

RATTÉ'S CIRCLE OF LIFE

ALL THAT GLITTERS...

The shimmer of Michele Ratté's gold-infused sculptures and prints is not just decorative veneer. Precious, permanent and pure, gold in her hands is not just a physical material, but a transcendent one. It is an ideal medium for cross-referencing the natural and archetypal cycles of

birth, death and rebirth that frame our existence on this planet.

At an early age, Ratté accompanied her father, a hydro-geologist, on treks into the Arizona deserts in search of signs of water. As he mapped, she picked up mica and fools-gold from the sands. Later he taught marine

geology in the Virgin Islands, where she kept up with high school classes by correspondence and swam with schools of fish among the coral reefs. Ratté's feeling for form is instinctive in her fingertips. Her mother sewed the children's clothes by hand, and Ratté remembers running through the fabric stores smelling and touching every bolt.

Midway through her art career, things changed. She and her colleague, artist Joan Morris, invented and patented a printmaking method that permanently bonded nano-thicknesses of precious metals and mineral grains to a substrate. Metallic veils and carapaces have since become a hallmark of Ratté's forms. Seductive yet not cloying, these shining skins hold opposites and complements in tension. Articulated steel wire and glass containers hint of exoskeletons and permeable boundaries.

New forms of life bloom along those long-buried in Ratté's visions, fusing poetry with the pulses of evolution and endurance deep within the Earth. "Escalier," a long corkscrew "necklace" twining around a spine of shell-beads, dangles effortlessly in mid-air like an underwater plant reaching for the sun. Tori of gilded cloth constrict ocean pebbles pierced by fossilized wormholes that wind their way upward along the core. A double helix of sky-blue beads bubbles up in a twisted ladder toward the surface. Below, a clutch of hollow brass bells fashioned from exploded bombs by women who survived the Cambodian killing fields drags the superstructure downward. The darkness of human catastrophe is thus buoyed up by a regenerative lightness and light.

MICHELE RATTÉ: SCULPTURE AND ETCHINGS
AIDRON DUCKWORTH ART MUSEUM
 21 BEAN ROAD
 MERIDEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE
 SEPTEMBER 17 THROUGH OCTOBER 30

FLOWER OF TIME: AFFINITIES
MITCHELL-GIDDINGS FINE ART
 183 MAIN STREET
 BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT
 OCTOBER 27 THROUGH NOVEMBER 27

Escalier, 2011- 2015, 22K gold prints on silk, fossilized stones, shells, glass beads, Cambodian bells, stainless steel wire and cord (photo by Rachel Portesi).

This past July, artscope's Elizabeth Michelman visited Ratté's Saxtons River, Vermont studio to see and discuss her work that will be on view this fall:

THE INTEGRITY OF YOUR STRUCTURES OFTEN DEPENDS ON GOLD'S CHEMICAL AND PHYSICAL PROPERTIES. WOULD YOU USE IT IF IT WERE BLACK?

Michele Ratté: I love black and you'll see it in my prints on paper and soft materials. But I've always been interested in reflectivity. Other materials tarnish. The beauty of the gold is that it doesn't. You have possibilities of different tonalities. The cooler, silvery "moon-gold" has palladium in it. Black isn't going to show lightness. For me, light is a huge element in my work. I want lightness, spaciousness and movement.

WHAT ARE YOUR NEW MATERIALS?

I'm currently using rope cast off from trawlers on the tide. I choose a color, tease it apart, find plastic threads in vivid colors and work with them. I'll have two pieces sewn with beach threads at Mitchell-Giddings, "Maze" and "Pelegrin." Also other smaller sculptures from the last three years, new etchings and new collages from drawing, photographs and prints. The Aidron Duckworth Museum is presenting

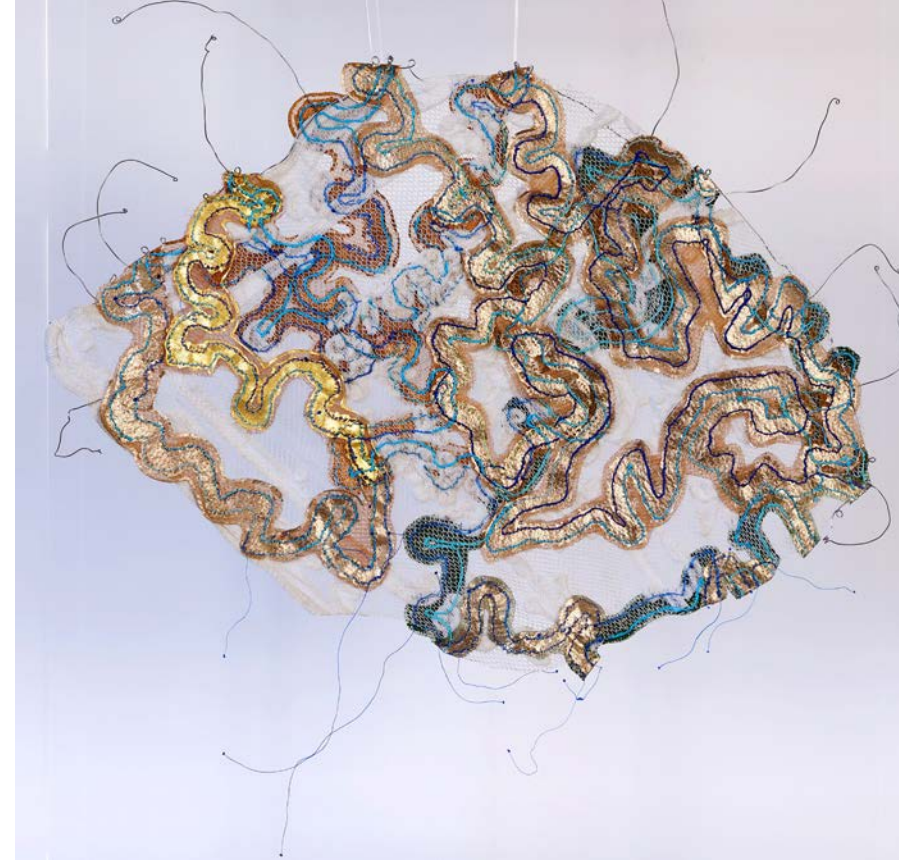
larger sculpture, my works from the last six months made with chum bags, and new etchings. The etchings are Chine-collé made from drawings from my sculptures while in progress.

And I'll show "Vernal Heart," a series of five flat works at Mitchell-Giddings. These are larger prints on silk and polyester substrates using a complex photographic gilding process. Each has a slightly different personality. This first one is 23K gold

on silk. The next two are moon-gold alone and moon-gold with a screen-printed root on top. This one has more organic free-hand painting on top of gold print.

THOSE VEINS LOOK LIKE RIVERS OR TERRAIN. MAYBE THE MOUNTAINS OF VERMONT?

The feeling of "mapping of the surface" emerged in drawing. I've been thinking of mineral and fossil forms. On a trip with Dad to the ancient fossil reef on Isle La Motte in Lake Champlain, we found bryozoans,



Maze, 2015, 22K gold and palladium prints on silk, beach rope threads, lace, stainless steel fishing wire; printed, shaped, cut, assembled. Two-sided, 20 1/2" H x 16 1/2" D x 6" W (photo by Rachel Portesi).

the first worm form of life. I noticed how visceral they were, like intestines, and beautiful.

In "Maze," I transformed them from drawings to printed images on gilded lace. These are already stiff and woven, but then gilding them makes it stiffer. Those ends sticking out are twisted steel fishing line. The two-sidedness of the flat lace gives it surprise. I like it taking away my control. I can work it front and back. Then I do the sewing part and see what happens.



Featured Artist

WHAT ABOUT THE SHOE-SOLE?

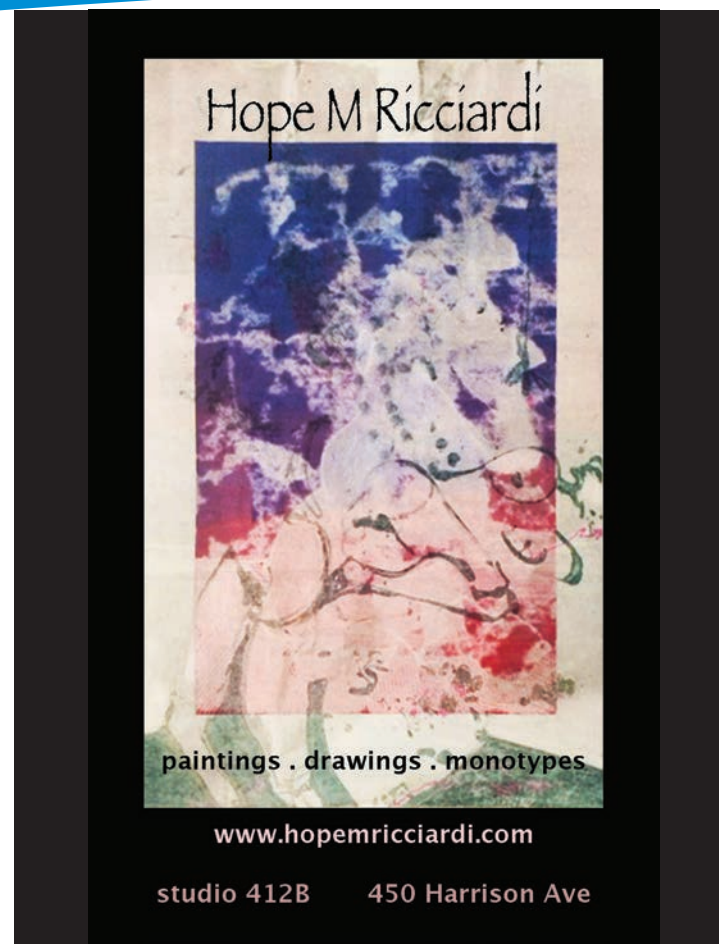
"Pelegrin." It's from a woman's boot, maybe 200 years old. I found it cast up at Race Point, Provincetown, during my 2013 Dune Residency. The perforations are hand-punched. I threaded through them but left some open to see the light coming through.

THE THREADS SHIFT FROM WARM GREEN TO PALE TURQUOISE. YOU'VE SECURED THEM WITH PINK BEADS UNDERNEATH. WHY THE GILDED TOP?

It's the surface of shells, light hitting the bottom and sand sparkling through clear water. Fish catch the light and flash, change direction and change again. And that time you see the old tire or canoe on the bottom with grass growing through it. It's magical and spooky.

Time is one of my materials. When I work in etching and drawing, it's fast and a wonderful counterpoint to the very time-intensive sculptures. I want to get more work done. The awareness of time passing more quickly, being more mature – time is more precious.

| Elizabeth Michelman



David Brewster *Quixotic Encounters* Vermont Paintings: 1996-2016

July 23-October 3, 2016 | Wilson Museum, Southern Vermont Arts Center
930 SVAC Drive, West Road | Manchester, Vermont 05254 | 802-362-1405 | svac.org
davidbrewsterfineart.com Artist talk - September 10, 4pm at the Southern Vermont Art Center.



Marilyn Kalish



Vault Gallery 322 Main Street Great Barrington, MA 413.854.7744

Lily Clifford Gallery 112 South Street East Sussex, England

www.marilynkalish.com