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### **Rain or shine, artists find inspiration**

By William Kenny  
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Dawn DeDeaux is a New Orleans-based photographer whose studio was completely wiped out by Hurricane Katrina.

Diane Burko is a Philadelphia-based painter who travels to remote locations like Iceland and Costa Rica to explore volcanoes as subjects for her work.

**Joy Garnett** is a New York painter who doesn't have to leave her own desk to generate ideas for her landscapes. Rather, she simply logs on to the Internet.

All three artists and 19 others whose works will be on display at the Abington Art Center in the coming weeks share something in common. For them, weather and climate are not only major subjects in their work, they're also very influential in their creative processes.

According to organizers of the exhibition *Out of the Blue*, which opens on March 4 in the art center's Kellner Galleries, the same might be said for human creativity in general.

The exhibition seeks to represent this symbiotic relationship between man and the natural environment, according to Amy Lipton, the center's curator.

"The common thread is the way that the artists are influenced and/or affected by weather," Lipton said. "For some artists, it may be a basic thing, like a cloudy day is sad or depressing."

For other artists, meanwhile, living in a warm climate versus a cold one, or experiencing a major natural event like a hurricane or volcanic eruption firsthand, has a profound and often subconscious influence on how they perceive the world.

In the exhibition, Lipton and her co-organizers — the aforementioned Garnett as well as New York-based photographer Joy Episalla — brought together an eclectic mix of about 50 contemporary works representative of a variety of media and places of origin.

The collection includes oil paintings, photos, silkscreen prints, etchings, sculptures and glass in a broad range of sizes. The artists hail from Philadelphia, New York, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, Toronto, Vancouver and London, and they range in age from their 30s to their 60s and beyond. One of the artists is deceased.

"It's a very broad show," Lipton said. "It's hard to find a unifying theme other than (the influence of weather and climate). The creative process is unpredictable."

The three Philadelphia representatives in the exhibition should be familiar to local art aficionados.

Burko's *Langjokoll After Trip* is a 42-by-72 oil on canvas depicting a bird's-eye view of the frosty, mountainous Icelandic landscape with a dominant snowcap in the foreground and icy seas in the distance. The Brooklyn native completed it in 2005.

Emily Brown is a locally based landscape painter who last year was featured in a solo exhibition at the James A. Michener Art Museum in Doylestown. That show included about 50 of her works from the last quarter century.

Brown's two entrants in *Out of the Blue* include the etchings *Shout Glory!* (2005) and *For JSB* (2005). Both are abstract renderings of the natural world — the former a 16-by-15 depiction of a cloud-filled sky and the latter an 18-by-15 rendering of a rippled lake surface.

Eileen Neff's *Stevens* (2004) is a 24-by-47.5 photographic print featuring a faint exposure of clouds superimposed over the white surface of a table sitting in the corner of a room. Neff's work has been exhibited widely, including at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

**Garnett** and **Episalla** provide two of the more unique methodologies in the exhibition.

**Garnett** collects digital images of weather events on the World Wide Web and, as the exhibition's text states, "unhinges them from their contextual framework by introducing them into the traditional artistic genre of oil painting."

Her *Strange Weather (2)* and *Plume 2 (Strange Weather Series)*, both completed last year, certainly grab the viewer's attention with deep blues and grays contrasting with bright swirling oranges and reds.

**Episalla** works in video and sculpture in addition to photography. One of her two photos in *Out of the Blue, air view #3* (2006), is a 36-by-36 chromogenic print mounted on Plexiglas and intended to sit horizontally 12 inches above the floor, rather than vertically on a wall. The shot was taken from an aircraft looking down through a mass of clouds at a community below.

Her other photo, *Grand Tetons of Yonkers* (2001), is a digital capture of the majestic mountain range printed on vinyl mesh with a city sidewalk running in the foreground across the bottom.

Meanwhile, two of the featured works in the show are DeDeaux's *Shrouded Tree #1* (2005) and Frank Moore's *Morphing Swallow* (2002). The first piece is a photo of a New Orleans-area tree ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. High winds have swept away all but the thickest stubby branches of the tree and seemingly mummified a large portion of it in tightly wrapped sheets, obviously debris from the storm.

*Morphing Swallow* is an oil painting whose artist died in 2002 after a long battle with AIDS. The work shows three figures soaring through a yellow-highlighted sky. One is a swallow; one is a communications satellite; and the third is a combination of both with a bird's body and solar panels for wings.

The piece juxtaposes technological innovation with the natural world. The exhibition in general could well become a catalyst for thought on environmental and political issues, such as global warming, although it does not endorse any particular agenda, according to Lipton.

"I wouldn't say it's an overtly political show in terms of statements," said the curator, who has directed three exhibitions at the Abington Art Center since her arrival there a year ago. "It's kind of open-ended, but (the opportunity for such discussion) is certainly present."

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*errata:*

Emily Brown's work for the show is listed incorrectly. Her pieces include the etching, *Shout Glory!* (2005) and a painting in oil on linen, *Jet Trail* (1992).

Not one, but three of the artists in the exhibition are deceased: Frank Moore (as stated). Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and Robert Smithson.