

VISUAL ARTS

Works by printmaking co-op showing in 3 exhibitions

Nancy Gilson

Special to The Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Most printmaking requires big, heavy equipment — something individual artists don't have and most likely can't afford.

Since 1998, the Columbus-based Phoenix Rising Printmaking Cooperative has come to the rescue, giving artists the space and equipment they need to produce woodcuts, etchings, silk-screens and more. Marking its 25th anniversary, the cooperative has three exhibits on view: "Celebrating 25 Years: A Retrospective" at the Marcia Evans Gallery in the Short North; "From the Ashes" in Otterbein University's Fisher Gallery in Westerville; and "Phoenix Rising: 25th Anniversary Small Works Exhibit" Downtown in the Riffe Gallery lobby.

The cooperative's start

In 1996, artists Anne Cushman and Claire Hagan — each wanting a place to make prints — founded the cooperative. Cushman sold her piano, Hagan took out a loan and with the money, they bought a Takach etching press, their first big piece of equipment. They were renovating a building on Parsons Avenue when a fire derailed the project. But the artists carried on, repaired the structure, and named their project Phoenix Rising, a cooperative that rose from ashes. The printmaking studio opened in 1998.

In 2011, the non-profit cooperative moved to a warehouse facility at 243 N. 5th St., where it continues to offer space and printing equipment for artists along with workshops, critiques and events. Currently, there are about 30 members ranging in age from their 20s to their 70s. Core members pay \$75 a month for use of the equipment and other benefits, and associate members pay an annual fee of \$100 for scheduled use of equipment.

The cooperative's president, Karen Campbell explained the attraction of the genre: "Printmakers just love the process — working with tools. It feels like a craft and there's a lot of science involved but you end up with fine art."



Susanna Harris' "The Nature of Loss," was inspired partly by the death of her mother to breast cancer. SUSANNA HARRIS

'Celebrating 25 years'

Through Feb. 28, at Marcia Evans Gallery, 8 E. Lincoln St., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays; marciaevansgallery.com

Forty-five works demonstrating the versatility of both the medium and cooperative members are hung salon-style in the Short North Marcia Evans Gallery.

Cushman's prints include the quilt-like "Rock Collections" with images of stones (that she loves) and topographical maps as well as a landscape of the Umbrian countryside in Italy.

In her bold linoleum relief print, Marilyn McPherson places kitchen implements — a whisk, eggbeater, mason jars, spoons, forks and more — on a yellow apron shape set against a bright blue field.

Rod Bouc defies the printmaking genre with his monotype "North of Lincoln," a Nebraskan landscape that looks like a watercolor painting.

Karen Albanese Campbell delivers a mountain scene with swirling abstract

images in her woodcut print "Blue Striations."

Nearly every current, and some past members of the cooperative are represented, demonstrating how a range of styles and ideas can be expressed in the challenging and versatile process of printmaking.

'From the Ashes'

Through May 6, Fisher Gallery, 27 S. Grove St., Westerville; 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily, otterbein.edu/art/miller-fisher-galleries/

On display on two levels of the gallery are 23 works by 11 Phoenix Rising core members. Among them: Eliana Calle Saari's small woodcuts and large silk-screen portraits of working women on the Caribbean Island of Antigua; Judith Steele's colorful calligraphs with images based on maple tree whirligigs; and detailed screen prints by Peter White.

Susanna Harris, one of the cooperative's youngest members and gallery assistant at Otterbein, installed the exhibit. Her included piece is the large and



"Everything But the Kitchen Sink," is a linoleum relief on handmade paper, mounted on acrylic painted canvas with a matte medium. MARILYN MCPHERON

gorgeous installation "The Nature of Loss," inspired partly by the death of her mother to breast cancer. The huge white sculpture — created through blind embossing or raised printmaking — resembles a coral reef and is backlit with a pink hue.

'Small Works Exhibit'

Through April 14, Riffe Gallery Lobby, 77 S. High St., noon to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays, oac.ohio.gov/Riffe-Gallery/Visit-the-Gallery

Included in this much smaller exhibit are two relief prints by Christine D'Epiro Abbott, who creates chaotic domestic interior scenes such as "Open Door, Open Drawer;" the floral relief prints and watercolor works ("Tell Him It's Not a Weed") of Alana Hiser; and "The Crying Leaf," a print of a single blue leaf, by Susanna Harris.

Also included are works by some of the stalwart core members — Eliana Calle Saari, Judith Steele, Karen Albanese Campbell and Anne Cushman, the only original member still with Phoenix Rising.

All these artists believe that the printmaking cooperative is thriving and, at the least, will be around for another 25 years.

negilson@gmail.com