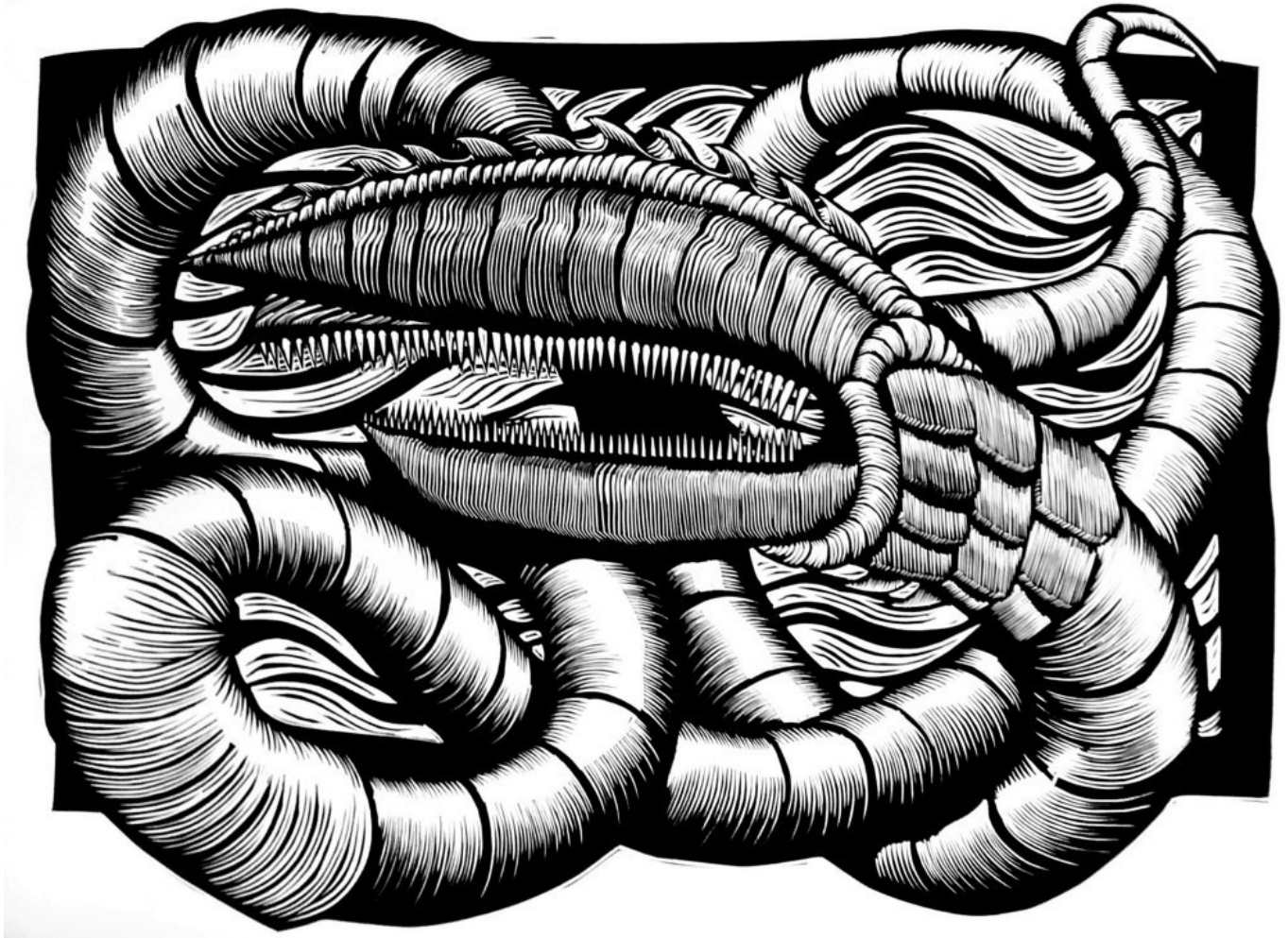


GARDINER PRINTMAKER USES LOBSTER CLAWS TO TALK POLITICS

Written by: Bob Keyes



“Ad Nauseum” Photos courtesy of Monkitree

GARDINER — Frustrated with the direction of the country and the willingness of politicians and their minions to shade facts to fit their versions of the truth, printmaker Scott Minzy spent a lot of time this past winter in his studio making prints that were full of anger, but ultimately felt too dark to show.

“They were cathartic, but I just wasn’t happy with the work,” he said. “It wasn’t me, and it wasn’t my style, so I had to search for a new way to tell it.”

The process of working through his frustration led to new body of work, “Deadweight,” that Minzy is showing through Nov. 25 at Monkintree in Gardiner.

Minzy has created oddly dramatic black and white prints, mostly linocuts, of mutated lobster claws, huge and grotesque and resembling deep-water aliens. Lobsters and lighthouses are two subjects he always vowed to avoid, but these lobster claws presented themselves as a conflagration of his frustration with the political climate and mood of the country.

He arrived at the idea in a roundabout manner after reading a children’s book to his child that described a lobsterman plugging a lobster’s crusher claw with a wooden peg while leaving the pincer claw free. That’s how fishermen rendered the lobsters less dangerous before switching to rubber bands on both claws in the 1980s, which bound the lobsters completely and left them defenseless.

The 1980s also was the time when the Reagan administration repealed the Fairness Doctrine, which required broadcasters to devote airtime to issues of public interest and to do so in a fair and balanced way.

Ditching the doctrine led to intellectual isolationism and, over time, “a type of polarized mutation that valued force over ideas and ideology over fact.” In his work, Minzy’s lobster claws, after being bound by decades of circular reasoning, have begun to mutate.



“Ad Hominem,” by Scott Minzy.

Rubber bands and the Fairness Doctrine may be linked only by the coincidence of timing, but they come together in Minzy’s work as an expression of his frustration with the level of discourse in the country. As citizens, we’re just as defenseless as the lobsters, bound by the rhetoric of the times and bursting to break free.

“With the lobster plug, it’s barbaric and it hurts a little, but you have your scissors claw to protect yourself. With the Fairness Doctrine, you had to face your opponents, and things couldn’t get out of control,” he said. “Now the lobsters are all bound up, and we’re all hardened in our ideas, and we can’t see other people’s opinions.”

Minzy, 46, teaches art at Erskine Academy in South China. He lives in Pittston and has a press in downtown Gardiner at Artdogs Studios, where he is part of a burgeoning community of painters, jewelers and illustrators, as well as galleries. “There is this really neat confluence of old Gardiner and new Gardiner happening now, and it’s a really fun place to have a studio. There are a lot of people working tirelessly to make it work,” he said.