

Rebecca Szabo Onstad



Untitled 2014, monotype, ink, pigment and water
on paper, 70 cm x 112 cm.

Rebecca Szabo Onstad (1985, Moss, Norway) is an Oslo-based artist working with painting, drawing and printmaking. Before completing her MFA studies at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2015, Szabo Onstad attended a workshop in Poznan, Poland, and participated in several group exhibitions, including »The Ship vs. Strawberry Helmet« at Oslo Kunsthavn in 2014.

Reluctant Figures

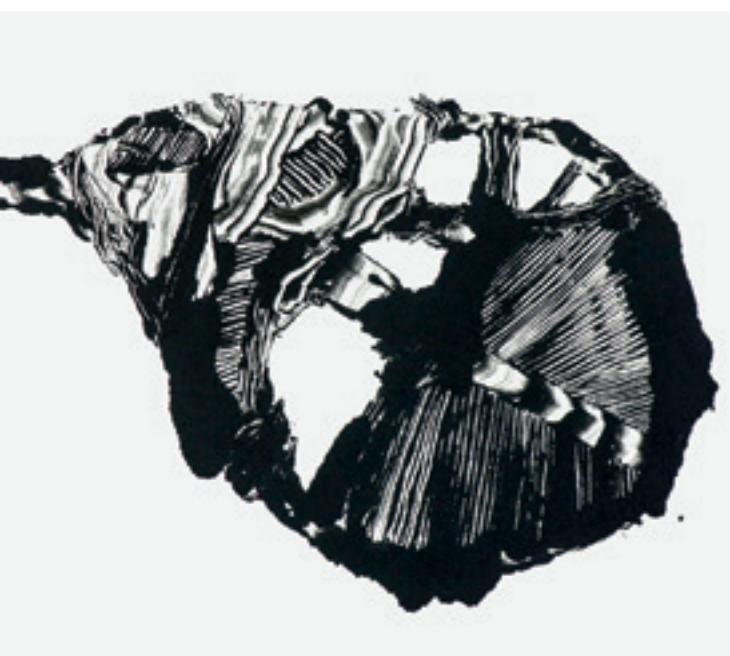
Rebecca Szabo Onstad seems to start out with clear intentions: to render a pier, a landscape or perhaps a tube – all in crisp black monotype prints. Yet, somehow, somewhere, her intentions go awry and the print appears to print itself, as if it were on autopilot: the pier morphs into rocky cliffs and shorelines; the landscape unravels into hundreds of tiny damask threads and knots; the tube spawns a mess of wires. Or veins? Maybe a ball of elastic bands. It's difficult to know, and that's the initial allure of her prints, which are not only intriguing but also intricate. In contrast to the free-flowing automatic drawings of Surrealism or the serendipitously-driven imprints of Rorschach blots, Szabo Onstad's prints are tightly-controlled images which waver between the poles of figuration and abstraction. The lines seem to condense upon themselves like silky fibres in a cocoon: spinning on their own axis while building up a kind of encasement, yet of oddly-related shapes and forms instead of uniform ones. It's tempting to perceive an almost Baroque logic in the generation of Szabo Onstad's prints, despite their figurative tinge, yet the elongated images hold onto the very center of the paper instead of spreading out to its edges, as expansive Baroque ornament would do. The blank whiteness of the paper is not a negative, empty, blank void to be filled with ink but a full space to be negotiated, if not relinquished. It's unclear whether the artist's printed images have marked the paper or if they threaten to slip away in the middle of the page, as ink down a wet drain. This particular treatment of surfaces – as potentially volatile, as present and perceived yet left alone – may have led Szabo Onstad to use other materials besides paper. *Untitled* (2012–13) is a series of large-scale prints of morphing abstractions, not drawn, but carved onto vinyl. *Digital Handmade* (2014) is yet another series created on the back of old linoleum flooring, which Szabo Onstad then exhibits, either traditionally hanging on the wall or suspended in the middle of a room – as if to emphasise that surfaces are always mobile, autonomous. Like the lines, surfaces don't stay put. Their directions may be straight as an arrow, but their destinations always take you by surprise. *Jennifer Allen*

The monotype is an act of investigation. I try to reach different, distinct surfaces in the material. With a variety of approaches, I see how the surfaces react against each other, and how I can bring about new structures. *Rebecca Szabo Onstad*

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Untitled 2015, detail, monotype, ink, pigment and water on paper, 70 cm × 112 cm. All images courtesy: the artist.

