

TUCSON

Richard Torchia

CENTER FOR CREATIVE
PHOTOGRAPHY

The camera obscura—a lighted scene projected into a darkened space—is making a comeback. Based on principles known to Aristotle and annotated by tenth-century Arab scholars, this precursor to photography and film has been rediscovered in recent years and put to use by artists as diverse as Abelardo Morrell, Ted Victoria, Steven Pippin, and Joel Katz.

One recent manifestation of this device was Richard Torchia's exhibition at the Center for Creative Photography, a major archive and exhibition space located at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Titled "The Waving of Foliage and the Coming and Going of Ships"—the phrase comes from a 19th-century signboard for a still-operative camera obscura in Bristol, England—this compelling suite of five works by the Philadelphia-based artist addressed issues specific to the region, the university and the center itself.

Projected from specially constructed cabinets, vastly magnified images of cacti in bloom and water drops evaporating from the branch of a paloverde tree symbolized the intense heat and light of the Southwest. Two other images—one on the ceiling showing the face of an electric clock perpetually rotating counter-clockwise, and the other on the carpeted floor simulating a solar eclipse as filtered through the leaves of a tree—spoke to the history of astronomy a science in which the university specializes and for which the region, with its clear night skies, is particularly well suited.

A. D. COLEMAN

Richard Torchia, *Desert Bloom*, 1997,
installation view.
Center for Creative Photography.



PURCHASE, NY

June Wayne

NEUBERGER MUSEUM OF ART

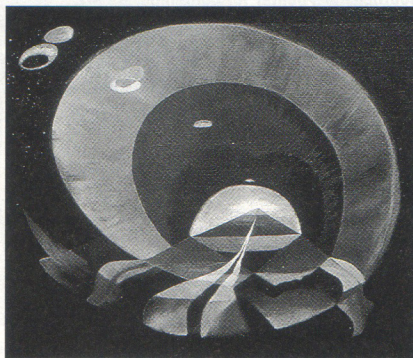
California artist June Wayne may be best known as founder of the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in 1959, which brought master European lithographers to the United States to train American artists. In addition to her prints, this retrospective exhibition featured Wayne's paintings, mixed-media works, and tapestry designs from the past four decades.

Wayne's interest in scientific notions and the phenomenon of human experience is best reflected in paintings like *Hel* (1984), in which she uses translucent layers of blue over a generously textured, silver-leafed surface that simulates the subconscious feeling of levitation one might experience when gazing skyward. In another painting titled *The Elements* (1951), abstract figures spew molecule-like dots into helical strands, suggesting the formation of DNA.

Wayne also finds profundity in near-imperceptible sightings. Following an optical experience while driving through Los Angeles's Second Street Tunnel, the artist embarked on a series of works that attempt to combine peripheral vision with primary focus. In the 1949 painting *The Tunnel*, a passageway boring through the dark depths of the universe approximates an all-encompassing field of vision. Twenty years later, she reintroduced the tunnel imagery in her tapestry works such as the 1971 *La Cible (Target)*.

Significant earthly events influence Wayne's work as well. Suggesting the ferocity of a California earthquake that the artist experienced, painted styrene packing peanuts are configured on a

June Wayne, *The Tunnel*, 1949,
oil on canvas, 20" x 24"
Neuberger Museum of Art.



wood panel as a ruptured and displaced crust in *Northridge* (1994). The fact that Wayne utilizes styrene (a material that takes many years to disintegrate) to represent an intense geological occurrence exemplifies her unique and at times ironic approach to metaphor.

D. DOMINICK LOMBARDI

PROVIDENCE

Barnaby Evans

WATER PLACE PARK

A nighttime spectacle, Barnaby Evans's multimedia installation *Water Fire* has attracted crowds to the waterfront in downtown Providence. Here, on scheduled evenings, 42 bonfires burn just above the surface of the Woonasquatucket River. Lit at sundown and burning well past midnight, 30 of the bonfires blaze in aluminum braziers. An audio recording compiled of sacred, avant-garde, and minimalist music accompanies the lighting ceremonies, creating an atmosphere of mystery and curiosity.

At the south end of the installation, near the waterfront's Memorial Park, 12 bonfires burn on granite pedestals. Each one has a speaker that broadcasts an eerie monosyllabic "Fire Chant," evoking the sacred tongues of fire perhaps. Compelling and enigmatic, Evans's outdoor installation embraces an esthetic of ritual and community that calls to mind a Viking funeral or a cremation ceremony along the shores of the Ganges in India.

Originally created for last year's International Sculpture Conference in Providence, *Water Fire* was reinstalled on a larger scale last summer and will have scheduled lightings through December.

KEN SHULMAN

Barnaby Evans, *Water Fire*, 1997,
Partial view of installation.
Water Place Park.



SANDOR BODO