



EFA Robert
Blackburn
Printmaking
Workshop

The Only Thing That Lasts:

An Oral History of Robert Blackburn's Printmaking Workshop interview with Luanda Lozano

Luanda Lozano is a founding member of the printmaking collective Dominican York Proyecto Gráfica (DYPG). Her printmaking career began in 1994 at The Printmaking Workshop, where she participated in the outreach program, bringing printmaking education to underserved communities. She also contributed to relocating the workshop to its current home at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.

In this excerpt, Luanda reflects on meeting Blackburn in the studio and viewing her first print. She recalls Blackburn's advice: "Just do it and let the print tell you the story."

Interview conducted by Camille Crain Drummond

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Luanda Lozano:

And when he saw me, he said, "Young lady, how can I help you? You look like you're ready to work." And I was like, I was speechless. I was very shy, I was afraid of my own shadow. So I say, "Hi, Bob. I'm Luanda. I was referred to you by Julio Valdez"—"Oh Julio! I know him." Julio was my teacher in the Dominican Republic, the first person who introduced me to printmaking. So at that moment, he was like, yeah, "So I guess you've brought your portfolio." And then I said to him, "I want to show you, you know, some of my work. I don't have that much printmaking experience." But he was so welcoming. He was so excited to see a new face. So he goes, "You don't have to show me anything. Just, if you're ready to work, we can give you something for you to start right now." I wasn't really prepared for that, but I have to say that from that moment I felt like I was in heaven and it was like a fantasy to me to be with him, to have the opportunity just to be in that environment. So that was my first day. Of course, I was going to Parsons, and during the night I had the chance to go to the studio, and I remember seeing, you know, people printing in the edition room. They had six edition rooms on 17th Street, and I remember seeing Devraj printing, and Marjorie Van Dyke, and Kelly Driscoll, and Ed Fausti. And this group of people, it became my family, my friends.

And that was the environment there. Everybody kind of tried to help each other. We were encouraging to practice, we approached different ways in different techniques. Bob was always walking around, and he would come close to you, you know, not to interrupt people, to see what you were doing, he would ask you questions, he would suggest things to you, what to do with your plate. I remember when I did my first etching and he said to me, "If you don't want to play with

colors"—because I was afraid of, you know, combining colors, I didn't have much experience—so he said, "You should try Chine collé." So that was great because it was an option for me to do my work. And, you know, after seven years being there, he said to me, just right before the preshow was closing in 2001, he said to me, "You really mastered the art of Chine collé. Your work is beautiful, I hope you will continue, even though we are closing down the doors now, you will continue to develop your career and develop your art and your love of printmaking. He knew I was serious about printmaking. He saw me from the first day. I was really devoted to it. The first thing that I said to him, "Tell me, what can I do here to help? I'm not coming only to take advantage of, you know, that you are generous to everybody. I want to make sure that I put something, you know, some work in exchange, too." Because I was a student, I was an international student, I didn't have money. I didn't have a way to work, because when you are an international student you cannot work. So, in order for me to feel as a person that I wasn't taking advantage, I was working as a monitor, working at night from 6 to 10. That's how I built my own community of friends. And of course, for me, it was like, free classes just being around all these people. And I remember Otto Neals, you know, printing his viscosity, and then seeing Elizabeth Harrington.

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This is from 1993 for sure, because this was the linoleum Bob gave me when I first came to the office with my portfolio, thinking that he was going to review it. He said, "Are you ready to work, young lady?" So I say, "Well, I came with my portfolio, I want to show you the prints." He said, "You don't have to show me. Are you ready to work now, young lady?" And I said, "Yes, I am." So he gave me this piece of—he gave me a linoleum block, and this was my first—oh, my god—and I don't know who gave me the paper because as I said before, all the time, people gave me the materials. So, yeah, I don't even remember the title of this print. But, it's two people kissing. I think I was just in love with the studio. So that's how I create. And Bob used to say, "Just do it. Let the print tell you the story." It's beautiful.