

Alumni Spotlight: Orit Hofshi returns to PAFA for *Philagrafika 2010*

Twenty years after her 1990 graduation from PAFA, Israeli artist Orit Hofshi returned to the Academy to install her work in the Fisher Brooks Gallery as part of *Philagrafika 2010: The Graphic Unconscious*. Revisiting the Academy and seeing her work on display in the Samuel M.V. Hamilton Building has been an exciting opportunity for Hofshi, who answered the following questions for *Preview*.

Was art something you always wanted to study and pursue?

There haven't been many days I wasn't doing something creative from kindergarten and on. During my high school years it was already quite clear to me that I would be doing art for the long term in one form or another.

How did you come to study at PAFA?

My husband, Nittai, and I came to Philadelphia when he enrolled at the MFA program at Temple University. I had just completed my graphic design studies in Israel. One of my professors at the college, Ed Sernoff, a PAFA alumni and a friend of Dan Miller, told me about PAFA and its programs. So after settling down in Philadelphia I began exploring the option of attending the Academy. To make a long story short, I was lucky to be accepted and granted a scholarship, and embarked on a great journey from there after.

Can you talk a bit about your experience as a student here?

One of the challenging and stimulating aspects of being a student at PAFA, was my being from a different culture. A different language, a different artistic environment, a different "language of art" all added to learning how PAFA operates and works. I found myself observing a lot and eagerly familiarizing myself with the school's atmosphere, energy, and very diverse student body. I felt that during my studies at PAFA, I maintained my personal identity and much of my background, while learning a great deal and experiencing the PAFA and local environment, all with the absolute support and respect of the faculty and fellow students.

How do themes and mediums of your work develop?

While drawing had always been the anchor of my art work and primary medium of expression, I feel that when enrolling at PAFA, I was primed for a deeper and more substantial personal introspective journey. In a short while, printing, and woodcuts specifically, became a significant media and mode of expression. Evolution of time, remnants and recorded natural or human footprints have been a focal point of much of my recent work. A significant factor influencing my work is living in a politically charged en-



Orit Hofshi (Israeli, born 1969), *If the Tread is an Echo*, 2009. Pencil, markers, and stone stick tusche rubbing on carved wood panels and handmade paper, 136 x 287 x 36 inches. Photo courtesy of the artist

vironment like present-day Israel. But the issue is actually broader than that in my mind. The human condition has a constant presence in my work, whether actually depicted in the work and even if not. I constantly look for images of people in daily newspapers as well as images from archives. I am fascinated by expressions and disposition portrayed in images as a source of inspiration. My frequent depiction of isolated figures refers primarily to the notion that people need to face challenges, as well as the consequences of their actions and decisions as individuals.

What are your thoughts on returning to your alma mater and participating in *Philagrafika*?

I feel I have an on going relationship with the Academy, and *Philagrafika* gave me a wonderful opportunity to work with the museum's contemporary art team and Julien Robson [PAFA's Curator of Contemporary Art]. As part of the opening events week I had the opportunity to meet with a group of PAFA students, telling them a bit about my experience and work and also looking at some of their work with them. Another highlight of my visit was a gallery talk with Julien, held in the museum next to my work. This was a wonderful experience not only as a venue of an interesting discussion, but was also an opportunity to meet a wide range of people some of whom remembered me from my PAFA days and came to revisit.

From the Desk of the Dean: Printmaking and Printmakers

By Jeffrey Carr, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dean of the School of Fine Arts

It was impossible to be around PAFA this winter without realizing we were playing host to a vast celebration of printmaking and printmakers. Top of the list is, of course, the printmaking extravaganza of *Philagrafika 2010*, with its long list of international art stars pushing and pulling the limits of printmaking as a medium and an art form. There was also an exhibition of modern and contemporary prints from the Academy's own collection, featuring printmaking masterpieces from Motherwell, Warhol, Sue Coe, and many others. Finally, there was an exhibition of outstanding prints from Philadelphia's own printmaking community who have produced work with Master Printer Cindi Ettinger.

The School featured demonstrations, exhibitions, and visiting artists in celebration of printmaking. *Philagrafika* artist and PAFA alumnus Orit Hofshi was a guest at the printmaking department, doing a day of demonstrations and critiques. The printmaking department participated in the Southern Graphics Council annual convention, hosted this March in Philadelphia by all of the area art schools. Lisa Hamilton, Tony Rosati, Dan Miller and Ron Wyffels gave demonstrations and displayed printmaking techniques to hundreds of visiting printmakers, students, and printmaking professionals from all over the country who were here for the conference.

Throughout printmaking's long and illustrious history, it has often played a secondary role to painting and sculpture. Paintings and sculpture were traditionally for the wealthy aristocracy. Prints, however, were a popular medium, intended for a wider and more democratic audience. Durer made paintings for the wealthy and the privileged, but he made his apocalyptic woodcuts for the masses. Printmaking evolved as a way of making multiple images that were more affordable for ordinary people. But it really came into its own when great modernist masters such as Picasso, Motherwell, and many others raised it to its current status of being an immensely creative and innovative art form of its own. The frenzy of exhibitions, visitors, and demonstrations illustrates PAFA's commitment to the evolving vitality of contemporary printmaking.

Renowned Artists Faith Ringgold and Julie Heffernan to Join PAFA Commencement Ceremonies

On May 14, the PAFA community will gather for its annual graduation ceremonies, which this year will feature an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degree presented to Faith Ringgold, and a commencement address given by Julie Heffernan.

Faith Ringgold began her artistic career more than 35 years ago as a painter. Today, she is best known for her painted story quilts—art that combines painting, quilted fabric, and storytelling. She has exhibited in major museums in the United States, Europe, South America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Her work is in the permanent collections of many museums including the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, and PAFA. Her first book, *Tar Beach*, was a Caldecott Honor Book and winner of the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration, among numerous other honors. She has written and illustrated 11 children's books and received more than 75 awards, fellowships, citations, and honors, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Fellowship for painting, two National Endowment for the Arts awards, and 17 honorary doctorates, one of which is from her alma mater The City College of New York. Ringgold is married to Burdette Ringgold and has two daughters, Michele and Barbara Wallace, and three granddaughters, Faith, Theodora and Martha. She is a professor of art at the University of California in San Diego, California.

Julie Heffernan is known for her lush and sensuous, large-scale figurative and still life paintings that combine elements of Italian or Spanish Renaissance painting, 17th-century Dutch genre still-life, and grand manner landscape painting. Her provocative and beautiful work evokes psychological issues surrounding feminism, gender issues, class structure, and motherhood. Her ability to cross-reference centuries and issues, both political and private, in large-scale figurative paintings, makes Heffernan one of the most unique artists working today. Heffernan has been exhibiting widely for the past two decades at The Korean Biennial; Weatherspoon Art Gallery, NC; Tampa Museum Of Art, FL; Knoxville Museum Of Art, TN; Columbia Museum of Art, SC; Milwaukee Art Museum, WI; The New Museum, NY; The Norton Museum, FL; The American Academy of Arts And Letters, NY; Kohler Arts Center, WI; The Palmer Museum of Art, PA; National Academy of Art, NY; McNay Art Museum, TX; Herter Art Gallery, MA; Mint Museum, NC; Virginia Museum of Fine Art, VA, among numerous others.