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### A look at quilt work and women's work

#### Ursinus exhibition examines artifacts and ethos of 19th-century society.

By Victoria Donohoe  
For The Inquirer

A quilt show with a sidebar interpretation of women's work? Yes, that's Ursinus College's full-house exhibit "Working Women: 19th Century Quilts from the Collection of Judy Roche."

A strong attraction in itself, that large display is accompanied here by a separate but related, plainspoken commentary on women's experiences and working lives by contemporary artists Tamar Stone and Christine LoFaso.

The twin-bill format proves in some respects an original approach to a subject as traditional as community quilting by American women, and most of these pieces are community rather than solo efforts. For it raises questions about when does making artifacts of domesticity backfire, becoming a constraint upon identity rather than helping shape that identity in a positive way.

The 37 featured quilts and related items on loan from Roche, a well-known Doylestown private collector, clearly emphasize Pennsylvania artistry - no surprise. For our commonwealth was "ground zero" at the outset of quilting in America long ago. So the material richness of the plentiful quilts Judy Roche has so painstakingly gathered need above all to be savored and cherished for the legacy they represent.

And that's precisely where Tamar Stone steps in. She salts her visual commentaries on women's restricted 19th-century lives with a special blend of poignancy. Her 3-D set-ups and textiles show her desire to personalize, to add inner light, warmth and hand-lettered words, so even a cold object like an old hospital bed can tell its story. We are pulled into her pieces by the immediacy of feeling, then held by their sure structural framework.

Christine LoFaso, by contrast, interviewed women and men ages 20 to 70 about how they regard their body for her "Body Project." Treating each reply with gentle deference, she combines these printed words with misty shapes on filmy silk. Her other work here refers to the troubled "Dora: A Case Study in Hysteria" by Sigmund Freud.

Of these two artists, Stone's sensitive, finely detailed work seems more consistently to fit the time-frame and feeling of Roche's quiltmakers.

An enterprising show.

Ursinus College's Berman Museum of Art, Main St, Collegetown. To Dec. 7. Tue-Fri 10-4, Sat-Sun noon-4:30. Free. 610-409-3500.

#### Printmaking

What's striking about the 26-artist Cheltenham Printmakers Guild show at Rosemont College is a respect by participants for using nontoxic materials and an obvious joy in giving visual expression to insights about new techniques no less than the old reliable ones.

Leading the way here in digital printmaking with Photoshop is guild president Merle Spandorfer. Her tangles of natural form in her *Spring Rites of Passage* and *Timeless Portal* prints are transmitted into a view of nature that's simultaneously disturbing and lyrical.

Founded in 1969 and growing, the guild is believed to be the only group of its kind locally for professionals.

Rosemont College's Lawrence Gallery, Rosemont. To Oct.25. Mon-Fri 9-8. Free. 610-526-2067.

#### Joan Becker

A figure painter of tantalizing promise, Joan Becker seems bent on portraiture as a very physical and immediate affair in this latest solo, her first at Gross McCleaf Gallery.

She uses gouache and charcoal on watercolor paper, and her interests here in solidity of form alone are obviously secondary to her feelings for color that tend toward the posterish. And so, while she thus sets aside the possibility of a truly monumental decorative statement in these realistic portrayals of individuals, couples and a nude model, Becker's handling of sensuous color comes out more strongly by comparison.

Still, Becker must learn how to be spontaneous without sacrificing discipline in the easy, natural style of characterization she is otherwise cultivating so well.

Gross McCleaf Gallery, 127 S 16th St, Philadelphia. To Oct. 27. Mon-Sat 10-5. Free. 215-565-8138.

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"Newlyweds," by Joan Becker, from her show at the Gross McCleaf Gallery.

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