



PAUL TILL

Julie Voyce's richly coloured and deceptively playful prints open at Open Studio's gallery on Tuesday (October 10) at 7 pm. 520 King Street West.

Voyce's lithographs fine-tune tensions

By DEIRDRE HANNA

Carefully balanced contradictions are the mainstay of painter Julie Voyce's art.

At her best, Voyce builds up an explosive tension by using playful colours and wacky, abstracted shapes so finely tuned that her images seem ready to whirl right off the picture plane.

The precision of her work is the product of rigorous, self-imposed creative discipline. For Voyce, making art is a constant learning process, and her technical and aesthetic faculties are infinitely perfectable. She has spent the last year refining her colour sense by making prints at Open Studio.

"I'm known for my paintings," says Voyce. "But when I know in my gut that I've come to the end of a phase I turn to printmaking to solve problems, even if I don't know exactly what they are. It's a humility lesson, because you put a lot of time into an image, and if it bites the dust you can't kid yourself — it's gone. You can't scrape off colour, like in painting. But at each stage you have to work with what's there."

Visual shorthand

Her new lithographs draw on sources as diverse as Saturday morning cartoons, tattered 18th century engravings and a rusted Soviet freighter to create deceptively whimsical images. Despite their cartoon-like qualities, they are laced with hints of decay and extinc-

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JULIE VOYCE: 6 Animals, 3 Kartoons & A Boat. Open Studio (520 King West). Opening Tuesday (October 10) at 7 pm, running to November 4. 366-8238.

things like rocks and grass. The engravings were commercial art, and time was money. I also got into the way some of the animals are really badly drawn. The off-kilter ones are the most interesting — and could be gotten for as low as \$2 each.

"At that price the paper is really knackered, and this series of lithographs is a way of preserving them. I've made caricatures of them, emphasizing what I love about them, and exaggerating what I assume are inaccuracies in the originals. Bats look like insects, and others look like skinny dogs. Yet while they don't look like bats to me, they might have to the people who made them. They may even be species that don't exist any more.

"I work with such toxic chemicals that I'd be a hypocrite to claim my work has an environmental message. When you make art you have to start with what's close to you. Big statements grow out of working with the familiar."

And Voyce, who supports herself with a day job as Toronto's hippest cleaning lady, pays tongue-in-cheek tribute to her own tough pragmatism in *Hell's Half Acre*, portraying a richly coloured butterfly fluttering through the cosmos.

"It's a tough-ass butterfly — it