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ART REVIEW: Barbara Burgess Maier displays 'Inscapes' collection at Endicott

Sabbaticals can supply unexpected rewards, both for the academic and for the outside world. Barbara Burgess Maier, recently retired professor of art at Endicott College, spent a year on sabbatical in 2014, mainly on Nantucket. She came away with a set of monotype prints, collected as "Inscapes," which provide an alluring study of the progression of ideas, coupled with advanced technique.

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By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted Apr. 1, 2016 at 2:29 PM

BEVERLY
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If you go...

- WHAT:** Barbara Burgess Maier: Inscapes
- WHERE:** Manninen Center for the Arts, Spencer Presentation Gallery, Endicott College, 376 Hale St., Beverly
- WHEN:** through May 21
- ADMISSION:** Free. Visit www.endicott.edu or call 978-232-2655.

Sabbaticals can supply unexpected rewards, both for the academic and for the outside world. Barbara Burgess Maier, recently retired professor of art at Endicott College, spent a year on sabbatical in 2014, mainly on Nantucket. She came away with a set of monotype prints, collected as "Inscapes," which provide an alluring study of the progression of ideas, coupled with advanced technique.

The exhibition, on view through May 21 in the Spencer Presentation Gallery at the Manninen Center for the Arts on the Endicott College campus, shows two dozen works. Most are monotypes, some flavored with acrylic colors or heightened by charcoal or pencil. A few larger acrylic on canvas works change the pace of the exhibition.

Some aspects of the works are particularly strong. A robust flavor of allusive calligraphy pervades — not calligraphy that suggests specific characters or shapes, but only the sense of the calligraphist's delicate, intentional hand. The artist's signature, careful and bold, folds itself into



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'Resisting ...what's going on around us,' by Barbara Burgess Maier, 2015, acrylic/mixed media on canvas



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some of the compositions.

The sense of movement also persists in these works, which are all abstract. But the movement seems to imply improvisation, as if they started with one shape, or pattern, and that design led into further explorations of composition and texture — not intentional on the artist's part, but part of an unexpected path.

All are titled, mostly enigmatically: "Sharing the Deep"; "The Duration of a Glance"; some reference poems by Emerson, or T.S. Eliot's "Prufrock." Almost all the works share a 2014 date, clearly making it a particularly active and fecund sabbatical.

Texture plays a subtle but striking role in some works. "As the Garden Greys," carbon pencil on paper, covered with another composition of graphite on vellum, has double layers that sit monochromatically over each other. In

combination the layers offer both a burst of smoky energy and an underlying delineation of pattern.

When Maier introduces color, the calligraphic aspect acquires a Calder-esque sense of play. "Forming/Reforming" and "Finding/Forgetting," both monotypes, display this most directly, but other works with acrylic touches also hint at an antic subtexts.

"Inscapes" conveys the feeling of a technically accomplished artist allowing paths of creative exploration to unfold without intention.

The exhibition remains on view through May 21 in the Spencer Presentation Gallery at the Manninen Center for the Arts on the Endicott College campus. For information, visit www.endicott.edu or call 978-232-2655.

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