

The Arts

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Editor: Michele Toney / 614-461-5075

The pull of printmaking

**Phoenix Rising
gives artists place
to create, show
their works**

By Nancy Gilson
Dispatch Arts Reporter

Printmaking, in many ways, is a communal experience. Artists give a subject and style to an etching or a woodcut, but, when they pull the print, friends and colleagues might help manipulate the press or wield cumbersome paper, or simply share the excitement of a newborn image.

Then, of course, a print is not a single work but one of multiples that hangs easily in a student apartment, suburban home or downtown office.

Phoenix Rising Printmaking Cooperative and Gallery is putting the communal back into printmaking.

The fledgling organization, which opened in September at 938 Parsons Ave., is the city's first cooperative printmaking studio and a labor of love for the founding artists.

Anne Cushman, a printmaker from Philadelphia, and Claire Hagan, a former print instructor at Fort Hayes Arts and Academic High School, first gathered with fellow printmakers in 1995. They devised a plan, found space, survived a fire, bought and scavenged equipment, and began to attract other artists who loved printmaking as much as they did.

Tonight and again Aug. 7, the cooperative will host an open house and demonstrations from 6 to 9:30.

The events coincide with print exhibitions at the Lanning Gallery, 990 N. High St., and the Hagan-directed Gallery at JungHaus, 29 E. Russell St.

"Most major cities have places like this," Cushman said, "but a printmaking co-op just hadn't existed in Columbus before."

"As an artist, it's hard to maintain an interest in printmaking because the equipment is very large and expensive. Our goal was to have a place for ourselves and other artists to make prints."

With financial support from the Columbus Neighborhood Design Assistance Center, the women worked with landlord David Rothert to renovate the building — which once housed a drugstore, then a used-appliance store.

The renovation suffered a setback in



A pulled print and tools of the trade at Phoenix Rising

Chris Russell / Dispatch photos



Claire Hagan, left, and Anne Cushman, founders of Phoenix Rising

1996 when a fire caused extensive damage. "That's why we're called Phoenix," Hagan said.

They have tried to make the storefront building look as it probably did originally, with wood floors, large windows and a cozy atmosphere.

At the front is a small gallery, leading into a space filled with presses, drawers and equipment.

Phoenix Rising purchased used presses, including a 100-year-old etching press that reinforces the old-fashioned atmosphere, from Ohio State University. Hagan and Cushman spent about \$6,000 to buy another etching press from a company in Albuquerque, N.M.

"It's the only new thing in this place," Hagan said.

An old cafeteria rack, purchased for \$1 at an auction, makes a print-drying stand. Old map trays from the state provide storage.

Hagan supplied an old sink, and the Columbus College of Art and Design donated water trays. Rothert had the idea of painting a blue sky and clouds on the ceiling.

While Hagan and Cushman have served as directors, the structure is changing into more of a true cooperative, with members taking charge of the organization and its direction.

Bryan Baker, a recent printmaking graduate from Ohio University, will become the live-in administrator; he is renovating and will occupy an upstairs apartment.

■ Phoenix Rising Printmaking Cooperative and Gallery, 938 Parsons Ave., will have an open house from 6 to 9:30 tonight and Aug. 7.

■ "Study of the Print," featuring works by 30 printmakers, will open tonight at the Lanning Gallery, 990 N. High St. (614-291-4421) — as will "Practice of the Print," with works by 10 Phoenix Rising artists, at the Gallery at JungHaus, 29 E. Russell St. (614-621-8217).

The five-member Phoenix board consists of Cushman, Hagan, gallery owner Ursula Lanning, artist Heather Marr and Bob Tauber, director of the former Logan Elm Press.

The cooperative offers lectures and workshops as well as printmaking facilities. The goal is to educate consumers as well as artists.

"Printmaking hasn't changed in 500 years," Cushman said. "The principles are the same, but a lot of the techniques have changed."

Contemporary printmakers are excited or put off by computer-imaging techniques. Many artists are demanding nontoxic inks and solvents, and printmakers in general are concerned about the public perception of prints.

"A Xeroxed watercolor is not a fine-art print," Hagan said. "People at art fairs often don't understand the difference between commercial prints and fine-art prints."

With Phoenix Rising, Cushman and Hagan hope to attract students, young artists and established artists who work primarily in prints or want to sample a new medium.

"It's funny with artists who are printmakers," Cushman said. "Sometimes you think, 'Why don't you just paint it?' But you get caught up in the process and you can't get the same image from a painting or a drawing."

People who make prints, Hagan said, appreciate the incremental stages involved in making art.

"And there's always the element of surprise," Cushman said. "Pulling a print is a very exciting moment. When somebody around here says, 'I'm ready to print my plate,' there are always two or three people ready to watch."