Review: COCA shows off six local artists and Pele Prints

By Ivy Cooper, Beacon art critic

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"Interface" at the Center of Creative Art's Millstone Gallery features beautiful art by some of St. Louis' best artists. But the star of the show is Pele Prints, an unassuming printmaking studio in South County that specializes in collaborative work with artists in all media.

For "Interface," six artists produced pieces that make use of Pele's impressive equipment and the guidance of master printer Amanda Verbeck, who runs the studio.

The works run the gamut, from the lovely translucent "Rockpiles" (2007, monoprint) by Laura Berman, to the sardonic environmentalist commentary by Lora Fosberg (see "Focus on Growth," a linocut and chine colle from 2009), to Alicia LaChance's dense multimedia works that play plant forms against blocks of color.

Most of the works are the products of collaborations at Pele, but there are a few pieces that come from the

IMAGE COURTESY OF COCA

Gina T. Alvarez' "Minor Node 1," 2009, 60" x 36," Relief, woodcut,

collage

artists' own studios, and the contrasts and connections that emerge are instructive.

For example, Gina T. Alvarez's "Minor Node I" (2009), a series of monoprints with layered cucumber shapes, takes on new levels of allusion when set beside her "Sift," a collection of stitched and painted objects that are more typical of her work.

And it's wonderful to see how painter Brandon Anshultz made use of Pele, producing a series of monoprints in 2007 that sport his signature floating shapes on flat ground; this time he's worked in some square planes that cast dot-matrix shadows, a witty nod to the technical specifics of the printmaking medium.

Artists have known about Pele Prints for a while; it's time the rest of the art community realizes the contribution it's making to St. Louis' art scene.

When: Through April 25

Where: Millstone Gallery at COCA, 524 Trinity Ave. 314-725-6555

Information: www.cocastl.org

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