

At rest in motion

Chantal Philippon-Cegede's mixed-media works encompass simple lines and nervous energy

By Kurt Shaw

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She has lived in Hong Kong, Egypt, South Africa and, of course, her native France. But no matter where Chantal Philippon-Cegede has lived, she has made art as a reflection of the place and mind-set she is in at the moment.

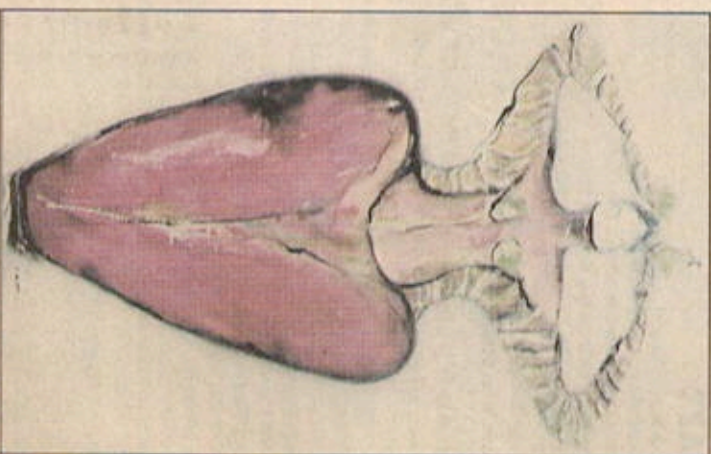
Currently Philippon-Cegede finds herself in Pittsburgh. More specifically, living in Upper St. Clair with her children and husband, a finance manager for a water-treatment company, with whom she moved to the area more than a year ago.

In the past year, as in years and places previous, she has made numerous mixed-media paintings of her interpretations of her surroundings.

They are as broad as a wide-angle cityscape featuring a bitter cold Downtown skyline from a North Shore vantage point, and as intimate as the cardinals that nest in a forsythia bush in her backyard.

Works like this make up much of the 51 pieces in Philippon-Cegede's solo show "Places and Allegory" on view at Watercolors Gallery, Downtown, running through Sept. 24. Also included are several paintings she created while living in Florida, as well as a few she created while on vacation in various places.

One such work is "The Hat Box," a reflection of New Orleans. Here in squiggly line and splotchy paint she depicts a humble character wearing a new hat. At first blush, one may be reminded of the work of New Yorker magazine artists Ronald Searle and Jean-Jacques Sempe. But, to her credit, Philippon-Cegede moves beyond that. The Hat Box, like all of her works, is not merely illustrative. Instead, it is a



Courtesy: Watercolors Gallery

"Elixir"

several of her works exist as pure allegory, utilizing female figures and other symbols as stand-ins for feminine qualities. Such is the case with "Timidity," in which a nondescript female figure folds in on herself. Similarly, in "Bodies," five dancing figures seem to meld. And in "Elixir," a colorfully costumed figure has apples for breasts.

"The apple is a symbol of femininity," Philippon-Cegede says in regard to that piece in which the figure has taken on the unmistakable shape of a perfume bottle.

In both "Bust and Lantern" and "Bust of Ebony," the artist depicts women with big bouffant hairdos that serve as bird cages in which birds are either