

EDITIONS '11

Nancy Princenthal

Lower East Side Printshop, Inc.

Blane De St. Croix

Tree Ruins (Haitian Charcoal Field), Tree Line (Haiti and Dominican Republic Border)

Landscapes and contentious borders have long been subjects of Blane De St. Croix's work. He has explored boundaries between the U.S. and Mexico, North and South Korea, and Pakistan and Afghanistan, among others. Engaging in extensive research for each project, including site visits, interviews, photographic documentation and satellite imagery, he has produced prodigiously detailed, monumental sculptures and drawings at intimate scales. "I am interested in articulating humankind's desire to take command over the earth, revealing distinct conflicts with ecology, politics and ourselves," he has said.

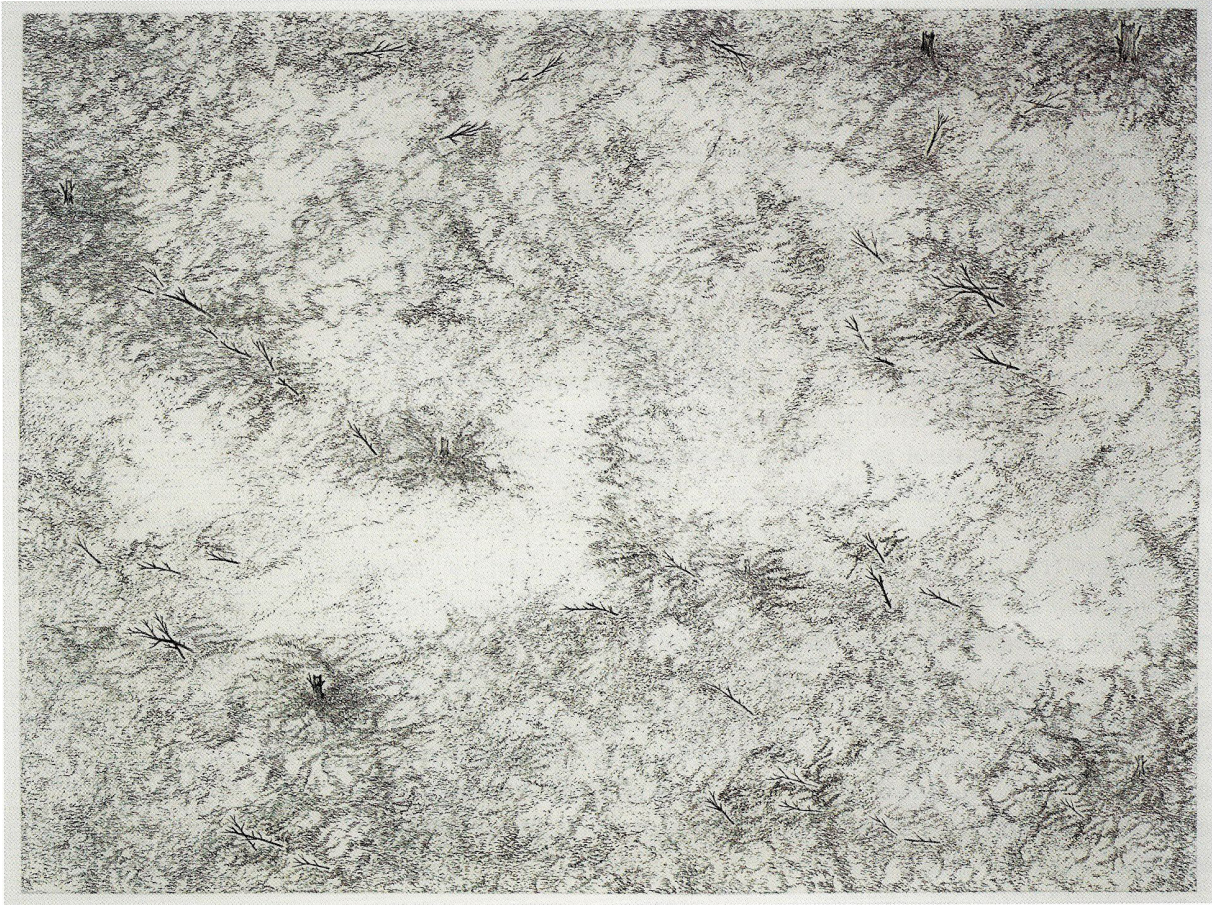
Born in Boston and based in Brooklyn, De St. Croix has been exhibiting for 20 years, and attracted considerable attention from the art world's critics and curators as well as mainstream media, including the *Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Miami Herald* and ABC News. The commanding size, painstaking clarity and political urgency of his work contribute to its appeal. Notable among recent projects, 2009's *Broken Landscape II* recreates at half-scale a slice of the deeply troubled border between Texas and Mexico, where human rights and environmental welfare are continually challenged. Eighty feet long, two feet wide and seven feet tall at its highest point, the curving wall of soil, shrubs, macadam, and wire and wood fencing expresses, "the desolation, desperation, and absurdity of trying to wall off one country from another," as art critic Jerry Saltz has written.

Mountain Strip, also from 2009, is based on a strip-mined ridge in West Virginia coal country. A disorienting, inverted wedge of natural materials with foliage at the bottom and earth and roots at the top, it stands 22 feet high and 40 long. As exhibited at Black and White Project Space in Brooklyn, it began in an outdoor courtyard and extended into the gallery space, creating a powerful experience of instability, threat and grandeur.

For the prints made at LESP, De St. Croix travelled to Hispaniola in the fall of 2010, following the year's earthquake in Haiti, which shares the island with the Dominican Republic. His focus was not on Haiti's devastated cities, but the border zone between the two countries, which makes painfully clear that the destruction to Haiti's environment was caused as much by human as by natural forces.

De St. Croix's prints, like his recent drawings, are graceful, finely detailed and matter-of-fact. Hard-ground etchings drawn on the plate by the artist, they show, in *Tree Ruins (Haitian Charcoal Field)*, an unbounded, lightly marked expanse of what might be pristine water or marsh. In fact, it's a man-made wasteland. Short, thin and brittle cipher-like forms course through the undifferentiated landscape. The forms are dead tree branches seen from above, though their frailty and vulnerability make them seem both metaphors for human lives and actual human limbs carelessly cast in untold numbers on the chartless terrain. As the title suggests, the fragmentary, scattered tree "ruins," which we might otherwise guess to be victims of the earthquake, were actually the remains of trees felled to make charcoal for home fires in a country too poor to sustain a viable electrical grid. Such ungoverned deforestation makes Haiti particularly vulnerable to landslides and floods.

The contrast with the wealthier Dominican Republic, which has environmental protection laws, is made dramatically evident in the diptych *Tree Line (Haiti and Dominican Republic Border)*, an etching with spitbite aquatint. It shows, on the right, the rich, dense tree canopy of a lush forest in the Dominican Republic; a billowing cloud of finely drawn leaves is punctuated regularly by openings that permit views of upright trees below. On the left is another expanse of wasteland, littered with the broken skeletons of dead trees. Quieter than De St. Croix's installation work, his prints are no less potent.



Blane De St. Croix
*Tree Ruins (Haitian Charcoal
Field)*, 2011

Etching and chine collé on
Rives BFK White 250 gsm
paper, and Japanese machine
made Gampi White 20 gsm
paper
17.50 x 23.50 inches plate,
22.25 x 27.75 inches sheet

Edition of 14, with 1 Artist's
Proof, 1 Printer's Proof,
1 Archive Proof, and 1 Display
Proof

Printer: Aurora De Armendi

