Jane Gregorous leads printmakers in PATT collective at the Tannery

The sound of soft wood shavings being carved from a cypress tree was common in Dongyang, China in 220 A.D., then known as Wuning. Situated at the headwaters of the Hengjin Reservoir, Dongyang, a city in the Zhejiang Province near Shanghai, is considered to be the birthplace of the earliest form of woodblock printing. Today, Dongyang is regarded as one of the great creative centers of China. Later examples of woodblock printing began to emerge in Egypt in the fourth century. In 1041, a Chinese commoner named Bi Sheng invented the first movable type printing press made from porcelain. A more efficient printing process evolved in 1470 in Augsburg, Germany known as etching using iron plates.

Since then printmaking has played a major role in world culture with the advancement in processes such as woodcut, engraving, etching, mezzotint, aquatint, drypoint, lithography, screenprinting, monotype, monoprint, digital and now 3-D printing. In the 20th and 21st centuries, printmaking became the medium of the moment with works like the silk-screen portraits of Marilyn Monroe by pop artist Andy Warhol or the controversial Obama HOPE poster by street artist Shepard Fairey in 2008.

Since arriving in Santa Cruz, artist and printmaker Jane Gregorous has been a major force in promoting and teaching printmaking. Jane has taught printmaking for 25 years at Cabrillo College as well as classes and workshops throughout Monterey Bay. Along with fellow printmakers, she has been working on finding a permanent home for a printmaking collective.

A year ago, her vision became a reality when 16 printmakers moved into their 1,000-square-foot space at the Tannery Arts Center and named the group “Printmakers at the Tannery,” or PATT. PATT will open its doors on Saturday from 3 p.m. to midnight for the four-year anniversary of the Tannery Artists Lofts and the one-year anniversary of the working studios at Tanniversary. Jane will be the featured artist at PATT for the upcoming July First Friday.

I caught up with Jane at PATT to talk about printmaking.

KIRBY SCUDDER: What was the genesis of the PATT Collective?

JANE GREGORIOUS: In 2006, myself along with Frank Trueba and Andrée LeBourveau, both of whom were my students at Cabrillo came to the Tannery to investigate the future art center. We had heard about the Tannery and we came out here when all the buildings were in ruin and walked through the property and picked out our studio. As it turns out we were off by about 150 feet. We got the list of every printmaker in Santa Cruz and kept inviting them to meetings about every six months. We would attend workshops at Cabrillo and Monterey promoting the co-op. We eventually amassed a list of well over 100 printmakers. As the studios got closer to completion, it continue to take classes. It’s funny, you would think that there is nothing left to learn after a while, but there is always something new to learn. I’m taking a mixed-media workshop this summer at Cabrillo. Printmaking is such a rich and amazing medium. This Saturday for the Tanniversary, we will be having live demos, so I encourage everyone to come and visit.

For more information about Printmakers at the Tannery go to www.pattpress.org.

Kirby Scudder is the director of the Santa Cruz Institute of Contemporary Art. Details: www.scica.org.