

ARTS | NEW JERSEY

By Invitation Only

In Clinton, Works by Well-Chosen Young Printmakers

UNCONVENTIONAL

From left: Yashua Klos's "Kenny" (2007); Myungwon Kim's "Reflection Series 3" (2007); and Ivanco Talevski's "Self Portrait" (2009).



There is a welcome recent trend at regional museums in which exhibitions of work by nominated or invited emerging artists are taking the place of juried shows open to whomever pays the entry

ART REVIEW

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The Hunterdon Art Museum is treading this path, replacing its annual juried print exhibition with an invitational show of prints by M.F.A. candidates and recent graduates from East Coast art schools. Titled "Up and Coming: New Printmakers Make Their Mark," it is one of the best contemporary print shows I have seen in a long time.

To choose the artists, the museum's

"Up and Coming: New Printmakers Make Their Mark," Hunterdon Art Museum, 7 Lower Center Street, Clinton, through Sept. 13; (908) 735-8415 or hunterdonartmuseum.org.

curator, Mary Birmingham, asked 11 art schools to nominate their best up-and-coming printmakers, from which she selected 22 artists. Some work with traditional printmaking techniques, but over all the accent is clearly on artists experimenting with the print medium.

If the majority of exhibitors have anything in common, it is probably that they tend to look beyond conventional printmaking materials and techniques, incorporating elements like painting, drawing, sculpture and collage. One artist, Tara Cooper, has even combined printmaking with new technology to create a 10-minute animation.

Nearly all the artists are first rate, and I suspect that several will go on to have long and productive careers. Yashua Klos, for example, has an uncanny knack for printing giant woodcuts on sheets of muslin. His two works here, "Kenny" (2007) and "Coby" (2007), are portraits of men with huge heads and drastically foreshortened legs.

Looking at Mr. Klos's woodcuts, I was

reminded of Andrea Mantegna's "Lamentation Over the Dead Christ" (circa 1490), in which Mantegna foreshortened Christ's body to emphasize the face and further dramatize the scene. Mr. Klos's foreshortening of his subjects and choice of an elevated vantage point has the opposite effect, making these figures seem smaller and less imposing.

Other splendidly free and energetic work in the show includes colorful, Surrealist-oriented prints by Andy Kozlowski, John Adimando and Ann Marie Heal. Like Mr. Klos, these artists combine traditional techniques with new materials or creative tools, including digital graphics and laser cutting processes.

Even those viewers not in tune with developments in contemporary printmaking should be impressed with the variety and inventiveness of the work. Jill Zevenbergen and Erin Sweeney present admirable experiments in relief and letter-press printing, while mixed-media works by Arlen Austin, Elliot

An exhibition that lends support to a trend away from juried shows.

Hess and Noah Breuer convey a radical sense of collage.

There are artists here working in more traditional media, but this does not mean their art is in any way conventional or boring. Ivanco Talevski makes strikingly unusual and beautiful etchings of figures, among them "Self Portrait" (2009), which shows him in profile wearing a fanciful hat; it combines elements of a village folk costume from his

native Macedonia and an ancient helmet worn backward.

Similarly, Myungwon Kim seems to be developing a starkly original voice in lithography, an age-old technique that is all but moribund. She makes simple yet beautiful abstract prints that can look like stains on a carpet or the meandering movement of oil mixed with water. In her seeming spontaneity and her attention to texture, however, she is an artist of great poise and sensitivity.

Nothing about this show is brisk or businesslike, qualities all too common in juried exhibitions. Chalk it up to the exuberance or the optimism of youth, but for many of the participants in this show, being an artist appears to be the most important thing in the world. That is a quality worth fostering.