

**JOSEPH BLAKE:**

***shitty gods***

JANUARY 19 - APRIL 27

Opening Reception: January 19, 6 - 9 pm

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Societies around the world have legends of tricksters stealing fire for the betterment of humankind, only to be punished. The Greek god Prometheus's noble quest to give man fire was met with tragic consequences: chained to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains, he was endlessly tortured by an eagle that tore his liver from his chest, devouring the tender flesh day after day. Other stories describe mere mortals acting like gods, attempting to erect beings in *our* image—bastardizations of the “originals.” In Dr. Frankenstein's quest to create life, he created a ghastly being who terrified everyone who encountered him. Abandoned by society, Frankenstein's creation sought revenge, acting as the murderous monster everyone believed him to be.

While Frankenstein's monster slipped out of his control, Blake reconstructs images to set them free. He thermal prints low-resolution images of human bodies he scavenges for online, scaling them up to massive proportions and scrupulously layering text-generated halftones with his own written text on strips of receipt paper. They become autonomous after they have been installed, moving and breathing with those around them. The mechanical elements of the artwork sustain these images for as long as they can before tiring out, allowing the images that come under Blake's guardianship to live temporarily in the physical realm, as if spirits drawn from the digital ether.

The creations in Blake's work are disguised as medicinal anatomy or classical human forms, images that are traditionally considered “good” or “worthy.” But he works with the shitty versions: damaged image files that he blows up, prints on garbage, fills with nonsense and love, and stitches back together. Recognizing the failure of the ideals these images once signified, Blake's creations speak a new language—the grumbles and grunts of Frankenstein's just-born monster, the 1s and 0s of data informatics, the @s and &s used in Blake's greyscale—suggesting that the hierarchical structures that give way to high-resolution gods or perfectly rendered saviors are dead to us. Their creator rubs salt into the original wound; he mends a historical rupture. He chooses Frankenstein's monster, Prometheus's punishment; the desolate Arctic; the intimacy of the crooked beak and the liver, formed inside an unhealed wound.

**Joseph Blake** is an artist. He grew up in central Washington and attended California College of the Arts, graduating with a BFA in Printmedia. He has a soft spot for found images and low-resolution media. With a certain skepticism of traditional printmaking's sensibilities, Blake makes prints with digital printers that focus on the material body of images, their transience, and the shape of information.

**Off Hours** is a nomadic curatorial project led by Katherine Jemima Hamilton, Shaelyn Hanes, and Ebti. We present artist-driven exhibitions that result from dialogue developed through studio visits, ongoing conversation, and collaborative writing practices. Off Hours supports and spotlights emerging Bay Area artists through thoughtful curation, programming, and writing. For more information, contact [offhours.sf@gmail.com](mailto:offhours.sf@gmail.com)