



Diane Burko's "Vesuvius Study," 2001. Depicted as a barren, varicolored cone with a knife-edge spiraling rim delineated in white, Italy's Vesuvius looks like a gaping wound in the Earth. Burko's volcano series combines the techniques of landscape representation and abstraction.

Review Art

Realistic yet intimate views of nature's forms, forces

By Edward J. Sozanski
INQUIRER ART CRITIC

Volcanoes not only are spectacular natural phenomena, they're dangerous and destructive, which is why artists have usually kept their distance.

Frederic Edwin Church, the celebrated 19th-century American landscapist, walked right to the lip of Niagara Falls, but depicted the Ecuadoran volcano Cotopaxi from what appears to be a week's march.

Philadelphia painter Diane Burko gets as close as she can to volcanoes, the better to apprehend their awesome magnificence.

Like an intrepid volcanologist, she climbs their slopes and flies over them so she can peer into their craters and feel the heat of their lava.

If You Go

What: "The Volcano Series"
Where: Locks Gallery, 600 Washington Square South.
When: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Through Oct. 6.
Cost: Free
Information: 215-629-1000 or www.locksgallery.com

Burko makes lots of photographs that serve as visual notes for the striking and sometimes emotionally resonant canvases she's showing at Locks Gallery.

A viewer feels moved not only by the intimacy of the views, but by

the sense that the artist herself is deeply involved with the subject beyond recording and describing.

This is apparent in her touch. Burko is a realist, but not one who effaces all traces of her working or who insists on fussy detail.

Viewers can be enchanted by the sheer audacity of her scenes — molten rock pouring into the Hawaiian sea, or streams of red, orange and yellow lava streaking across a stark ebony landscape.

But they also can revel in Burko's fluid, energized brushwork, which in a sense replicates both the sight and the character of these exotic scenes. Her paintings convey energy and power as well as the magnitude of being so close to normally unapproachable natural wonder.

This is true even with painting of dormant volcanoes such as Vesuvius in Italy, which Burko depicts as a barren, varicolored cone with a knife-edge spiraling rim delineated in white.

Vesuvius looks like a gaping wound in the Earth; even when quiescent, it testifies to the prodigious geological forces that created it.

Burko's interpretation of these forces and their manifestation, such as lava and venting vapors, is more scientific than those of the 19th-century romantics, but equally imposing, especially in the incandescent, unforgettable Hawaiian taleau called *Kilauea's Overflow*.

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