

Mike Kondel, Easton Irregular, May 2013

The big windows in Mike Kondel's Easton apartment cast shadows on the walls and floor, and one day he decided to trace the outlines and record time passing. He was racing the sun and surprised that he couldn't keep up--the stretching trapezoids and rhomboids changed faster than he could draw them. These angular shadows became the basis for (and the external shape of) his *Sun Spot* paintings. Focusing on the composition of these works, I notice that he fills empty zones created by the intersection of the shadows of the furniture and windows with his own screen print patterns, found images, and, humorously, rubbings of cryptic messages carved into the weathered counter of The Lafayette Bar. These works are pleasing, well balanced and integrate his painting and printing skills to their best advantage.

Mike was a printmaking lab technician at the Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, MI, and received his Bachelor's in Fine Arts in Printmaking/Art of the Book from SUNY Purchase. He interned at Solo Impressions print shop in Chelsea, worked as a studio assistant for artist Lesley Dill in Brooklyn, and apprenticed himself to master printer Brent Bond at Segura Publishing in Mesa, AZ. He is the main screen printer at Durham Press in Bucks County and is skilled at making complex, large-scale screen prints, woodcuts, and mixed media projects. He is also an emerging artist, and *Irregular* readers may remember his pieces in *Twinkle Sparkle* at Mercantile Home in 2011. He has exhibited in Brooklyn in shows *New Meat Flavor* at 439 Franklin and *Arc Angle* at Lucky Gallery. In 2012, he was included in *Silkscreen* at the Rockland Art Center in Rockland, New York. Currently, his work is on display at Suddenly Samantha, and he will appear in *...it's an art show* opening May 4th at Garage Space Gallery here in Easton, and *Home: Interpreting the Familiar* opening May 10th at Goggleworks in Reading.

Lately, he has shifted away from painting and printing on canvas to experiment with fabric-based sculpture. Working with fabrics he has dyed and printed, he hangs them in swags so that they droop away from the wall. One piece called "Shiner," as in a black eye, wraps lavender colored, bandana-like material around a drum-like form. He simultaneously works abstractly and realistically, inventing a fabric pattern that coordinates with his physical representation of an eye. The overall effect softens the

allusion to violence, giving a novel twist to representing the figure by combining a filmic close-up of a bruised eye with soft sculpture. Imagine Claes Oldenburg and Richard Tuttle filtered through current fashion, gang and street culture and you'll approximate Kondel's latest work.

"Support" dangles yellow scarves printed in a mock-Asian script from sticks upon which images of ropes or crayon marks have been printed. Just as Roy Lichtenstein made paintings from photos of brushstrokes, Mike prints images of ropes or drawn lines and glues them onto "swoosh" shapes. He is in essence converting something generally considered linear or pliable into something firm and functional, and in the process highlighting the difference between the "real" and the "copy". Whereas working in 2-D limits how much graphic information Mike can layer onto paintings, 3-D frees his ability to mingle pattern, script and design using multiple, flowing surfaces with found objects. The new sculptures engage his building skills, awareness of gravity and speedy thinking. He invents odd, scrappy, harmonies pitting soft verses hard and image verses form as he intuitively works his way across a wall. The *Sun Spot* paintings allowed him to playfully improvise inside geometric boundaries; but, even better, sculpture is removing them.