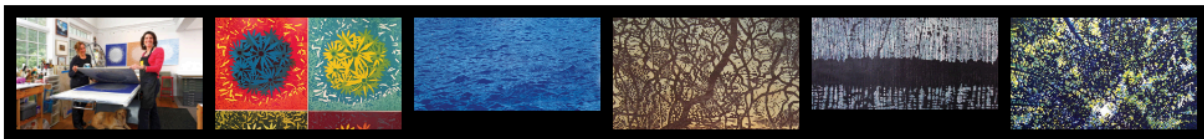




Artist Eve Stockton (right) and master printer Susan Goldman printing woodcuts at Lily Press in Rockville.



ART STUDIO, ARTISTS, LUXURY LIFESTYLE, MAY/JUNE 2015

Primal Power

Eve Stockton evokes the beauty of nature in her bold, graphic woodcut prints

By Tina Coplan

Growing up in rural Chesterland, Ohio, [Eve Stockton](#) loved exploring the deep woods and environs near her home. The house, overlooking farm fields, was cantilevered above a ravine that led to a small series of caves. "It was really magical," recalls Stockton. "I would go out and play for most of the day. It seemed so natural."

Those early adventures are much more than distant memories for the artist. Drawing from a lifetime of outdoor observations, her large-scale prints—vivid seascapes, hazy landscapes, imagined stirrings of life—conjure the primal power and robust beauty of nature. Inspiration has also come from printed images collected over years. "I've always been so interested in nature and exploring imagery," she says, adding enthusiastically, "Woodcut printing is a brilliant medium for what I want to express."

This earliest print technique involves carving a design into a block of wood. The print is made from the raised surface that remains. "The medium is hard-edged and tends to be very graphic and dynamic," says Stockton. Referring to the rough-hewn German Expressionist woodcuts of the last century, she observes admiringly, "You can see one from 50 feet away. It makes a very strong impression."

In the renovated-garage studio beside her home in Alexandria, the printmaker recently started carving a new wood block. She sketched the design, an exploding pattern called *Burst*, onto the veneered wood. First using an electric engraving tool to outline the image, she proceeded to remove large areas and details with hand-held gouges. Carving a new block may take from "an intense week" to a month or more to complete, she says.

Once fixed with varnish, the *Burst* block—along with several others and a stack of unfinished prints—is loaded into her van headed to the printing studio. Stockton works hands-on with master printers at Lily Press in Rockville, Maryland, and at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk, Connecticut, where she began her printmaking career.

Woodcut printing is a layered process. It requires that each color and shift in the woodblock design go through the press separately. Stockton introduces a contemporary twist: manipulating freshly carved and reused blocks—all three feet square—in new patterns and color palettes. Typically, she combines three or four different blocks in every new print.

Stockton and master printer Susan Goldman lay the *Burst* block on the made-in-America press. Goldman compares her role to that of a personal trainer “helping artists work through their ideas.” While transferring white ink from a roller onto the block’s raised surface, Goldman describes color options. “Much of it is about layers. Oftentimes, it is printing successive veils of transparent ink. Or, if you don’t like something, you can block it out by making the color more opaque,” she says.

“It’s like painting,” Stockton adds. “You are reacting to what’s on the paper at that moment. You may decide this needs something else. What’s it going to be?”

The two will work out such art/technique questions together; meanwhile, they remove splattered ink from the block’s carved areas. Then, very carefully, they place a sheet of paper on top. After covering the paper with a felt blanket, Goldman manually turns the wheel of the press as the unit moves through the drum under just the right amount of pressure.

Stockton didn’t set out to be a printmaker. After graduating with a master’s degree in architecture from Yale, she spent ten years working for architecture firms in DC, New Haven and New York. During a work slowdown when she was a young mother in Westport, Connecticut, she returned to a longstanding interest in making art and joined the area’s thriving artists’ community, exhibiting paintings and sculpture at juried exhibitions.

On a whim, she signed up for a woodcut printmaking workshop in 1999. “It was a strong eureka moment,” she remembers. “I had been searching for the right medium and this was it.” Being able to visualize a carved design in reverse or imagine a finished print as layers was easy for the former architect, who had mastered the skill of rendering buildings as two-dimensional plans overlaid with mechanical and electrical systems.

Architecture also taught Stockton about structural form, as in the details of a leaf or an imagined genetic structure. “I had a need to get back to nature,” she recalls of that time. Six weeks after taking the woodcut workshop, and with the help of master printer Christopher Shore in Norwalk, Connecticut, Stockton made a six-foot print, *Woodlands I*.

She has not looked back since.

Writer Tina Coplan is based in Chevy Chase, Maryland. Eve Stockton’s woodcut prints can be seen with works by Sondra N. Arkin in “Networks,” an exhibition at Long View Gallery (longviewgallerydc.com) in Washington through May 3. For more information, visit [evestockton.com](http://www.evestockton.com) (<http://www.evestockton.com/>).



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