



THIS ETCHING, "Branches," by Nola Zirin is on view at Canio's bookstore.

## *From The Studio*

*Phyllis Braff*

Volumes old and new fill most walls at Canio's Books in Sag Harbor. One section is reserved for art, however, and the audience for things that appeal to both mind and eye seems to be a dedicated one.

Nola Zirin, the current featured artist, has used the limited space for a mini-summary of her creative interests. The focus on carefully chosen highlights works out well, for it demonstrates how Ms. Zirin can be quite successful moving from etching to collage to pastel. (She is best known as a printmaker, and has been included in invitational shows on Long Island and across the country.)

Aside from the strength of the esthetic qualities, viewers will find a certain appeal in the way the different techniques fuel each other. In the "Tie and Pistol" collage, for example, two sets of cut-out images are placed inside indented surface boxes with edges that have the characteristics of intaglio copper plate marks. In another experiment, a design pattern motif in the pastel drawing "Woman with Wings" gives the impression that rubbing against a metal plate achieved the mysterious, crisply defined forms with deeply toned and built-up edges.

### **Texture**

The emphasis Ms. Zirin places on

uggesting rich, varied textures becomes especially clear in her abstract work — where texture almost dominates as subject. The etchings make extensive use of aquatint and soft-ground to create gentle, amorphous forms, and the pastels build color passages that have sparkling and startling variations in translucency and surface.

● A decided fondness for the unpredictable runs consistently through both the abstract and the more representational work. Wispy amoeba shapes in purples, blues, and greens float across a mauve field in the large etching "Memories of the Sea," with the experience not one of observing forms, but rather one of watching the movement of liquid paths that occasionally coalesce and thicken. "Composition of Obscure Astronomy," a very handsome pastel, is based on seemingly spontaneous surges of intense color, presented in fractured window-like sections that defy logical spatial definition.

● Random markings — which often become dramatic highlights — occur frequently. Even when there is a sharply defined mass, such as a crisp arc, its appearance as well as its form is unexpected. Perhaps "Poetic Scape," a hand colored etching, is the best example, and certainly it is one of the most effective pieces in the exhibit. Its pale blue tone lends a sense of delicacy and sets off the pattern areas of scumbled, rough, stone-fissure texture.

### **Surprises**

The image and content surprises in the mixed-media collages can be quite wonderful. A decidedly surreal quality comes across in the "Men with Straw Hats" collage, and the small scale adds to the feeling of deep concentration.

These spirited, thoroughly engaging inventions annex the Surrealist concept of dislocations. Even time references are made jarring, as Renaissance angels are placed next to a shoe and stocking of the 1980s.

● Considerable attention has obviously been given to making the impact as strong as possible. The haunting, rather sophisticated "Masks and Feathers," for example, uses cut-outs, voids, tears, both flat and three-dimensional forms, and much white space for emphasis.

Ms. Zirin looks for drama in color, too. Contrasts and carefully placed bold tones are important to her expression.

This condensed but worthwhile presentation of Nola Zirin's work will remain on view through April 9.