

art

MUSEUMS • GALLERIES

She leaves the viewer wanting more

Rebecca Rutstein's "Precipice" exhibition shows her working at a new level.

By Victoria Donohoe
FOR THE INQUIRER

Rebbecca Rutstein is on a roll.

New large paintings in her "Precipice" solo at the Bridgette Mayer Gallery engage the imagined world of underwater landscape using a signature blend of imagery.

Effectively evoked by these images are powerful ocean undercurrents that cause gradual erosion, and violent upheaval. But also called to mind are Japanese woodcuts, isometric drawings of the seabed keyed to sonar readings, and map-making technologies.

In Rutstein's hands, art doesn't exile itself from reality, but delves deeper into it. We recognize here the optimistic ambitions of an area painter who celebrates the aesthetic richness of visual experience, and has an active imagination as well.

The featured paintings mark a confident step in the

maturing of Rutstein's work. Until now, her art hasn't been especially remarkable. But she has fused the deep space necessary to these watery images with a flatness and a schematization of design that translates in a fascinating manner the vast breadth of space represented.

These acrylics, with their often beautiful color and their tracery of line, aren't terribly venturesome things, but they make us want very much to see more of her new work.

Moreover, one can admire the skill and substance of such work as discreet echoes of goings-on in the taste of our time, rather than specifically in our art. On that basis, too, Rutstein's paintings make sense.

Bridgette Mayer Gallery, 709 Walnut, Philadelphia. To Sept. 26. Tue-Sat 10-6. Free. 215-413-8893.



"Empire of Dirt" (2009) by Rebecca Rutstein, at Bridgette Mayer Gallery.

Victoria Donohoe, "She leaves the viewer wanting more," Philadelphia Inquirer, September 11, 2009