

In the galleries: A dazzling show of mammoth and minuscule prints

Also: Artists explore the African diaspora, a painter's works suggest microscopic life, and a printmaker with a patented technique combines different media



Review by Mark Jenkins

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Among the creatures rendered on huge sheets of paper at Pyramid Atlantic Art Center are a large deer and a nearly life-size bear, but no big tuna. That's because Big Tuna is not an image but a machine: It's the nickname for the press on which the massive prints, some eight feet tall, were made. There are also smaller works in the exhibition, as indicated by its name, "Big and Little Inks."

Big Ink is a mobile print workshop that has hauled Big Tuna coast to coast since 2012. The press produced the show's largest pieces, all of which are vertically oriented black-and-white woodblocks. These include Gretchen Woodman's exquisite picture of a deer, reaching toward a branch to grab one last apple as a rabbit supervises, and Ralph Robinson's robust bear, defined by horizontal lines as if it's a screenshot from a low-definition video.

A few of the jumbo prints use their size to conjure an immersive sense of place. Matt DeLeo places the viewer at sea, gazing across choppy waters at the refuge offered by a lighthouse. Even more detailed is Cait Giunta and Ned Roche's immaculate rendering of an old-fashioned office door from the inside, so the word "private" is displayed backward. It's a vivid evocation of interior space, and of a lost era.

Supplementing the huge woodblocks are nearly 100 prints that scale from little to tiny. Of the smaller pieces most akin to the large prints, the standouts include Daniella Napolitano's elegant "Baby Javelina" — a piglike wild ungulate — and Millie Whipplesmith Plank's portrayal of three birds nestled in what appears to be barbed wire. Other little prints employ various techniques and often use color. One of the most vibrant is Ryan Kalentkowski's watercolor-painted woodcut of a bird framed by what the title calls a "strawberry moon." Such pictures may not require a Big Tuna to make, but their expressiveness is vast.

Big and Little Inks Through Nov. 26 at Pyramid Atlantic Art Center, 4318 Gallatin St., Hyattsville.
pyramidatlanticartcenter.org. 301-608-9101.