

Mary Bruno: *End of Times 2/The Time is Now*

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Mary Bruno, proprietor of Bruno Press, specializes in letterpress printing where she produces high quality fine art prints, greeting cards, posters, and calendars on presses over 75 years old. Her greeting cards are sold in over 100 stores nationwide.

Bruno enlisted the help of forty printmakers from around the world to present “End of Times 2/The Time is Now” during the Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA) Book Art Biennial Exhibition June 9 – August 13. Free and open to the public! For more information go to BookArtBiennial.org.

How have you amplified individual and collective voice through your art?

I like to bring people together, printers or not, and start conversations about creating. Over the course of the last 10 years I have collaborated with many people (non printers) to pass on the old school tradition of letterpress. I enjoy sharing what I do when people come to my print shop and I bring letterpress into the world through talks, workshops, and demonstrations as often as I can. I think that I have a gift for connecting with people and sharing my craft. That gift has brought me all over the globe to create in small print shops in Sweden, France, and all over the US. I share all of the innovative things that I do in my shop on various social media outlets, and it has been nothing short of astounding to connect with printers in Central America, Britain, and Japan. It is incredible how technology can connect people who are doing the same things on opposite sides of the planet.

How does the MCBA Book Art Biennial theme “Shout Out: Community Intervention, Independent Publishing, and Alternative Distribution” inform your work?

Man, *End of Times* is all about grassroots and putting the power of the press into the people! This is the culmination of 41 printers from many vastly different backgrounds, beliefs, countries, religions, you name it, but we are coming together to collaborate on making beautiful art prints about how we feel in the world right now.

How do you define success?

I think that is one thing that changes as time rolls by. I feel happy most of the time and I love what I do. That feels good. I continue to learn and adapt and I am open to things that life and people have to teach me, I am lucky to be aware of that. Success sometimes to me is when I realize that I really am good at what I do and when my skills and confidence align, I can do great things. It pains me that it only comes in waves.

What is the biggest lesson you've learned as an artist?

It is okay to not be everyone's cup of tea. As I get older, I honestly care less and less about pleasing everyone and more about staying true to what I do and who I am. I also think that taking feedback and criticism from people I respect is something I treasure now and feel that I can handle better than I used to.

Can mistakes lead to creative success?

As it turns out, learning from mistakes is the most effective way for me to learn and grow. I think that my biggest turning points are often the result of a ginormous mistake.

What is your greatest success as an artist?

I am very proud of the *End of Times* Project. I am proud of the network that I have built and the friends I have made. I am proud of the print shop that I spend 85% percent of my time in, and the interns that I have impacted and the conversations I have started. I feel immense pride at what I have done with the legacy my father left me. I have a lot more work to do and I am stoked as *hell* to do it.

As an artist, what keeps you up at night?

Still, even at this stage of the game, I agonize over asking what I am truly worth. Money is part of living and people tend to devalue creative folks like me. It is something that I have always struggled with.

What called you to the book arts as a profession?

I first learned about Letterpress from my father, Don Bruno, who was a brilliant artist and graphic designer. He fell in love with letterpress back in the 1980s and was always ahead of his time. He knew that there was something very special about this tradition, and when all the printers he knew were dumping their type and ditching their big iron presses he *JUMPED*. He acquired all he could for next to nothing and built a small print shop off the side of the garage of the house I grew up in. I was in high school and I was hooked on spending time with him in the shop, carving linoleum and setting type!

What quotation inspires you to follow your passion?

*"Success is not final, failure is not fatal
It is the courage to continue that counts."* — Winston Churchill

Who do you admire and why?

I am always inspired by my pal Amos Paul Kennedy Jr. That guy is like the energizer bunny of printers. He never stops; he is everywhere all the time and can always make time for people who want to talk letterpress. I also feel that way about Aaron Draplin, the dude is not only a brilliant idea man and genius designer, he is so generous with his talent and shares tips and workshops with a "I'll tell you everything I know" sorta attitude.

If you could travel through time and discuss a socio/political issue close to your heart, who would you reach out to and what issue would you discuss?

Well since I already mentioned the environment to be and dear to me, I mean how can it NOT be, I would love to have beers with Neil Degrasse Tyson and Bill Nye the Science Guy. Make a plan. I feel like I am an empathetic and level headed person, and I would really like to grab a cocktail with John Stewart, maybe check out his ranch where he has 12-acres dedicated to abused animals. I am also all about women's rights and all that good stuff so I really feel like I would hit it off with Oprah, Barbara Walters, and Chelsea Handler.

BIO

[Mary C Bruno](#) runs a small letterpress print shop that she inherited from her late father, in St. Joseph, Minnesota. She returned to Central Minnesota after moving away out of college. Since her return in 2005, Mary has built a reputation for her edgy sense of humor that can be found in most all of her work. Starting the business with a hilarious line of greeting cards, she now prides herself on her detailed linoleum reduction block prints. This is, quite simply, her jam. The small print shop is home to many interns and lots of creative madness. Printing on a Vandercook #4, a 10X15 C&P, and a Heidelberg Windmill, things are always hummin' in the shop.