



By **Dan Bischoff/For The Star-Ledger**



"P(n, k) [Combinatoric]" by Nancy Cohen

The main floors at the Hunterdon Art Museum this summer are given over to a rare exhibition of the museum's permanent collection, which is made up of prints — many bought as prizes in Hunterdon's annual National Juried Print Exhibition, which was established by museum co-founder Anne Steel Marsh, for whom the collection is named.

If you're familiar with the museum and its converted century-old mill building, you may know many of these etchings, lithos and screen-prints by artists as well-known as Phillip Guston, Alex Katz, Faith Ringgold and John Goodyear.

But the others don't get seen enough, and the inventiveness of American printmaking is only suggested by the museum's collection, which includes everything from wire-mounted handmade paper to sheets of clear plexi printed with concentric lines to make moire patterns when they overlap. In the first-floor gallery and the second-floor side gallery, on the other hand, are two small exhibits by contemporary artists whose concerns are for nature and the environment, which seem like summertime ideas. The first, "Nancy Cohen: Precarious Exchange," is from a glass sculptor who served as artist-in-residence at the Pilchuck Glass School in Washington state. Cohen has been brought to Hunterdon from her New York dealer Accola Griefen Gallery,

which is run by Kristin Accola, who served as exhibitions director at the Hunterdon for many years; the themes are taken from a number of different Cohen series, but the overall impression they give is of a day at the beach. Not figuratively, in the sense of taking it easy, but literally, in the sense of visiting one of New Jersey's artificially maintained, industrial-scaled tourist beaches. The main wall of the windowless gallery is covered with several reliefs — "Double Take," "P(n,k) (Combinatoric) II," "Metamorphic Traces" — made from glass, wire, resin, fishing line, cement, hand-made paper and other odds and ends that range from found objects (stoppered test tubes) to standard sculpture class materials (metal wire). There are starfish here made of cast glass and of translucent resins with springs in every arm; they're arranged on the wall like flotsam on a shore, connected not by viscous strings of draining sea foam but by monofilaments and plastic tubing. In the middle of the gallery, there's the skeleton of an old shopping cart, smeared with dried cement, with glass "towels" slung over the handlebars. Called "In Pulverum," the cement-covered cart is a memorial to the increasing number of homeless people Cohen notices around her home, and the cast glass "towels" suggest the fragility of the property "rights" they claim on their few possessions. But the sandy-looking concrete seems to invoke the beach, too, and at the Hunterdon, the mind wanders to thoughts about the horrors of homelessness in the midst of vacationing fun.

Upstairs, Bill Macholdt is showing stoneware vessels — well, some are vessels, and others are closed-form artifacts — in a show of almost mystic intensity called "Thinking in Form." Curated by Hildreth York and Ingrid Renard, Macholdt's work is brimming with references to plant forms — one vase sports a triple pea-pod shape — but often veers into almost Memphis-style decorative tropes, like shiny metallic coatings, embedded steel balls and really brilliantly realized glazes.

Macholdt teaches ceramics at Raritan Valley Community College, but he works full time as an environmental consultant, and sees a kind of ecological correspondence between the smooth, gently morphing shapes he makes in Raku and high-fired ceramics, and the habitats he studies as a professional. Macholdt was born and raised in Hunterdon County, and he ascribes at least part of his interest in pottery to a visit he made when he was only 4 years old to the studio of Toshiko Takaezu, another early founder of the Hunterdon and longtime ceramicist at Princeton University.

Takaezu comes to mind as you look at Macholdt's closed-form ceramic shapes, most of them coated with a wonderful blue-green glaze that's veined

like malachite; the forms themselves are reminiscent of Neolithic hand-axes or worn river stones. But the branching, shiny, closed vessels have Surreal antecedents, even as they hint at references to ancient Moche pottery from Peru. This small room is filled to bursting with more than 30 objects (including drawings) — and often seems to brandish even more ideas.

Works on Paper: Celebrating the Hunterdon Art Museum's Collection

Where: The Hunterdon Art Museum, 7 Lower Center St., Clinton

When: Through Sept. 9. Open Tuesdays to Sundays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

How much: Suggested donation is \$5. Call (908) 735-8415 or visit hunterdonartmuseum.org.