

Philadelphia Weekly
September 17 – 23, 2003
Sketches for the Space Age
By Roberta Fallon

I consulted the Magic 8 Ball and weighed my inbox (8 pounds of paper, slides, photographs, postcards and CDs), and I'm here to tell you the fall art season looks great.

Printing Press

Whether it's due to the economy or because artists are pack animals and just want to be together, it seems every week I hear of new collaborative efforts – artists staging shows and helping each other produce work. Organizations like the Philadelphia Print Collaborative (PPC) have been fostering collaborations between local artists and printers for several years now with nice results.

PPC debuts its third invitational portfolio this month (A portfolio is a group of prints by different artists pack aged and sold as a set.) PPC director **Teresa Jaynes** likens the project to a snapshot of the art community – work by a cross-section of all races, both sexes, established and emerging artists.

This year **James Brantley, Emily Brown, Enid Mark, Stuart Netsky, Alice Oh, Hester Stinnett** and **Rochelle Toner** worked in a variety of media (from silkscreen to digital prints to lithographs) making printed editions of 80 (50 for sale, 20 artists' proofs and 10 for the shops). Each portfolio includes all seven prints, and individual prints will also be for sale. For the first time, PPC asked the artists to produce a work based on a theme – landscape.

"The committee felt it was time to experiment a little to see how that played out," Jaynes says. **Silicon Gallery**, one of the member print shops, will host an exhibit in November.

PPC is an organization whose members include several area print shops. The shops participate heavily in the project – from selecting the size of the prints (this year, 15 inches by 18 inches) to choosing the artists and assembling the portfolios in what Jaynes calls their "collating party."

PPC acts as a facilitator, but it's up to the artists and print shops to grope their way toward a working relationship and produce the prints. Often, the artist is new to printmaking, or new to a particular kind of printmaking, and there's a learning curve.

Painter Alice Oh, for example, a Pew fellow and Leeway Award-winner, is a first-time printmaker, but she caught on right away. Oh was matched with **Space 1026** to make a screen print, and because of the way she paints – building up many layers over time – she was a natural for screen printing, which also uses layering to produce the result. Oh's *Red Star P.C.P. no. 1*, in rich red and blacks, shows a large circle in which a microcosm of smaller, sometimes paler, sometimes brighter red and black circles swim.

Netsky, also a painter and Pew fellow, had a bigger challenge when he had to learn a software program, Corel Painter, and create a digital image from scratch on the computer – something his printer, Silicon Gallery, was eager to try. Netsky was game.

"He worked exceedingly hard and was very cheerful ... it started out looking a lot like his paintings from the last **Locks Gallery** show but then it morphed," says Silicon's **Michal Smith**.

Asked to describe the work (still in process as of press time) Smith says, "There's lots of pink, as you might expect... and it's very abstract... and it's probably untitled." Netsky's paintings are known for strong color and for their use of unconventional materials like lipstick.

The five prints I saw definitely had a Philadelphia aesthetic – some representational imagery, some poetically abstract, all beautifully crafted. Emily Brown's black-and-white lithograph, *An Early Thaw*, perhaps the most traditional work in the set, looks like a Sumi ink painting of tall trees in the deep winter woods. Brown worked with the **Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper**.

Unlike the previous two portfolios, which had a kind of youthful exuberance – mania even – this year's portfolio is a serious affair. That may be due to the landscape theme. Or it may be because most of the artists are established mid-career artists with comparatively austere aesthetic sensibilities. >>

"Philadelphia Invitational Portfolio 2003," Nov. 7-Nov. 26. Silicon Gallery, 139 N. Third St. 215.238.6062. Philadelphia Print Collaborative, 215.557.8433. www.printcollaborative.org