

A LIGHTER LOOK AT MODERN ART

Copy-machine art has come a long way since a now-notorious secretary was fired for photocopying her naked derrière on the office machine. Chicago-born artist Lesley Schiff has not experimented with body parts, but she has transformed everything from tinfoil and flowers to a Sony radio and dead fish into her signature "laser-ray paintings."

A 1974 graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in classical and modern painting, Schiff traded in her paintbrushes for the copier shortly after moving to Manhattan in the mid-'70s. She finds that utilizing such technology "keeps you in your culture. It's like America: electronic, direct, visual, spontaneous."

"It's like combining silk-screening, photography and painting," Schiff says of her work in xerography. Currently, she uses the new Canon Color Laser Copier to create multi- or mono-color prints that can be displayed individually or mounted together into wall-sized murals. Her first book of prints, *Seasons*, was purchased last year by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the New York Public Library.

Schiff alternates between the gallery scene and commercial work, between art history and new tech-

nology, not only for monetary sustenance but, more importantly, to expand her artistic vision. The first time she saw her work in show-window displays, she realized, "This is what Buckminster Fuller meant about 'the global village.'" Her innovative creations have been exposed to the masses via covers of national magazines, album jackets and print-advertising campaigns.

Schiff keeps her other foot dangling in the more rarified art world. Thus far, New York art collectors have been the most welcoming: An exhibition sponsored by Canon Corporation last year resulted in a dozen sales for her studio. Her luck in Chicago has been mixed. In 1994, a show of exotic flower prints at the Chicago Cultural Center brought Schiff to the attention of many art-buying architects and interior designers. However, at a more recent debut to the Chicago public at Montana Moon Gallery on Franklin Street, interest waned in the face of New York prices. Schiff adjusted accordingly, but the pieces have yet to attract a strong following in Windy City art circles. Some prints are shown by request at Montana Moon and others are on display at the adjacent River North Café.

Working with this unusual medium has not clouded Schiff's perception of her artistic endeavors. "Regardless of how high-tech my tools become, I will still consider myself a painter. But instead of painting with oils, I'll be painting with light."—Candice Hadley



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