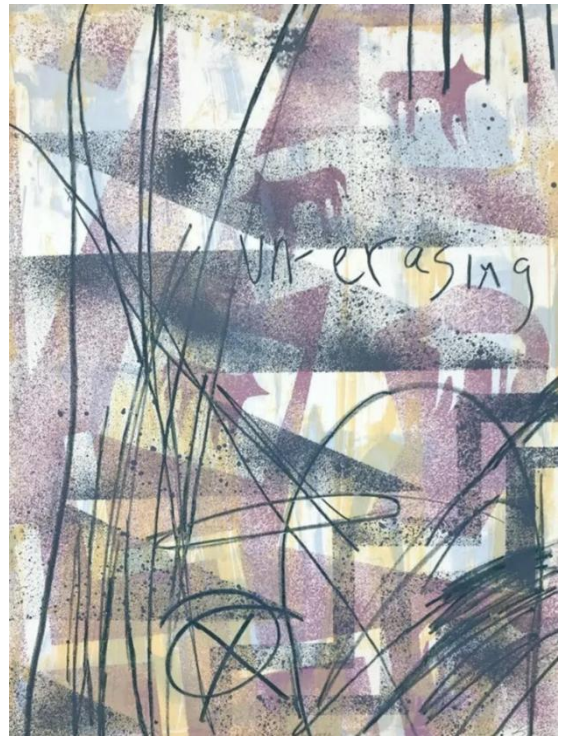


PRESS ON

The Print Center presents *America Today: Voices in Contemporary Print*

Pamela J. Forsythe | Jun 15, 2026 | In **Visual art** and
Exhibitions | 5 minute read

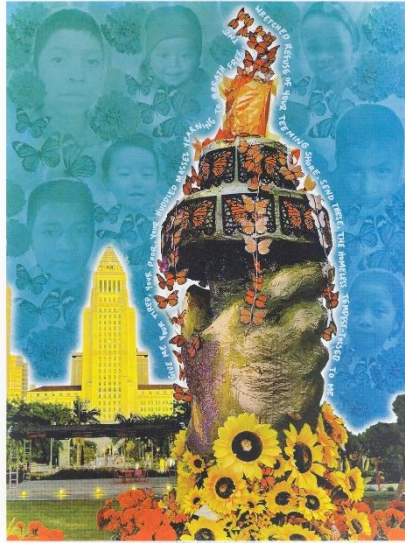


With pens and presses, artists assess the state of the nation in *America Today: Voices in Contemporary Print* at The Print Center. The exhibition, a survey of 37 artists representing six printmaking workshops, is a multifaceted assessment of the United States in a critical period.

America's 250th birthday doesn't come at our Yankee Doodliest moment, as the lithographs, screenprints, and other works make clear. The more important takeaway, though, is that this is nothing new: for two-and-a-half centuries, Americans have pursued a more perfect union in a decidedly imperfect manner. We sometimes forget who we are, as Consuelo Flores and Melissa Govea observe in screenprints made at Self Help Graphics & Art in Los Angeles.

No-one is illegal

Flores's *Monarchs and Migration: Children at the Border of Freedom* (2026) and Govea's *Migration is Natural* (2022) use the butterfly as a metaphor. Flores reimagines the torch arm of the Statue of Liberty, the portion displayed at the 1876 Centennial, edged in Emma Lazarus's anthemic verse. The torch erupts in a fountain of butterflies, rising into a sky filled with the faces of migrant children and Los Angeles's city hall, glowing like a golden door.



'Monarchs and Migration: Children at the Border of Freedom' (2026), Consuelo Flores, Self Help Graphics, Los Angeles. (Image courtesy of The Print Center, the collaborating institution, and artist.)

Govea's screenprint replicates a 1970s-style poster. It features a large butterfly with women's profiles in its wings, bracketed with the bold slogan "Migration is Natural" and bracketing *that*, barely visible, "Abolish ice...No one is illegal."

Who is the immigrant?

Immigration hysteria is not new, but who the immigrant is changes, as Ka'ila Farrell-Smith, a Klamath Modoc tribal member, notes in *Alien Invasion 1492* (2018). In the abstract lithograph from Crow's Shadow Institute for the Arts in Pendleton, Oregon, Farrell-Smith layered texture, color, and shapes suggesting open plains and plants, wind and wolves. Over it all, she applied graffiti-like slashes and scribbled a single word: *un-erasing*.

Kenny Rivero, a Dominican American, explores identity by unwinding history. In *Shadow on the Wall* (2015), printed at Coronado printstudio in Austin, Texas, he brings us to a lonely street corner. A shadow folds across the pavement and up a brick wall. The shadow's source is merely implied, symbolizing the invisibility of immigrants trying to succeed in cultures they are in, but not of.



'Shadow on the Wall' (2015), Kenny Rivero, Coronado printstudio, Austin, TX. (Image courtesy of The Print Center, the collaborating institution, and artist.)

Sandra Fernández, also of Coronado printstudio, is more explicit: *We...the Gente* (2014) superimposes immigrant faces and travel documents on the familiar script of the US Constitution. When created, the screenprint was likely a more uplifting statement on American values than the indictment it now seems.

Reflecting the past, imagining the future

Curated by Lauren Rosenblum, *Voices in Contemporary Print* was inspired by the New Deal era, when artists participated in federally sanctioned programs enabling them to practice, earn a living, express diverse views, and enliven public spaces. (Delaware Art Museum highlights the work of New Deal creatives in *Citizen Artist*, on view through July 19, 2026.) Participating printshops are similarly artist- and community-focused.

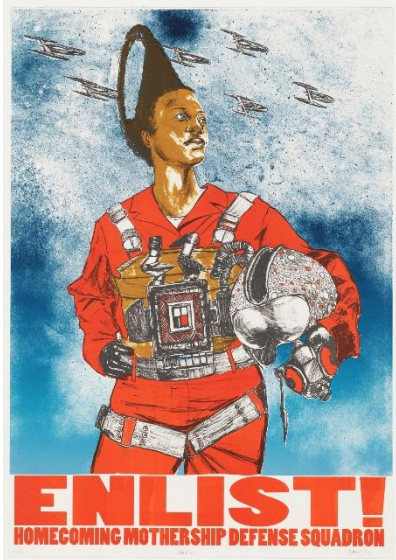
Several works draw directly on history. Dindga McCannon's collagraph *Sojourner, Harriet, Shirley, Maya* (2022) is a portrait of her heroes. Printed with a collaged plate, the abstract comes out of the oldest and longest-running community printshop in the nation, New York City's EFA Robert Blackburn Printmaking Workshop.



'Following Freedom' (2025), Laurie Darby, women's Studio Workshop, Kingston, NY. (Image courtesy of The Print Center, the collaborating institution, and artist.)

Following Freedom (2025), by Laurie Darby, transforms a little-known Civil War incident into a beautifully illustrated gatefold book, its pages extending like the bellows of an accordion. Fully open, the book, printed at Women's Studio Workshop of Kingston, New York, reveals a single page relating the story of 5,000 enslaved persons in 1864 as they followed the Federal 14th Corps through Georgia. The group was marooned when Union troops, to foil Confederate pursuers, destroyed the only bridge across marshy Ebenezer Creek. Though some could not swim, they waded in. Some crossed safely, but many enslaved were recaptured. When Darby visited the site, now a peaceful retreat, she wrote, "I am now grateful for the feeling of freedom as I kayak on the waters where so many of my ancestors wished to be free."

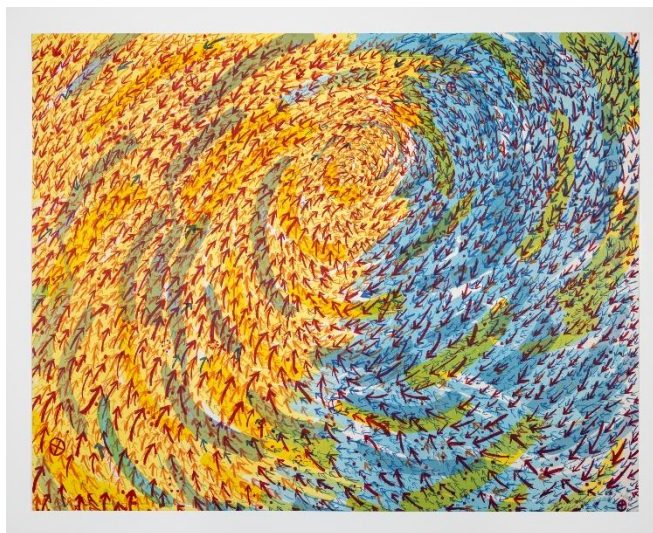
Robert Pruitt's *Star Pilot* (2012) is a hopeful vision for the future. It's a recruitment poster for Homecoming Mothership Defense Squadron pilots, featuring a Black woman, standing tall in a bright red flight suit. Chin up, she props her helmet under one arm so as not to disturb her magnificently sculpted hair. Her team—for this *must* be her squadron—flies overhead. With this woman leading, Pruitt signals, things are in capable hands.



'Star Pilot' (2012), Robert Pruitt, Brandywine Workshop and Archives, Philadelphia. (Image courtesy of The Print Center, the collaborating institution, and artist.)

Time to correct course?

Pruitt's lithograph was printed at Brandywine Workshop and Archives of Philadelphia, which also produced pieces by Sedrick Huckaby and Howardena Pindell. Huckaby's *The 99%* (2012) is a sampling of 101 Black portraits. Presented in a single frame, the quartet of individuals seem in conversation, as if discussing all the topics that arise in barbershops, around kitchen tables, and waiting in lines.



Katrina Footprint (2005), Howardena Pindell, Brandywine Workshop and Archives, Philadelphia. (Image courtesy of The Print Center, the collaborating institution, and artist.)

Pindell's *Katrina Footprint* (2005) maps the meteorological disaster that laid bare fault lines of race and poverty. Hundreds of tiny red arrows swirl over fields of blue and gold, indicating the devastation Hurricane Katrina wrought on New Orleans in 2005, when wind and water pummeled inadequate flood barriers, engulfed homes and businesses, and drowned neighborhoods, the damage compounded by an incompetent emergency response from every level of government. If it were possible to forget all that, the image itself is beautiful, full of color and movement. If only.

By holding a mirror to America as we are, *Voices in Contemporary Print* speaks to how far we are from the founding vision. With marching bands practicing and fireworks ready to go, it's not where we want to be, but it may be the perfect time to course-correct.

At top: Alien Invasion, 1492 (2018), Ka'ila Farrell-Smith (Klamath Modoc), Crows Shadow Institute of the Arts, Pendleton, OR. (Image courtesy of The Print Center, the collaborating institution, and artist.)

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WHAT, WHEN, WHERE

America Today: Voices in Contemporary Print. Through July 25, 2026 at The Print Center, 1614 Latimer Street, Philadelphia. (215) 735-6090 or www.printcenter.org.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Print Center building is a 19th-century carriage house with a historically certified façade. There is a small step at the entrance, leading to the first-floor gallery and Gallery Store. The second floor is only accessible by a flight of stairs. For more information, call (215) 735-6090.

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