

Grabbed by printmaking

Astoria artist Kirsten Horning practices her art at Clatsop Community College

Kirsten Horning mixes ink to create a lavender color, applies it to a sheet of Plexiglas, and uses a roller to apply an even coating to the plastic. She walks across the Clatsop Community College printmaking room to a light box, where she uses a cotton swab to carefully remove ink where there will be highlights in the final print. Her face wears a look of concentration.

She walks over to a large floor-mounted press and carefully places paper and the finished Plexiglas plate on the bed of the press, covers it with a pad, and adjusts the pressure the roller will apply to the print and plate.

"I had taken drawing and watercolor classes," she says, "and acrylic painting classes. Then I took printmaking here at CCC, with Royal Nebeker, and something about the whole process of printmaking really grabbed me."

That was more than 15 years ago, and Horning has been taking classes ever since. She spends a lot of time at the college not just because she uses the art department's press, but also because her

day job is as the distance education coordinator for the school. She's the resource person for all online students.

Horning turns the flywheel in the center of the press, which turns the roller, which presses paper and plate together.

"That didn't feel right," she says. "Not enough pressure." She tightens the pressure adjustment and repeats the process. That feels right, so she carefully lifts the print away from the plate.

The print Horning is making today is a collagraph, a technique that is unusual for her. A rigid plate, in this instance the Plexiglas, is used to transfer an image from plate to paper. Different kinds of plates or materials on the plate produce different textures, and many effects are possible. Horning had painted a "goopy sand of acrylic medium and silicon carbide" onto her plate to create a raised, slightly textured surface.

Horning has also done etchings and monotypes, but her favorite technique is woodblock printing. Invented in China about 2,000 years ago, this is the earliest printmaking technique. The woodblock is carved as



Photo by Dwight Caswell

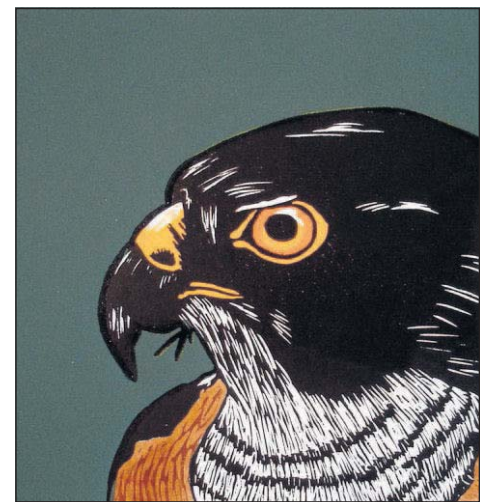
Kirsten Horning inks a sheet of Plexiglas, getting it ready for the Clatsop Community College printmaking press.

a relief pattern, with "white" areas cut away from the smooth wood surface; the image prints in reverse. For color printing, multiple blocks are used, each carved differently, one for each color, and overprinting of blocks may produce new colors.

Horning says that the subjects that appeal to her are the natural world, plants and animals, but, "I'd like to do more landscapes and portraiture in the future."

With her husband, Tom, she is building a home studio and office that will enable her to devote more time to her art, and she hopes to be "full time, sometime." It is difficult, she says, "to get a body of recent work together for a gallery show when you're working full time."

Horning is a member of the North Coast Printmakers Collective, a group of about 15 printmakers, all of whom took courses from Nebeker ("I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to take classes from Royal," says Horning). She exhibits with the group (the next show will be in



Submitted photo

"Raptor," by Kirsten Horning.

December at the Seaside Public Library) and at CCC student shows. She will also be showing at Cannon Beach Gallery this summer, with two other printmakers.



Submitted photo

"Coral Sky," a woodblock print by Kirsten Horning.

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Story by DWIGHT CASWELL