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in her exhibit
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Her efforts resulted in revival of lithography as an art form

By Hunter Drohojowska

Shortly after her mother died in 1960, artist June Wayne printed a lithograph titled "Dorothy, the last day." When she saw it reproduced in a Time magazine article, she felt ashamed. She didn't want to imply that her mother's importance was restricted to her last moments of life. "I had it in my mind to redress that imbalance," she recalled.

Fifteen years later, Wayne, 67, has done just that in a suite of 20 lithographs called "The Dorothy Series," which will be on view this Sunday through Oct. 10 in the Montgomery Art Gallery at Pomona College in Claremont.

"Dorothy, the last day" was the first print Wayne did at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, which became the center for the revival of lithography as an art form in this country. Starting the Hollywood workshop from scratch in 1960, and serving as its director for 10 years, Wayne personally guided the expansion

of lithography techniques from five to more than 1,000 and the number of trained printers from three to more than 300. Along the way, she exposed countless artists to the medium. Today, virtually all the 200 print workshops in America, including L.A.'s Gemini, G.E.L., Cirrus and Angelus Press, trace their roots back to Tamarind, which was reorganized in 1970 as Tamarind Institute and transferred to the University of New Mexico.

During that fertile decade, Wayne continued to work as an artist. But since Tamarind was funded by the Ford Foundation and one of her duties as its director was to select grant recipients, she kept her work off the market to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest. That experience has produced some regrets.

"Without showing for 10 years, well, I have name recognition, but no image recognition," she ruefully said during a recent interview in her cavernous Tamarind studio/home. "My kicks came out of the intellectual design of Ta-

marind. It was a work of conceptual art. But I hadn't seen the ancillary effects. It took many years for people to think of me as an artist again."

In part, "The Dorothy Series" is an attempt to get people thinking again about June Wayne the artist. The intimate suite of images chronicles the life of her mother, Dorothy Kline, from her childhood migration from Minsk to Chicago, to her first brief marriage, which produced June, to her job as a traveling saleswoman for Bien Jolie corsets, to her bizarre second marriage to an FBI agent who concealed his identity in the hopes of meeting her Communist brother, Paul, to her illness and death. Wayne uses Dorothy's letters, IRS documents, receipts, snapshots and other memorabilia to provide the substance, the structure and the point of view of the series.

"It was an aesthetic problem to hear her voice, to select in her mode as it were," Wayne recalled. "I've always been interested in the relationship between the written word and the visual. I was also

thinking of it in a larger sense, the way we women disappear from history. It's hard for an anonymous woman to speak in our history, yet I've never met a woman who didn't have interesting things happen in her life. I wanted to let this woman speak for herself."

"The Dorothy Series" also allows Wayne to speak for herself, in a more personal voice than that of most of her past work. Whether doing tapestries, paintings or lithographs, Wayne's "curiously impersonal" images were primarily those of science — abstractions of stellar constellations, enlarged fingerprints or gigantic tidal waves. "When 'The Dorothy Series' came out, people said, 'June, you've mellowed so.' I think (that judgment) is a matter of misidentification," she said in reply. "We're all dreadfully alike to one another in our personal lives. The messy human elements are very reassuring to people."

Nevertheless, Wayne retains her abiding interest in science —

most of her friends are physicists — because, she said, "the things that occupy me aren't things we can control, but things we're learning about." More importantly, science serves as a way of breaking the stereotype of the female artist. Her just-completed print series, "Stellar Winds," testifies to that need.

In fact, to Wayne, feminism is more than an attitude in her art. Married with an adult daughter and granddaughter, she scrupulously avoids any mention of her personal life. "My husband is never evident, and we don't use the same last name. You have to remove every aspect of the female stereotype to be a successful artist," she explained.

"The personal takes away from the credibility of a woman," she continued. "The notion of creativity in the case of women is identified with procreation. Artists having babies, feminine clothes, nurturing, et cetera, all aspects of female stereotypes, must be put to

the side so people can focus on the simple profile of being a professional. It's an advantage being my age, because men stop thinking of you as a sex partner. For a young woman, it's important to assume a neutral aspect so as not to distract the highly distractible male."

Besides males, the idea that women can have it all — babies, feminine dress, a career — is a persistent distraction, too. "It's ridiculous. It takes a lifetime to be good at one thing. Professional women want their cozies and a career. Men never have time to do that. Everyone agrees that a man's career comes first."

Such opinions come naturally to Wayne, having been raised in a household presided over by grandmother and mother. From her earliest childhood she was interested in both drawing and writing, often illustrating the margins of her mother's books. In 1933, she quit high school at 15 to become an artist. "My life was right dead center in the middle of my head, right behind my eyeballs. I just couldn't go to school. I couldn't understand any of that."

Two years later, in 1935, Wayne traveled to Mexico City, where she had a major exhibition of paintings at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. In 1938, she was working as

an artist on the easel project of the WPA. After jobs as an industrial designer, illustrator and radio writer, she came to California in 1944 to pursue her art.

Growing dissatisfied with painting, she persuaded her neighbor Lynton Kistler, who was one of three printers in the country, to lend her a lithography stone. "It was like your first shot of heroin," she recalled. "I was aided by the fact that I didn't know very much, so I could use it directly for what was interesting to me. I saw lithography unconventionally... as more than it had been used for."

Her unconventional approach to life, coupled with an undying curiosity in science and art, have shaped June Wayne and her art. "There were a myriad of things that happened in my life that made me suspicious of everything I didn't learn for myself. And even then, one is always testing. Everything is a variable, and, finally, you have to make your own truth, write your own version of it. Whatever you think you know, you only know provisionally. You must be prepared to go back and change your position if you later find out that you didn't know enough about it."