



I'M NOT TRYING TO CHANGE ANYTHING

I'M JUST CHANGING

SONNENZIMMER

March 8 - May 24  
Closing Reception May 17, 5:30 - 7:30PM

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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## SONNENZIMMER

is the Chicago-based duo and real life married couple, Nick Butcher and Nadine Nakanishi.

Giants in the Chicago art world and pioneers in all things graphic design, the pair have been making visual worlds together since 2006. The name, Sonnenzimmer, literally translates from German, meaning “sun room.”\*

[\* Perhaps a nod to their primary medium of screen printing, a process which relies on light to fix an image onto a screen which is then used to print that image.]

## NICK BUTCHER

Nick grew up in a quiet home in Tennessee. His parents were both makers and tinkerers, and gave Nick the space to think independently and explore. He read a lot and often retreated to his room to experiment with music of all sorts. “I didn’t know who I was until I started making things.”

Nadine says of Nick, “In his hearts of heart, he’s a musician.” “[His] secret indulgence is pop punk and memphis hard core bands.”

Printmaking’s really wonderful because you’re always separated by 3 or 4 steps in a process... never in direct confrontation with yourself. You can always turn it, twist it, don’t print it at all, or run away from it, whatever” - Nick



## NADINE NAKANISHI

Nadine was introduced to art through her mom who traveled the world and brought back strange objects. She learned to see making as a cultural pursuit rather than a primarily professional path. She studied typography in Zurich, land of letter-shaping legends. Nick credits Nadine with providing the big picture vision for their projects. Nadine is not only fearless in her design- she's also been known to slay the slopes as a professional snow boarder.

"I'm like a hamster in a wheel trying to get to the next thing. Nadine has this incredible long vision."

- Nick



# We all have a stake in negotiating the new virtual reality

Their work together started in 2006, as they opened their own design and print studio, named themselves Sonnenzimmer, and began cranking out screenprinted posters for all sorts of clients—from famous bands like Modest Mouse and Andrew Bird to museums and major institutions like the Chicago Symphony.



Sneak a peak at their huge range of projects at [sonnenzimmer.com](http://sonnenzimmer.com)



Known for their fearless experimentation and boundary-busting approach to art-making, Sonnenzimmer describes their work as “finely applied graphics,” pointing out that “the graphic arts predate the siloed genres of fine and applied” art.

While blurring boundaries between art and design is common in contemporary art, Sonnenzimmer is unique in that they mess with every medium they touch, and whirl it all together. This is what makes them hard to pin down.

Underlying their work is a deep respect for print tradition, yet they fuse historical hallmarks of printmaking like repeated images and wood block prints with like non traditional techniques like vacuum-forming, laser-cutting and sound installation. The result is head-scratching, mesmerizing, and something altogether new.

Their brand new body of work offers an exploration of physical touch in the digital age. An exhibit marked by whimsy and play includes prints posing as paintings, distorted sound machines, and interactive sculptures offers an exploration of physical touch in the digital age.

## ABOUT THE EXHIBIT

Exhibition is on view  
March 8- May 24, 2019



The title, “I’m not trying to change anything. I’m just changing” is taken from a song the two created together. It also relates to their thoughts on our role in a changing, increasingly virtual visual landscape.

The works on canvas combine screenprinting and hand-drawn marks. Their displays that use grommets and binders are a direct reflection of their studio environment. Their studio is located in a former photo album factory. So, they’re surrounded by old equipment and binding materials that they have incorporated into this new work.

Unlike most artists, Sonnenzimmer rarely shows their work more than once. So, the work you’re seeing in our galley was made exclusively for this space, for this moment in time!

Look for the works that invite you to touch and interact! (Hint: They’re labeled on the gallery maps.)

## BEFORE VIEWING

Consider all the ways the word graphic is used.

What makes an image graphic (adjective)?

What is a graphic (noun)?



Think about how screens play a role in how you view images and information.

How does your physical touch affect what you see on those screens?

# WHILE VIEWING

Sonnenzimmer often uses the image of a leaf, to bring to mind fleeting moments and mundane details of our everyday world. Where do you find references to a leaf in this exhibit? How is it portrayed? What do their display choices say about everyday moments and physical touch?

What elements do you find humorous or ridiculous? What makes these particular works humorous?

Where do you find elements of distortion in this exhibit? Which artworks in particular seem to be distorting something? What is the result of that distortion- is it humorous, creepy, or...?

Look closely at the canvas pieces. Some marks were made indirectly, through screenprinting. Some were made directly, through hand-drawn marks. Can you tell the difference? What might this combination of indirect to direct mark-making say about the artists' thoughts on movement between physical touch to automated, image-making?

Think about the democratic associations with print media- mass communications, DIY culture, accessibility. How do you see this democratic spirit at work in this exhibit?

