

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

Posted on September 19, 2024 by Claire Haik

Art Spiel Picks: Philly Exhibitions in September 2024

HIGHLIGHTS



Rebecca Rutstein at Bridgette Mayer Gallery, Photograph courtesy of the artist

As the Philadelphia gallery season ramps up, we explore unseen worlds in three very distinct shows. If you are a science or color enthusiast, be sure to see Rebecca Rutstein's large abstract paintings at Bridgette Mayer Gallery. She uses bold designs and bright colors to tap into the sublime, examining hidden ecosystems fundamental to life on Earth. Delving into the veiled depths of the subconscious, Elena Drozdova's *Riding Fear* at PII Galley presents dream-like paintings with powerful symbolic imagery. Across town at InLiquid Gallery, *Brotherly Lens: A Portrait of Philadelphia* places three exceptional photographers in conversation, inspiring introspection and creating a striking narrative of Philadelphia's unknown history and communities.

All The Stars In The Sea at [Bridgette Mayer Gallery @bmayergallery](#)

On view through: October 19, 2024

Featuring: Rebecca Rutstein

709 Walnut Street 1st Floor Philadelphia PA 19106 tel 215 413 8893 fax 215 413 2283
email bmayer@bridgettemayergallery.com www.bridgettemayergallery.com

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

30 Days: Chronicling a Voyage at Sea



Rebecca Rutstein at Bridgette Mayer Gallery, Photograph courtesy of the artist

Rebecca Rutstein's combination of micro and macro imagery cleverly encapsulates the interconnectedness of the natural world. Informed by scientific research, her work evokes awe and wonder by illuminating the unseen worlds fundamental to life on Earth.

Skillfully employing sprayed, scraped, poured, and brushed paint, Rutstein's brightly colored abstract paintings seem in flux. Organisms gather and grow in an elusive floating world. Lines inspired by the movement of tapeworms jitter and zigzag across fields of color. Repeated motifs of natural forms weave throughout her paintings, combined with scientific diagrams and patterns reminiscent of digital readouts. Her layered compositions subconsciously fill the viewer with anticipation, as if they might move and expand as the systems they map mutate and change.

In her 30 Days series, Rutstein joined a research vessel studying hydrothermal vents on the ocean floor; she painted all 30 paintings in the series while on board. Throughout the project, she worked side by side with the researchers, including a mile-deep dive in a submersible to the sea floor. Layering images inspired by these underwater landscapes, including sonar maps and bioluminescence, these small paintings make you feel like you are peering through portholes or into a microscope.

709 Walnut Street 1st Floor Philadelphia PA 19106 tel 215 413 8893 fax 215 413 2283
email bmayer@bridgettemayergallery.com www.bridgettemayergallery.com

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

Accompanying her nine large-scale canvases and dozens of smaller paintings, Rutstein presents a mesmerizing sculptural installation made of metal disks, shadows, and light. With so much to take in, Rebecca Rutstein's *All The Stars In The Sea* transforms viewers into active explorers of these elusive natural systems normally beyond sight.

Riding Fear at [PII Gallery @piigallery](#)

On view through: September 28, 2024

Featuring: Elena Drozdova



Elena Drozdova at PII Gallery, photograph courtesy of the writer

Russian artist Elena Drozdova showcases a retrospective of acrylic paintings on canvas and mylar created over the past 16 years. Her experiences as a stained glass artist and immigrant, provide subtle undertones to her visceral paintings, filled with complicated psychological imagery.

Drozdova's studio practice is rooted in improvisation and experimentation, resulting in a variety of approaches and styles. Cut canvases are directly pinned to the wall, and double-sided paintings lead to an intriguing conversation between images.

709 Walnut Street 1st Floor Philadelphia PA 19106 tel 215 413 8893 fax 215 413 2283
email bmayer@bridgettemayergallery.com www.bridgettemayergallery.com

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

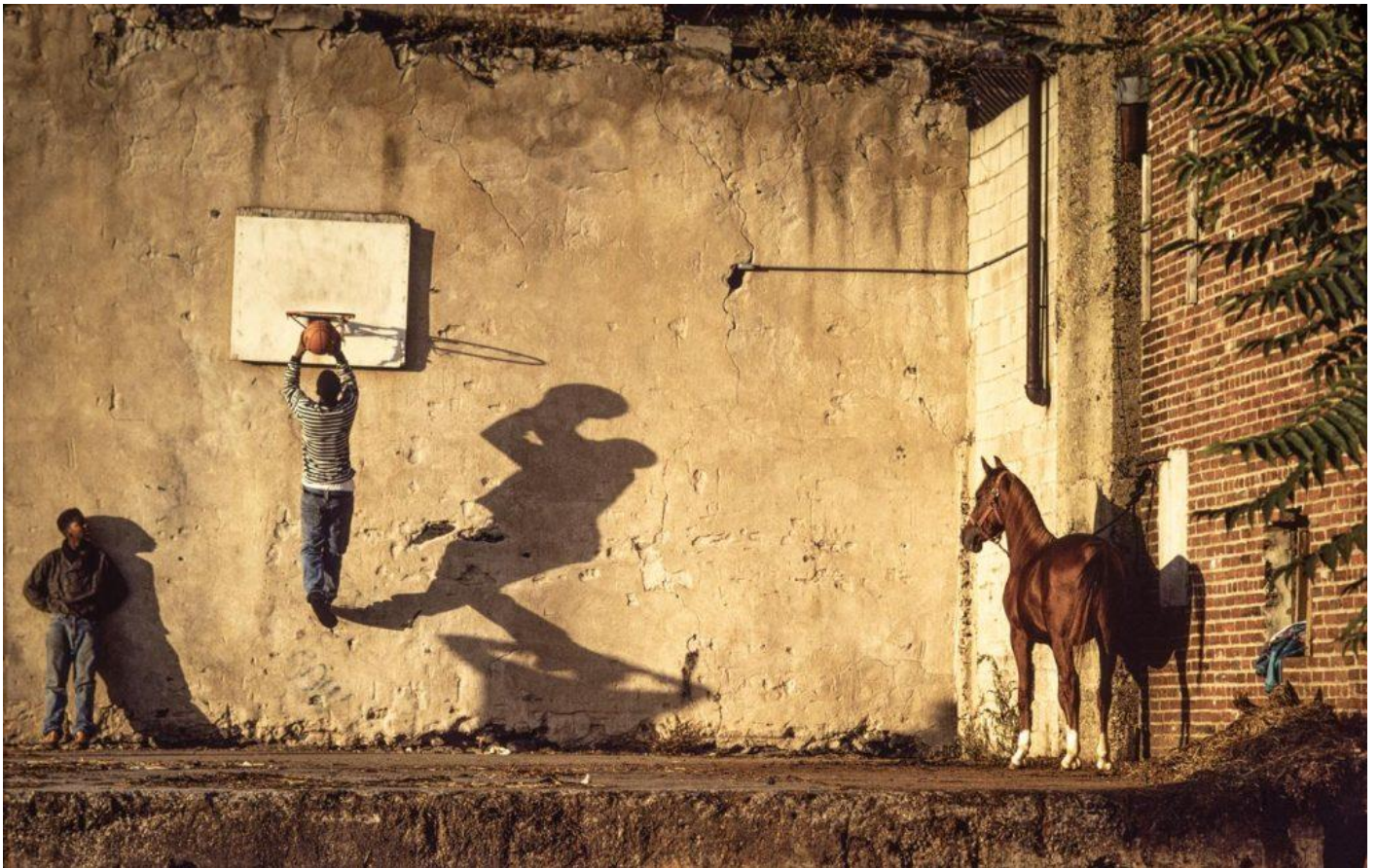
Elongated nudes entwine with geometric patterns, blooms of color, and religious iconography, hinting at mysterious symbolologies. Drozdova leaves her narratives open for the audience to interpret. To me, many of them feel like dark fairy tales or fever dreams offering a vision that is complex and deeply personal. Nothing is explicit, but much is implied as Drozdova attempts to “confront and transform the shadows within.”

Drozdova explains that “Riding Fear” is not only the title for her show, but also a manifesto of her work. Her depictions of the subconscious testify to the importance of working vulnerably and the power revealed when we harness our fear.

Brotherly Lens: A Portrait of Philadelphia at [InLiquid Gallery @inliquidart](#)

On view through: October 12, 2024

Featuring: Eric T. Kunsman, Joseph V. Labolito, and Ron Tarver



The *Basketball Game* by Ron Tarver at InLiquid Gallery

Eric T. Kunsman, Joseph Labolito, and Ron Tarver each have long and prestigious photography careers. Together, the photographs in this exhibition spark dialogue about Philadelphia’s history and open pathways to explore overlooked stories.

Kunsman’s photographic portraits of payphones in the Philadelphia area evoke feelings of nostalgia in those who remember their ubiquity and prompt questions about their function today. His scenes have a quiet and lonely feel. Kunsman draws attention to stark economic divisions between neighborhoods, the importance of maintaining communication, and the stigmas we often unknowingly hold.

709 Walnut Street 1st Floor Philadelphia PA 19106 tel 215 413 8893 fax 215 413 2283
email bmayer@bridgettemayergallery.com www.bridgettemayergallery.com

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

Alongside these photos are Joseph Labolito's images focused on the Kensington area of Philadelphia in the 1980s. Labolito shows us a blue-collar community, filled with people and shops, adjusting to the changing economics of deindustrialization. Almost forty years later, these photographs are a reminder of the devastating effects the opioid epidemic has had on these areas and invite viewers to empathize with the families and individuals who call this place home.

Complementing Kunsman and Labolito's black and white photos, Ron Tarver presents colorful, romantic images of Black cowboys caring for horses, riding down urban streets, and traveling grassy trails with the Philadelphia skyline in view. These images draw attention to the often-excluded stories of Black cowboys in our country and cities, recontextualizing iconic feelings of strength, self-determination, and freedom that are evoked in traditional images of the American mythic West.

Each of these photographers provides entry points to compelling and complicated human stories. Together, they leave you pondering vital social questions and feeling more attuned to the many communities in Philadelphia.

About the writer: [Claire Haik](#) is an artist and educator living in Philadelphia. Her work focuses on natural imagery and examines the hidden processes beneath the visual exterior of nature. You can see her work and learn more about her [here](#).

[Art Spiel Picks: Philly Exhibitions in September 2024 – Art Spiel](#)