

KEY to Philadelphia
Oct. 23- Nov. 5, 2006
Print Portfolio Invitational Opens at Silicon
By Krystyna Warchol

Philagrafika proves once again that art is not always a solitary process

Philadelphia Invitational Portfolio 2006 is an exhibition of fine art prints created by area artists in collaboration with print shops. The exhibition is sponsored by Philagrafika (formerly the Philadelphia Print Collaborative).

This is the sixth annual Philadelphia Invitational Portfolio exhibition. "It's a program that is very successful in lots of ways," said Renae Page, Philagrafika's program coordinator. "It offers an opportunity for local artists to collaborate with a master printer from one of the well-known print shops and to increase visibility for the print shops, as well as to create affordable art."

Philagrafika has a Portfolio committee made up of representatives of major print shops. Each year they choose six to eight artists who each get paired with a fine arts print shop to create a series of prints that forms the portfolio for that year. This year they invited eight artists to collaborate with the shops to produce seven prints. Anda Dubinskis was paired with the Fabric Workshop and Museum; Tara Goings with the Borowsky Center for Publication Arts; Talia Greene with Silicon Gallery Fine Arts Prints; Homer Jackson and Sherman Fleming with the Brodsky Center for Innovative Print and Paper; Sue Patterson with Deer Tree Press; Shelley Thorstensen with Brandywine Workshop; and Richard Torchia with C.R. Ettinger Studio.

"Sometimes the artists are master printers, have been printmakers for many years," Page points out. "Other times there is someone who never made a print before...Sometimes there is an opportunity for the artist to meet new people, to work with them in the shop, or work in media that they never worked in before."

Torchia, known mainly for his camera obscura projections, is one such artist. "I think I'm a good poster child. I have never made a print; certainly I have never made an etching. Now I know a little bit about etching and I feel like I want to go back to continue working [in that medium]."

He knew about [Cindi] Ettinger- a renowned printmaker- and he proposed working with her. "I had an idea to do something with etching, as opposed to working with photos. I knew that I wanted the line to be the essence of the project, and I wanted something that would look like a drawing and that could relate to my work with tracing images with the camera obscura."

He calls the etching he produced with her "basically a kind of love letter to the studio and all the hard work that she did. It was very exciting and inspiring to be collaborating with [Cindi]. She was incredibly generous and patient with me, so understanding, and at the same time she got me to deliver something that I might not have been able to do alone. It was really a collaboration because she was so invested in the success of what we were doing. My time with her was very much like a tutorial or a seminar because I was in a way a novice about the process...She sort of introduced me to this new world...she was such an advocate for her process...I felt like she introduced me to all of these possibilities and directions."

Torchia is quite happy with the print, and plans to make more etchings with the Ettinger shop in the future. In fact, several artists who have taken part in the Portfolio programs in the past went back to their collaborators to create more prints, which in turn brings more visibility for the print shops. Torchia especially appreciates the fact that he ended up with a concrete art object. "For someone like me, who doesn't make anything—I don't make objects, I don't have anything for the marketplace to be able to have something out there, like a print that's related to my primary practice. I'm very happy about that. It's nice

to provide something for people who want examples of my work, but could never own a projection—they're so complicated to do."

The etching Torchia created is called "Study for Funes the Memorious (cloud contours traced in a camera obscura between 4:30p.m. and 5p.m., July 9 2006, Baltimore, Maryland)." The title references the short story "Funes the Memorious" by Jorge Luis Borges, in which a young man isolates himself in a dark room to cope with an extreme photographic memory that will not allow him to forget anything. "The image came first and then reminded me of the story...What's beautiful about the story is that this man is living in a very dark room, because his mind is basically full. In a way that's very connected to the idea of being in the camera obscura. The lines in my etching are very ephemeral, but at the same time they are etched—there is this very permanent record of these ephemeral shapes, unlike camera obscura, which is always fleeting and ephemeral."

A copy of Torchia's print, like all the other artists' prints, can be purchased for only \$300. (The portfolio of all seven prints created this year is also available for \$1600.) Page says, "We price the prints at affordable prices in order to make them accessible to people who can't afford fine art prints or art in general. We even provide a payment plan." They also limit the number of prints one can buy to two, to discourage buying prints and reselling them later. "We want to make sure that the work is available and affordable to many people."

Note: Images of the prints that will be shown at [Silicon] Gallery are already available on-line. To view the images visit www.philagrafika.org/portfolio-2006. To purchase a print or portfolio, contact [Renae] Page: 215-701-6149 or e-mail rpage@philagrafika.org

Philagrafika programs promote and sustain the printed image as a vital and valued art form in contemporary culture. The organization's centerpiece program is "Philagrafika 2010," an international quadrennial festival of the printed image to be launched in 2010 that hopes to increase Philadelphia's presence as an international art center. For more information about "Philagrafika 2010," visit www.philagrafika.org

Philadelphia Invitational Portfolio 2006 Exhibition
Silicon Gallery Fine Art Prints
139 North 3rd Street
Reception: First Friday, November 3rd, 6-9 p.m.
till November 25th, 2006