

Profile of a Printmaker

# Betty MacDonald

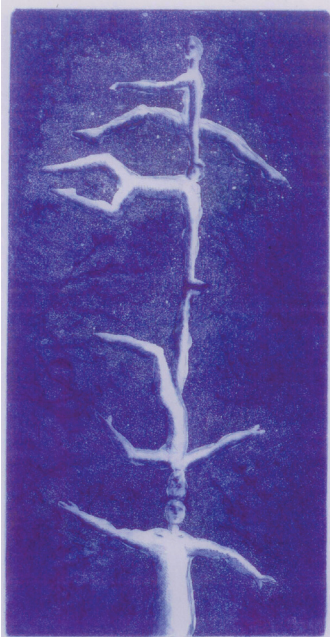


by Rebecca Ronstadt

You may recognize the name Betty MacDonald as a regular contributor to the Journal of the Print World. But you may not know much about her and her work. Over the past year or so, it has been my pleasure to get to know Betty as a wonderful person with a great sense of humor who is very knowledgeable about printmaking. I invited her to send in something about her work. She reluctantly agreed.

Coincidentally and around that same time, I'd visited Sophia Lane at the Old Print Barn in Sanbornton, New Hampshire. When I do that, I know I'm in for a visit of at least a few hours, as she never fails to have so many beautiful pieces in her gallery. On this day, there was a Robert Kipniss on the wall which caught my eye. I adore his work. And right beside his work was a beautiful, bright and happy small print in brilliant blues. I took a closer look at the signature. Lo and behold, the signature was that of Betty MacDonald. I asked Sophia, "This print next to the Kipniss ... could this be the very same Betty MacDonald that writes for the Journal?" Sophia replied, "Yes ... the same ... and did you know that Robert Kipniss is her brother?" Betty had never mentioned that to me....

I occasionally receive books for review in the Journal, and just about the same time, I received a book in the mail: **Robert Kipniss: A Working Artist's Life**, by Robert Kipniss. The cover jacket draws you into the book right away. Lots of gorgeous images of his work inside, along with his personal memoir. I love those smoky greys ... those birch trees that you can feel swaying with the breeze. Yes, Betty grew up with an artistic family ... just as Jeannie Motherwell did.



Betty MacDonald, "Family Tree," etching 1/95  
Courtesy of the artist.

My images are in museums and private collections around the world, including The Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires, Argentina; The American Cultural Center, New Delhi, India; House of Humour and Satire, Gabrovo, Bulgaria; Museum of Cheremeteff Collection, Book Chamber International, Moscow, Russia; New Orleans Museum of Art, Louisiana; New York Public Library, to name a few.

Etchings have appeared in the *William and Mary Review* (1992-1995) and book covers, *Adagio for Trumpet and Strings* (Paul Revere Award.) *Precipice and Contrasts*, Arsis Press. My work has received the Purchase Award Prize at the Delta National Small Prints Exhibition, Arkansas State University; Best in Show in *Small Prints, Big Impressions*, Maryland Federation of Art's Circle Gallery in Annapolis, Maryland."

Betty MacDonald's work is available at **River Gallery**, 400 East Second Street, Chattanooga, TN 37403 telephone (423) 265-5033 ext. 5. Her work can be viewed on their website,

<http://www.river-gallery.com/artist.php?artistId=9&page1>  
email [art@river-gallery.com](mailto:art@river-gallery.com)



Betty MacDonald, "Strength in Flexibility," etching, 33/100  
Courtesy of the artist.

# Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthaler and Cape Cod Influence the Works of Jeannie Motherwell



Jeannie Motherwell, "Perfect Storm," 2007, Acrylic and Collage on Canvas

by Jeannie Motherwell

In early childhood, my father and stepmother encouraged me to make drawings and paintings about what I dreamed the night before. Like many, they often pinned my work to the refrigerator, but they also framed many of these mementos. It was a marvelous form of validation for me and influenced my love for painting today. I have a childhood of memories from summers spent in Provincetown, MA, a tiny fishing village and artist colony on the tip of Cape Cod. Surrounded by artists, writers and an internationally renowned artist family (my father is Robert Motherwell and stepmother Helen Frankenthaler), it was there where much of my creative influences were derived.

In 2009, I had a solo show in Provincetown at Lyman-Eyer Gallery, where I dedicated a series of close to 20 paintings and collages as both a personal response and as a public memorial to the sinking, in October 1976, of the "Patricia-Marie" fishing vessel. It was headed for home to the Provincetown harbor -- its hold too heavy with scallops. The captain and all six crew members perished.

The sinking of the Patricia-Marie happened early during my first winter in Provincetown, and for 30 years the loss haunted me. I was 20-something, fresh out of college and the Art Students League, meeting local people, getting around by bike, painting in my studio but mired in a deep slump at the time-- I was on my own, and feeling part of a community--something new to me since New York City, my home town, was so global.

I had befriended a dark haired fisherman named Bobby, one of the younger crew members of the Patricia-Marie. One morning, headed to the bike trails, I passed the local bar --there he was in the door, asking if I'd join him for a beer. After a moment's hesitation, I joined him for a soda instead. What I remember was his smile that lit up the room and the thick wad of \$100 bills in his wallet--it must have been thousands of dollars, and he said, 'Here I have all this money and I can't even give it away.' When the boat went down, Bobby's wallet was the first thing that emerged before recovering his remains weeks later.

I was only at the bar for a few minutes, when I mentioned that we should get together again soon. He said he'd be going out very early the next morning and would be gone for several days. It gave me a glimpse into his world--the constant coming and going--from sea to land, and the dedication that it commanded.

The tragedy was a pivotal moment for me creatively. I mourned along with the community, and as I continued to paint, an abstract subject matter began to emerge. Triangular shapes decoded were not the sailboats of my sunny childhood, or the picturesque draggers lining the wharf, but the ghost of the Patricia-Marie.

These works began with streaks of loosely applied washes on the canvas often mimicking a raging sea; collaged imagery of torn bits of paper, drawing and painting. *Perfect Storm* hints at the expressive boldness of Chinese calligraphy. Splashes of blue surround the center of the picture; a torn piece of paper from one of my earlier boat paintings suggests a red boat tossed by a raging sea. All elements are deliberately balanced holding the boat aloft as it appears to be ravaged by the sea. Even if I complete the *Patricia-Marie* series, its sudden cataclysm will remain in my work as memory and feeling. I liken this series to my father's "Elegy to the Spanish Republic," which consists of hundreds of pieces done in memory of those who fought and died in the Spanish Civil War--a shattering event for his generation. The boat is in my skin. After three decades of trying to name my subject, I have pulled from deep within my core to find my own elegy conveying the unspeakable horror of that day.

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