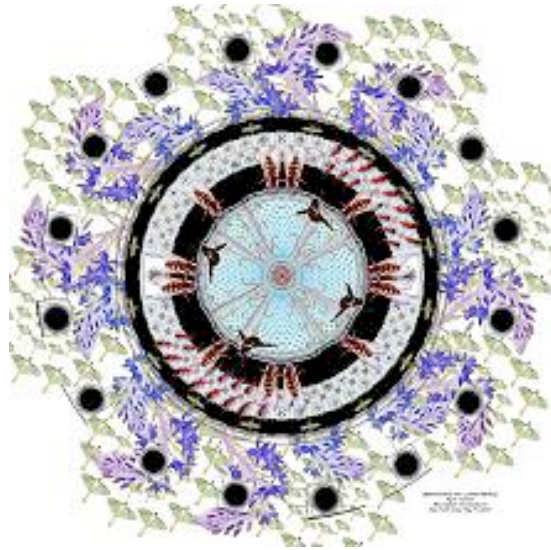


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April Vollmer: Bramante's Lunar Temple, 2001
Digital print on mylar, 915 x 915 mm.

Into digital

Best known for her use of traditional woodcut, April Vollmer's latest prints use digital techniques

This summer I held my first solo show of digital prints at the Ceres Project Room at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, New York, USA. It included 11 large format digital prints, a selection of smaller work and a portfolio of hanga woodcut prints (see "*Printmaking Today*", Vol 7 No 4) illustrating the evolution of this new work.

The show's title refers to the architectural plans and elevations, which inspired most of the images. Architectural plans represent the physical principles underlying natural forms. The same structural concerns can also be seen in the woodcuts, but in the new work the computer supplies an explicitly mathematical foundation. Four of the digital prints took Bramante's Tempietto plans as a foundation for radiating patterns of plants and insects, printed on architectural mylar. Others, such as the Iris prints Big Bangs (Fire and Ice) and two Rose Tantras, used astronomical images and oversize flowers as backgrounds. Both of these pairs played with tantric diagrams of the universe, substituting flies and bees for gods and goddesses. All were printed on handmade Japanese paper.

Which printer?

The prints were created on the computer in multiple layers from scans of drawings and photographs. I proofed the architectural series myself on an HP Designjet 1050 plotter, a 36-inch roll-fed inkjet designed for architectural drawings and photos.

These prints are not lightfast, so I asked Silicon Gallery Fine Art Prints to print the final artwork. For the Tiny Temple series they used a large format six colour Epson printer, which uses pigment based inks, generally agreed to be more lightfast than dye based inks. Epson also makes an affordable desktop printer, the 2000P, which again uses pigment based inks. Both offer smooth colour gradations and a very fine spray pattern.

The Tantra series was printed on an Iris printer, using a quality Lysonic inkset. The Iris printers cannot run pigment inks because the pigment particles are coarser than their own spray pattern. However the right combination of ink and paper will produce long lasting images as long as they are handled with the same care as any artwork (see Vol 8 No 4). The Iris is generally reckoned to offer more sensitive tonalities than even the best pigment printer. Also, because it prints from a drum, rather than a sheet feeder, it is able to print on a wider variety of substrates: for the Tantra prints I used handmade Japanese paper, bleed printed over the deckle edge.

The final prints owe a great deal to the collaborative energies and atmosphere of the Silicon Gallery Fine Art Prints. Digital printing requires much proofing and evaluation, and good communication between the artist and printer. Silicon charges a fixed amount for proofs, and by the square foot for final prints. Their informative attitude and their willingness to experiment with materials were essential to the completion of the work.