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Philadelphia Museum of Art exhibits work of 10 local artists

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FOR THE just-opened exhibit "Here and Now," the Philadelphia Museum of Art will throw its considerable weight behind the local art scene by displaying the work of 10 Philadelphia artists, ages 25 to 50, who create works on paper. Six of the 10 have never been exhibited at the museum.

"There's an enormous variety of approach and style. I really strove for diversity," said curator Innis Shoemaker. "I have huge photographs of skyscrapers in Tokyo, then I have these incredible tiny drawings of every Rice Krispie poured out of a box."

Shoemaker stressed how difficult it was to limit her search to a scant 10 artists, including Astrid Bowby, Steven and Billy Blaise Dufala (who collaborate), Vincent Feldman, Daniel Heyman, Isaac Tin Wei Lin, Virgil Marti, Joshua Moseley, Serena Perrone, Hannah Price and Mia Rosenthal. She said she strove for diversity not only in subject matter but also in the type of artist, from the locally famous like Marti - who mixes high art and a '70s design aesthetic - to the lesser-known names like Price - who photographs her surroundings, specifically men who catcall her on the street.

Some of the exhibited work was already a part of the museum's collection, but Shoemaker made it her mission to talk with other curators, gallery owners and art dealers to find what the museum didn't already own that should be added. Each artist is represented by several works, instead of just a single piece, with a section of the gallery dedicated to his art. "It was great fun to pick out pieces that complemented each other and represented the artists at their best," Shoemaker said.

Daniel Heyman, whose exhibited work integrates text and images from the prisoners of Abu Ghraib, is thrilled to be a part of "Here and Now," not just for his own sake but because of what it means for the museum to show support for Philadelphia artists.

"It gives the museum a legitimacy if they support the local community. It gives the museum a special role to play," he said, much like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which helped foster the city's art scene by supporting contemporary artists, rather than just giants of the genre. "It's the kind of show you hope happens every other year because there is so much talent to draw from."

"Here and Now," Philadelphia Museum of Art, 26th Street and Ben Franklin Parkway, through Dec. 4, free with admission (\$12-\$16), 215-763-8100, philamuseum.org.

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