

Shelley Thorstensen's ultimate goal is to formulate a state of esthetic counterpoint where all the complex elements in a given composition merge together and take on a distinctive sense of unified wholeness. This ambitious goal was developed by Stanley William Hayter and described in his great magnum opus, *New Ways of Gravure*. To the present day, Thorstensen regularly returns to this volume in order to draw upon its storehouse of intellectual insights, working information and heartfelt inspiration.

As with Hayter's own special idiom, the essences of form that comprise Thorstensen's unique style find their origins in a surrealistic identity. Its underlying character lends a mysterious air of haunted ambiguity and lyrical authenticity to her shapes and colors as they move from the printed layers of form in one of her prints to a visitor's personal network for visual perception and emotional response.

Layered passages find their way into the work. She combines highly personalized interpretations of references from the world of her external observations with off-beat ingredients of memory and imagination stored within her intuitive resources. In turn, they are joined with mystical impulses taken from dreamland and other free-ranging, subconscious zones of awareness, situated deep inside the center of her nerve-endings. Welded together graphically, they potentially become the basis of her printmaking matrices. Inked and printed, they eventually evolve into constellations of optical energy on fine rag paper, moving back and forth in space, transparent and translucent entities floating dynamically upon the retina, the back wall inside your eye.

Implementing a rare talent that is constantly bubbling with energy, she puts together sights that never fail to catch and hold a visitor's attention. Full of the unexpected, they hold one's concentration with a sense of authority that completely defies verbal explication. In their own, they are vocabularies of ceremonial intensity, alive with sincerity and subjective expression. Ultimately, on a metaphorical level, I believe they illuminate existential issues that focus on stages of birth, life, change, death and regeneration.

Dr Burton Wasserman, ICON Magazine
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