

PRINT-INTERESTING

Orit Hofshi at Locks Gallery

by Amze Emmons, March 30th, 2012

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Steadfastness, 2010, spoon printed woodcut on handmade paper, 68 x 141.3 inches



Orit Hofshi's new exhibition *Pharos* at Locks Gallery in Philadelphia is a wildly powerful investigation of the way a print process, in this case, woodcut, can create a monumental and solemn aesthetic experience. For those unfamiliar, Hofshi is a wildly talented Israeli-based artist (who studied at PAFA) whose large scale woodblock/print installation really caught our attention during the Philagrafika festival. This exhibition will run until April 13th.

Hofshi's process evidences both an intense dedication to process, as seen in the time spent hand-carving and hand-printing the large scale works, as well as, an utter ruthlessness in service to creating these brutally fantastic images; for example, she resolves that old printmakerly dilemma of the



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beautiful matrix – by hanging it on the wall too! This move of moving the carved block to the wall seems both bold and generous, as it lays her process bare, removing the distance found in the prints. *Steadfastness* (seen above) appears to be printed from carved floor planks. The way that subtle signifier triggers a slow cascade of contextual associations is a delight, bringing to mind the work of Whitfield Lovell, another artist interested in the relationship between history, place, and narrative.



Remant, 2008, ink drawing on carved pine wood panels, 103 x 141.7 inches

The gallery describes the body of work on display:

The exhibition title Pharos, taken from her 2012 piece, means both milestone and beacon. Hofshi's work has long conveyed the notion of passage—both in the historical sense but also humanity's individual renewal. Hofshi's massive prints render agitated landscapes in black, ocre and shades of grey—the terrain alternately wild and marked by man's imprint. Often depicting her native Israel, the plains and ruins are haunted by history, suggesting nostalgia, despair and meditation. The arid lands, symbolic and ordinary for every Israeli are reconfigured through Hofshi's intense study of artists such as Albrecht Durer, Kathe Kollwitz and Anselm Kiefer.

The imagery is haunting and sad, but also memorably beautiful, her time spent looking at those great artist was not in vain.

I would also add William Kentridge to the list of artists whom Hofshi is now in conversation,



Reclaim, 2008, ink on paper, 58.8 x 112.5 inches



Amassment, 2012, woodcut on Fabriano paper, ink, carved pine wood panels, 67.3 x 86.2 inches

especially the images where the male figure appears wandering alone in the ruins. While these are in many cases not the strongest works in the exhibition, they are powerful and provide a temporal context for the landscape.

Some of the mono-prints in this exhibition have been so completely worked over with charcoal and ink. The aggressive lines and strokes easily slide into the ambient chorus of the signature carving.

This was a really great show, perhaps one of the strongest solo exhibitions by an artist producing image-based print work I have seen in a long time.



Morass, 2012, woodcut, ink drawing on paper, 100 x 38 inches