

# BC3 gallery to showcase Maryland resident's scientifically themed art

March 6, 2020



Kathy Strauss, a senior research scientist at the University of Maryland's School of Medicine and a fiber and print artist for 40 years, pulls a print from an inked linoleum block in this undated photo taken in her home studio in Baltimore. Strauss, a former Gibsonia resident, will display nearly 20 prints during her "Revealed" exhibit that opens March 21 in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on Butler County Community College's main campus in Butler Township.

(Butler, PA) As a senior research scientist at the University of Maryland's School of Medicine, Kathy Strauss analyzes RNA and DNA extracted from the red blood cells of volunteers bitten by

mosquitos infected with malaria as her lab pursues a vaccine to prevent a disease that causes at least 500,000 deaths annually.

As a fiber and print artist for 40 years, the former Gibsonia resident and Westminster College graduate introduces calculations into her scientifically themed solar plate and monotype art, figures and formulas that are written in ink and incorporated into her prints, many of which include portions of the human form.

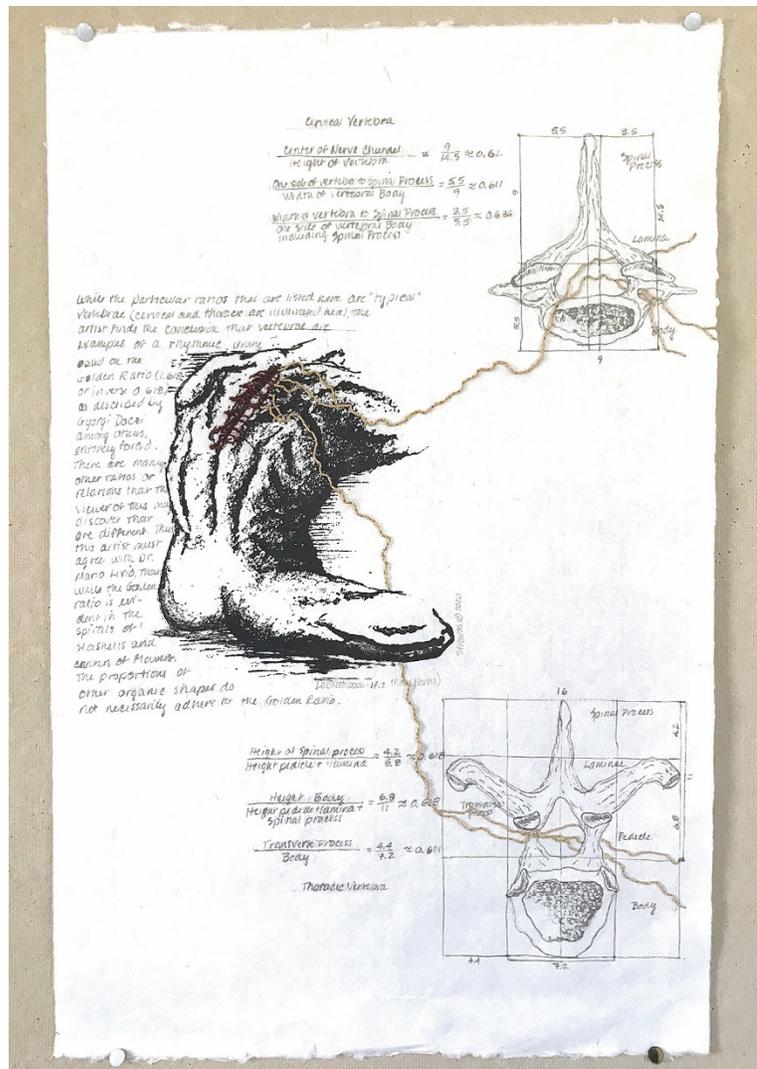
“The imagery,” she said, “is very much influenced by my work.”

“Revealed,” Strauss’ first public exhibit of 2020, will feature nearly 20 embroidered prints created from solar plate and monotype processes and transferred to rice or mulberry paper, or made by batik on silk gauze, and will be on display at Butler County Community College from March 21-28.

An opening to the free exhibit will be held from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. March 21 in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on BC3’s main campus in Butler Township and precede the Pittsburgh Philharmonic’s “Heartbreak at the Symphony” concert that begins at 7:30 p.m. in nearby Succop Theater.

Her works – with titles such as “Revealed 9 (Raw Nerves)””; “Revealed 10 (Sensitive Nerves)””; and “Lab Notebook 17.2 (Raw Nerves)” – range in size from 42 inches wide by 66 inches high to 13 inches wide by 17 inches high.

“Lab Notebook 17.2 (Raw Nerves)” shows the grayscale back of a male form, the vertebrae within his slightly revealed spinal column enhanced in nearby larger illustrations, images that are joined by a woven strand of tan embroidery thread representing nerves.



“Lab Notebook 17.2 (Raw Nerves)” is an embroidered solar plate print created by Kathy Strauss, a senior research scientist at the University of Maryland’s School of Medicine and a fiber and print artist for 40 years. The 21-inch wide by 29-inch high print will be among the nearly works in her “Revealed” exhibit that opens March 21 in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery on Butler County Community College’s main campus in Butler Township.

“I like drawing the human figure,” Strauss said. “There is a sense of pathos about this particular image. It was a study of a male back. I was interested in the different vertebrae, and I wanted to talk about some of the math.”

Some of the math includes what she penned beside the male form:

“While the particular ratios that are listed here are ‘typical’ vertebrae (cervical and thoracic are illustrated here), the artist finds the conclusion that vertebrae are examples of a rhythmic unity based on the Golden Ratio (1.618 or inverse 0.618) as described by Gyorgy Doczi among others, entirely forced. There are many other ratios or relations that the viewer of this may discover that are different. Thus the artist must agree with Dr. Mario Livio, that while the Golden Ratio is evident in the spirals of seashells and center of flowers, the proportions of other organic shapes do not necessarily adhere to the Golden Ratio.”

Doczi was an architect born in Hungary and author of “The Power of Limits: Proportional Harmonies in Nature, Art, and Architecture.” Livio is an astrophysicist and author of, among other books, “The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, The World’s Most Astonishing Number.”

Strauss earned a bachelor’s degree in art with a concentration in biology from Westminster College in 1978, and later that year studied scientific art at the Sea Education Association in Woods Hole, Mass. She also studied art at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C, and mathematics at the University of Maryland’s University College.

Her works have been on exhibit in the Maryland cities of Annapolis, Baltimore, Columbia, Frederick and Silver Spring; in Alexandria, Va., and in New York.

“In a lot of contemporary art, the meaning has been stripped away on purpose,” Strauss said. “(Artists) want to have art for the sake of the image only. And they don’t want it to represent anything.

“I’m obviously neck-deep in science. We expect scientists and physicians to cure disease. And (art) is kind of divorced from everybody’s day-to-day life. I like trying to integrate it, and show the beauty of some of these processes and images and the beauty of solving a calculus equation. Calculus is a very beautiful thing. How can I make it beautiful visually as well as intellectually?”

Strauss, a graduate of Pine-Richland High School in Gibsonia, has worked as a senior research scientist at the University of Maryland’s School of Medicine since 1993, most recently in the Center for Vaccine Development’s Malaria Labs.

Her goal, and that of those with whom she works, is to develop a vaccine to prevent a disease caused by a parasite whose constant evolution enables it to become resistant to many drugs.

Those who attend “Revealed” can see that science “contributes to many of the good things in life,” Strauss said. “I hope they see that it is beautiful and that it is complex. And that it can be moving.”

Following the opening to her exhibit, guests can view “Revealed” in the Mary Hulton Phillips Gallery by appointment by calling the BC3 Education Foundation at 724-287-8711 Ext. 8161.