Henrik Drescher’s new work with Island Press last October 20-24, 2015 marks his second visit to Washington University, the first being more than 20 years ago. Drescher worked in residence as the Arthur L. and Sheila Prensky Island Press Visiting Artist. Student assistants in the Department of Printmaking contributed their skills in coordination with Drescher’s direction.

Drescher has lived off and on in China since 2001, and his work reflects the mountainous landscapes he observes in the Yunnan Provence, where he and his wife, the artist Wu Wing Yee live. Drescher has said that the mountains in his work are a “riff on the tradition of Chinese ink landscapes.” His work in this “mountain/machine” series diverges from that tradition by the inclusion of his complicated, organic machines, which appear attached to, within, and around his unique, conical mountains.

Mountain/Machine: Henrik Drescher at Island Press
This unique imagery we see in the Island Press prints emerge and take shape from Drescher’s observance of what he calls “image debris,” which he chronicles in his mind, and numerous sketchbooks and journals. One cannot help but wonder if the mountain/machine works are Drescher’s response to his observation of the rapid incursion of industrialism on China’s landscape—and that of the world.

Drescher’s work has always been highly improvisational. As a world traveler, the artist is a painter, printmaker, illustrator and keen observer of life. The new etching that is being debuted at Island Press includes several chine collé elements of block printed machinery, giving viewers another level in these lush and detailed prints.

Looking closer at the work, you will see Drescher’s signature “nervous” line quality, an effect he created for this series by attaching a bent nail to the end of a Dremel tool. When watching him work, I could see that this improvised technique was giving him exactly what he wanted for the detailed Chinese mountains, all seemingly invaded by his signature, science-fiction like machines.

*John Foster*
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*Above: Black Mountain, relief from etched plate, 52” x 40”, 2014.*