

Penny Barringer: A Passion for Print

Penelope Barringer had a passion for printmaking--all types of printmaking: etching, lithography, monotype, collagraph, linocut; and for printmakers, print collecting, the printed word, and illustrated books and manuscripts. Many may not know that Penny collected illustrated books, or that she adored organ music, or that she was an amazing Italian chef. She led several art tours of Italy and finding the best restaurants was always part of the fun.

She attended Syracuse University 1964-68, and received her BFA, majoring in fabric design. She met her husband, Marty Barringer at Hamilton College in 1965 and they married in August 1967. They moved to the Washington, DC, area in 1970. Penny began studying printmaking (lithography, intaglio) with Don Brown at NOVA Annandale, ca. 1974-78. Her first group show was with Nancy McIntyre (current Art League teacher of silk screen printing), Lynd Ward, and Mark Leithauser (Chief of Design and Senior Curator at the National Gallery of Art), at NOVA Annandale in 1979. Her first solo show of lithographs was at the Quill & Brush Gallery, Bethesda, MD in 1981. She also studied lithography and assisted in teaching with Scip Barnhart (now a professor of fine art at Georgetown University) at the Union Printmakers demonstration/teaching lab in downtown DC, around 1979-81. During the same period she displayed her work regularly at Washington Printmakers and in its various venues in DC.

In 1981 Penny went to work in the educational unit at the National Museum of American Art, where she met Allan Kaneshiro. Her job included driving small trucks around the DC area delivering small intaglio presses to local high schools and teaching them how to print. When an administrator abolished the educational unit at the end of 1982, Allan and Penny appropriated the NMAA program's "Discover Graphics" name, adding to the official title "Atelier". They convinced the Art League to sub-lease them the space to undertake teaching printmaking classes for the Art League and provided nearly \$20,000 worth of equipment which they owned/built themselves. From its inception as a 501c3 organization, DGA has encouraged individual printmakers through its "affiliate" program providing experienced printmakers with a place to hone their skills and print on large presses for a reasonable fee. Discover Graphics now has two large etching presses and two lithography presses. There are very few such open and inviting print shops in the country and DGA has been used as a model for setting up a cooperative shop. Since Kaneshiro retired to the "big island" (Hawaii) in 2003, Penny became the sole director of DGA, doing everything from developing programs to emptying the trash. They now have five instructors: master printmaker Ed McCluney, Nancy Aldrich-Wolf, Pamela Day, Harriet Lawler, and David Skibiak, each with over 30 years of printmaking experience.

Penny has shown her prints at the Factory since 1995, sharing studios with Marnie Montgomery, Pat Barron, and Rita Ludden, before joining Printmakers Inc. She also showed her cloisonné enamel jewelry, whose designs elegantly transformed her printmaking style into wearable art, in her own spaces and summers in the Metallum Gallery at the Torpedo Factory. She also taught a monotype workshop with Diane Tesler in Kewanna, Indiana every fall. She continued to study printmaking techniques throughout her career.

Penny encouraged hundreds of artists to explore printmaking and was a constant source of inspiration.

She was former President and current Treasurer of the Torpedo Factory Artists Association and a member of the board working with Alexandria to forge a future for the Factory. As we reflect on the remarkable legacy of Penny Barringer, we take some comfort in knowing that the printing workshop of Discover Graphics Atelier, which she founded and so passionately defended, will continue, though it will take many people working together to begin to equal one Penny.