
Fleisher Ollman

1216 Arch Street – 5A
Philadelphia PA 19107
tel / 215-545-7562
215-545-6140 / fax
fleisherollman.com

Rochelle Toner: New Watercolor Drawings

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Rochelle Toner: New Watercolor Drawings features work created over the past several years that evolved from the artist's fascination with nature and how she sees human interaction mirrored in the natural world. Best known as a printmaker, the drawings allow for a looser, more spontaneous approach to expressing herself on paper. Toner is interested in the unconscious and the tensions created by forces that individuals have little control over. She refers to these social, sexual, and gender dynamics as "nature, pleasure, and innuendo," and explores these tensions through abstract forms, patterns, textures, and colors. The drawings plumb the fertile juncture between abstraction and representation—the gray area in which a referent may be felt in the work without the intrusion of the literal. Surprisingly diverse, these works range from vibrantly colored organic abstractions that evoke microscopic life forms to glyph-like elements and linear marks that recall the 1920s Bauhaus-era work of Vasily Kandinsky. Like many artists working in the midwest during the 1970s, Toner fell under the spell of self-taught artists including Martín Ramírez and Joseph Yoakum, whose work she saw in Chicago at this time, and whose influence is evident in this recent body of work.

Toner has shown in major Philadelphia-area institutions including the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania; Tyler School of Art; the Michener Museum; and Woodmere Art Museum, among others. Elsewhere she has exhibited at the Lafayette Museum of Art, LA; RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia; Ball State University, Muncie, IN; and the Corcoran Museum of Art, Washington, D.C., among others. Her work is in many public collections such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Kemper Art Museum, Washington University, St Louis, MO; and the Zuckerman Museum of Art, Southern Graphics International Collection, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA.