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A Discovery of Woodblock Prints in Color

January 10 - February 16, 2012

Idaherma Williams

Reception to Meet the Artist:
Friday January 20th, 5-7 PM

Villanova, PA – Words such as 'joy', 'love', 'peace on earth', and 'gift of life' come up frequently in conversations, the life view, and the art of painter-printmaker Idaherma Williams. 'Joy' was the title the much honored Princeton, NJ, artist chose for a recent one-woman exhibit and one of the words she uses to describe her engagement in the acts of painting and printmaking.

"Formidable" and "magnetic" are words art reviewer Dr. Burton Wasserman uses to characterize Idaherma's (the identifier she uses as artist) upcoming solo exhibit of woodblock prints and watercolor paintings at the Villanova University Art Gallery. Her show will "warm a visitor's sense of being alive and in touch with insights that are rare and unique. The examples on view truly hail the new year with aesthetic gusto and a massive dose of creative bravura," Wasserman writes in his review in ICON magazine.

Idaherma's A Discovery of Woodblocks in Color opens January 10, 2012, in the Art Gallery on the Villanova campus. A free public reception to meet the artist will take place on Friday, January 20, from 5 to 7 pm in the Gallery in the Connelly Center. Refreshments will be served.

Eschewing the use of a printing press, Idaherma prefers instead the more painstaking, exacting process of hand rubbing the images from her painted and inked wood blocks onto hand-made Japanese rice paper. "That I choose to hand print my blocks is not a statement about using a press. I do it because I love the process, every step of it," says the artist, whose work has won more than 40 respected awards and is held in private and institutional collections around the world.

There is much in Idaherma's Villanova exhibit for the visitor to relate to, identify with, and ponder. Her work, she notes, speaks to paradox and harmony, her images "bridging the internal world of dreams and the outer world of physicality."

New Jersey's cold months finds Idaherma hunkering down in her Princeton studio and taking the time to artistically explore the place of windows in our lives. The outcome is her Windows series of colorful prints with their stylized, evocative imagery. Out a partially open hinged window, a gentle rain gauzes a neighborhood tableau, giving it a dream-like quality; framed in another, birds and children at outdoor play herald the arrival of warm weather. Some images offer up the window itself and its interior surrounds as the primary focus. Bracketed by patterned and pictorial curtains, sills serve as pedestals for thriving plant life; in one, the slats of a Venetian blind horizontally slice the view beyond.

There's much to take in and ponder in Idaherma's enigmatic and delightfully whimsical Train series. The passing scenery doesn't add up, words on signs are misspelled, some letters mirror written, a newspaper headline about a moon walk seems out of time and place. But possibly not. We know the artist is on the train; two images show her hands at work. Is it just about a train ride, which the artist frequently takes between her Princeton home and New York City?

In another print series, Idaherma acknowledges the dedicated wood carver's debt to the legendary carvers of the Haida native people of northwest Canada. Through her prints of totems, scenes of worship, birth, life and death, she offers an interpretation of Haida cosmology, while stating the artist's obligation to forge her own creative path: "I recognize the need to expand my vision and create my own unique woodblock prints," she says.

Flowers hold a special place in the artist's vision and art. In her Flowers print series, cut stems emerging from vases of all shapes turn and bend to the weight of the blossoms they support and feed. To Idaherma, looking deep into the bloom of a flower is to look at life itself: "In the heart of a flower one sees the beauty of life. The greatest gift to mankind is the flower of life."

"My Villanova exhibit will be a beautiful show," promises Idaherma, whose joy of art was forged in childhood. Encouraged by her parents to explore her interests, she knew very early on that art would be her life-long love.

"When I go into my studio, I enter a space of happiness and joy. I never stop; it's my life's work. I honor with love and respect the tree that produces each block I carve," Idaherma says. Each piece of wood holds potential for the unexpected, the unforeseen turn of grain becoming an opportunity for spontaneity, varying densities a challenge to the application of paint and ink. "I gain a greater appreciation for the beauty of the wood as I explore the color and poetic ideas of my work," she says.

Throughout her career, she has pursued printmaking as an individual artist, forsaking the collaborative path that many printmakers follow. This insistence on artistic control, and the fact that she produces all of her work in limited editions, has won her favor among collectors, galleries and exhibitors.

As a student at the Philadelphia College of Art (today the University of the Arts), Idaherma was taught by Jerome Kaplan and Benjamin Eisenstat. Leading printmakers and inspired teachers, their scholastic careers and work did much to help elevate the status of printmaking in the United States to that of fine art. At the Pennsylvania Academy of the Arts, she studied with Morris Blackburn, an American pioneer in silkscreen printmaking. She also earned a master of fine arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

Idaherma's connection with the Philadelphia Museum of Art has been abiding, beginning when her mother took her there for art lessons when she was a young girl. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, she returned to the Museum's Fleisher Art Memorial division to teach drawing and painting, which she did for many years.

For more about the artist and her work, visit www.Idaherma-Williams.com.

'A Discovery of Woodblocks In Color' continues to February 16. All exhibits at the Villanova University Art Gallery are free and open to the public. On-campus parking is also free and usually convenient. The Art Gallery is open weekdays from 9 am well into most evenings. For extended and weekend hours, and other information, telephone the Art Gallery at (610) 519-4612. Selected works from the Idaherma Williams' exhibit may be previewed at www.artgallery.villanova.edu



The Artist's Studio
Woodblock Print, 31" x 25"



Tickets
Woodblock Print, 26" x 32"



Rain
Woodblock Print, 24" x 36"



Street Scene
Woodblock Print, 18" x 24"