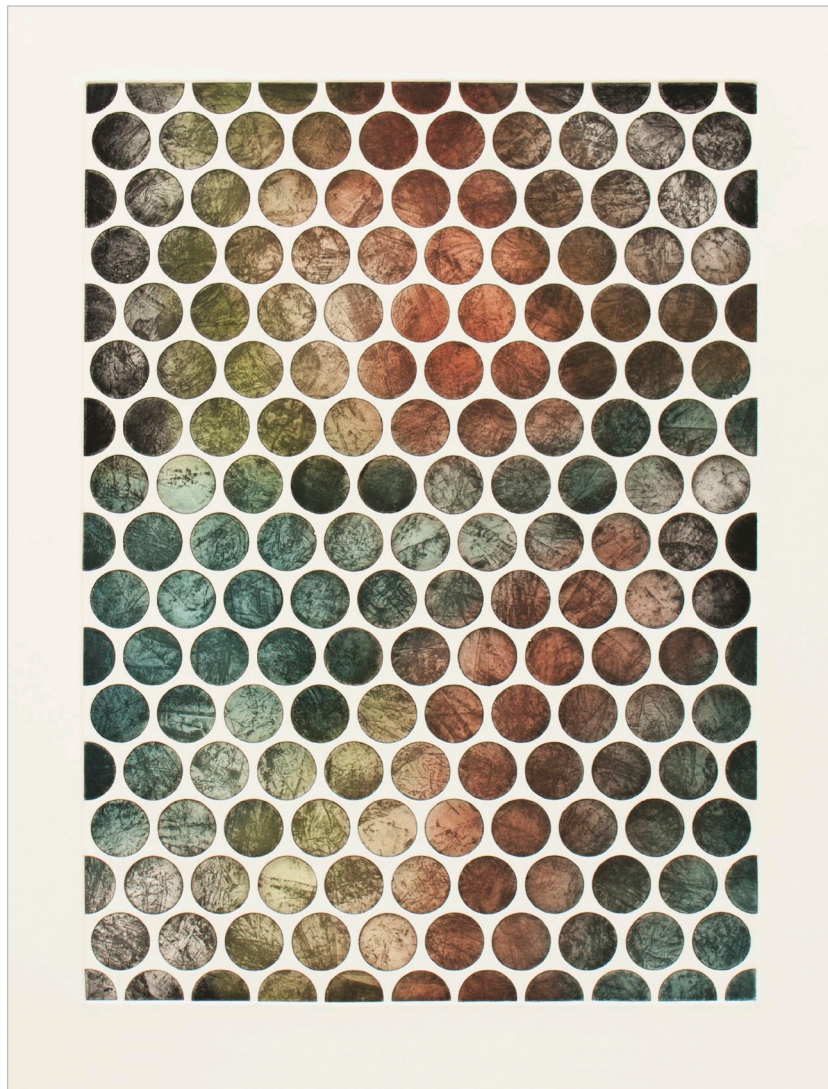
*Bubble-Up* series (2013)

(*Anatomy, Blood, Curtain, Curve, Detail, Glass, Hum, Orb* and *Release*)

Portfolio of seven screenprints and two etchings, 22 3/4 x 17 inches each. Editions of 35. Printed and published by Durham Press, Durham, PA. Price on request.

Emil Lukas's portfolio *Bubble-up* includes nine prints that explore the artist's signature methods of image composition within controlled parameters. Lukas creates indexical marks (the images record a process rather than mimic an appearance); he focuses on the creation of the circumstances rather than the direct making of marks.

Five of the prints present the possibilities of massed strings also explored in Lukas's unique "paintings": *Hum* and *Curtain* were made by stringing threads across the interior of a rectangular frame: for *Hum*, strings were criss-crossed in all directions, building up at the edge and opening up in the center; *Curtain* used string running parallel in strong vertical lines. A photosensitized screen was then set inside the frame and exposed. Each print is the result of many frames with varying string arrangements, printed in different colors. Lukas was quickly able to push his ideas further into the realm of printmaking, utilizing the photographic nature and discrete layering of screenprinting to capture multiple stages of time and motion. In *Release*, *Curve* and *Blood* the image moves from taut strings to loosely strewn ones, freely manipulated by the artist. The hair-like tangles of *Release* result from cutting the laced strings, letting them fall, and then arranging the fallen string,



Emil Lukas, *Detail* from the *Bubble-Up* series (2013).

exposing multiple screens as he did so. In *Blood* and *Curve* the artist's hand is more directly evident and the arrangement of threads more intentional.

The etchings *Orb* and *Detail* rely not on string but on bubble wrap pressed

into soft ground. The plates were cut into circles, individually inked, placed in a jig, and sent through the press. These "coins," as the printers refer to them, are thicker than the jig, thus leaving a traditional plate mark from the jig

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Left to right: Emil Lukas, *Anatomy*, *Blood*, *Curtain*, *Curve*, *Glass*, *Hum*, *Orb* and *Release* from the *Bubble-Up* series (2013).

around the perimeter, as well as individual circular impressions. Whereas *Detail* shows a full grid of circles resulting in a dense patterned field, *Orb* includes only a few disks, opening a pictorial space that encourages the viewer to focus on individual colors and details.

The final two screenprints document quite different materials: glass and larvae. For *Anatomy*, the artist dipped fly larvae in India ink and laid them on a piece of film, letting the insects move around to create the image. As with the string prints, multiple films are exposed to screens and printed with various levels of opacity. *Glass* is the most illusionistic print in the portfolio and shows the effects of panes of glass that directly exposed on the screens. Light passes through the panes, producing only a shadow on the screen; the surfaces of the represented glass panes are printed with flats of transparent ink.

*Bubble-up* showcases Lukas's experimental methods of image-making. His practice starts with a simple experiment and then he responds and amends, a method similar to a scientific experiment as well as printmaking. The results can be seen as both a form of controlled chaos and a celebration of the ordinary. This routinely encountered stuff (including the housefly) is given the power to be both the implement and the generator of the image. ■