

Art Scene

A new take on prints

"[Some] Prints" gives six artists the chance to display vibrant work.

By R. B. Strauss

The present review is not a continuation of last week's piece, but altogether separate — though very much a pleasant surprise. "[Some] Prints," is just one of many shows of such work throughout Philadelphia this month — but certainly the most unique in a number of ways, as befits its showcase, Larry Becker Contemporary Art, 43 North Second Street in Philadelphia's famed Old City. The exhibition runs through Nov. 17.

The gallery's office has been transformed into a viewing space, with the work of a complementary half dozen artists featured. Unlike the standard run of prints, these here boast but a few, with one but an artist's proof.

Eve Aschheim is represented by four untitled works that transcend the very notion of being prints in that each features added art, thus making them singular beyond any notion of a run. The basic image is a sequence of rippling

lines, dense here, more spatial there, to which more marks are added, with one boasting a light wash that has been applied beforehand.

These sublime pieces are most impressive for their sense of movement, in that from afar one gets the feeling these are gently lapping waves guaranteed to lower your blood pressure — but are quite engaging beyond their ambient qualities.

Somewhere between wakefulness and sleep (or vice versa), one enters an altered state which unleashes dormant forces deep within the subconscious. This is the territory where Kocot and Hatton work on their sequence, "Semiconsious."

Delicate, precious, yet ever tactile, the single print they offer features a series of diagonal lines that after no time at all take on characteristics of three dimensions. As to which artist created which line, that is a good part of the mystery on view here, necessary and requisite. Let it be known that the lines, in their varying trajectories, form something of a hypnotic midscape.

An artist concerned with how space is divided up into cartography, Robin Miller is represented by a number of pieces, though only two hang on the wall. "Bottle Rockets" is a celebratory work of art that features two of the titled items crossing paths.

For all their exuberance, there is poignancy here, as the moment Miller depicts is gone at once as the bottle rockets plunge back to earth. Yet maybe, since they possess an ethereal gravity, though, they just might find their way into orbit instead, circling the earth — and the circle is an image that courses through Miller's oeuvre.

As an analogue to her paintings, Merrill Wagner's untitled print is a shadowy work filled with contrasts of chiaroscuro. Though abstract, this piece resonates a cinematic quality, as if it were a still from a film ever in progress. Large expanses of murky yet crisp black shimmer. Yes, you heard right.

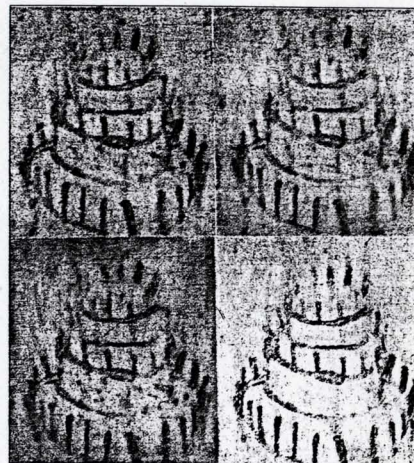
There is something like light at the core here, deep within the work, a brief glimmer as if set in a section of maze that reinvents itself at its leisure. Gray on gray is filled with swirls that swarm about in a profusion of detail, for detail abounds here.

Bill Walton is on hand with a piece from his sequence, "Letters and Memos," and it is a pure epistolary marvel that is all of high magic. This is a standard shape and size — 8 by 11. It is, however, no ordinary missive. Rather, it is an unnumbered work, the last of eight so made.

Shot through with a coruscating yet subdued gold amidst a field of black, the grains ease from the surface while from the top of the "page," jagged verdant lines shoot in a tight array that draws sight to the seeming Kirlian force at work here.

Dense and precise in palette, John Zurier's two works make their convincing pitch through painterly persuasion. A small field of yellow stands in contrast to its neighbor, this one blue. Yet both belie any notion of monochrome device.

Captivating through nuance and source, this pair is an invitation to more, to green and red and beyond. As separate entities from his somewhat similar paintings, these careful monotypes hold fast to the precepts of how a basic yet roiling delineation of fractal light affects a basic need to move out of any sense of utter visual economy and into necessitated optical acuity.



Courtesy photo

"Babycakes," a print by artist Robin Miller

These six artists offer prints that challenge the notion of the medium, not the least being their exclusive runs. Though the print has all too often been mocked by snobs as being inferior to other art forms, the value of this work is best clarified by the frames they are housed in and which have been created by

Larry Becker himself. They afford them the status of interactive art objects that you can take them down from the wall so as to get up close and personal. This effort is a fitting characteristic of this exceptional show at a most exceptional gallery.