

## Many strands,

Emerging artists bring a major installation to the New Hope Arts Center.

## single purpose

By GWEN SHRIFT  
STAFF WRITER

**T**he essence of art is its evolution in the artist's mind. Usually, a work is set in stone — or paint, or wood or some other medium — before it ever sees the inside of a gallery.

A painter also does not have to worry where the wall is located inside the gallery, how high the ceiling is or how wide the floor is. To the installation artist, however, space is everything.

Ambitious installation artists have to think on their feet. This process is central to the character of "Sumbioun," the largest site-specific work to date by the emerging Philadelphia collaborative Factory 418, which is on view at the New Hope Arts Center.

The members, Lauren Prince, Eliza Serocki and Brigid Tray, first connected at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Serocki and Tray made early works "using natural materials that were characteristic of our upbringings or backgrounds, so we did these prints with dirt from Brigid's mother's backyard," says Serocki.

Prince says she had been working in fibers, knitting and sewing at PAFA. "I had a ton of yarn to begin with, so we started messing around with yarn," she says. "Eliza grew up weaving and knitting, so we started exploring that medium."

The trio devised a synchronized method of braiding extremely long strands of yarn. They kept their minds open about two-dimensional applications, such as using their fiber compositions as tools to make cyanotypes and works in ink. The graceful movements of the braiding process suggested a video component.

All are represented in "Sumbioun." The work consists of more than 700 pounds of white cotton yarn made into thick braids 23 to 25 feet long and



A cascade of braids made of more than 700 pounds of white cotton yarn (inset) is the centerpiece of "Sumbioun" by the Philadelphia art collaborative Factory 418.

suspended from the ceiling in a wash of cushiony substance that falls from a height and tangles on the floor. About 30 braids were prepared off-site and the rest woven on the spot.

The braid cascade is the centerpiece of "Sumbioun," but not the only element. Two-dimensional works in sea greens and sky blues owe their existence to the braids, some of which were used as printing devices. A small series of works incorporates printed animal skulls and yarn.

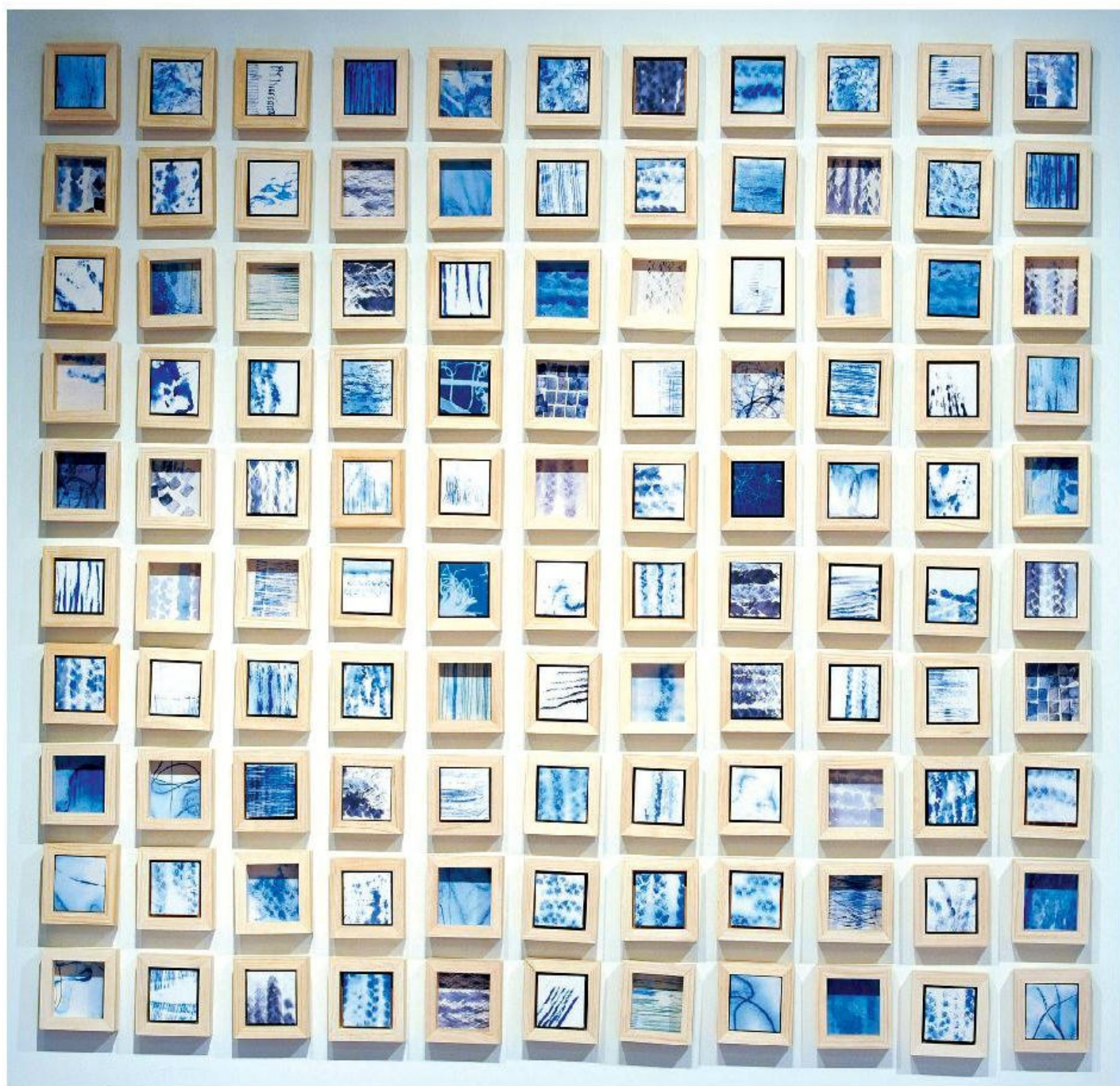
The material is fluid in its own way. "It offers a lot of opportunity," says Tray. "We can rework that piece as many times as we want. We can halfway deconstruct it ... it's kind of a never-ending piece for us."

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Photos by  
William Thomas Cain



The artists used cotton braids as tools to print cloth with dye and ink.



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM THOMAS CAIN

An installation within the installation includes 110 small two-dimensional printed works, each titled with a woman's name.

## Strands

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For the first time, Factory 418 incorporates video into an installation. A four-minute piece projected on hanging strands of cotton shows the artists braiding the yarn in a graceful sequence of arm movements as they stand in a line, connected by material and motion.

The trio engaged in marathon art sessions that required them to sleep in the gallery for several nights. Late-night discussions were productive as the artists sought to pull together the white yarn, the blue and green prints and a group of works woven of neon-colored tulle.

One day, around 2:30 in the morning, "we weren't sure if we could make these colors work,"

Prince recalls. One of her colleagues said, "We have a great show here if we just have the braids and the prints and the video.' It was hard to swallow that we weren't going to see (the tulle pieces) again, or at least now. We didn't need to add any other colors to it."

"It was a combination of the space not being able to accommodate what we had anticipated the outcome being," says Serocki. "The colors that we had going didn't work as well in reality as they did in theory."

Tray says the group initially tried to work a deep shade of red into the piece. "It didn't go," she says. "It just stood out too much, and broke that continuum of the story we were trying to tell. We tried to keep a really simple palette — so you could follow the story.

"We wanted to kind of stick with

the peaceful feeling of the main sculpture. We knew people were expecting a big color choice. We tried to keep it simple, mainly based off that cyan — bright, clean blue — so as not to take your eye away from the main showpiece."

It was a canny artistic decision. The snowy yarn and the delicate colors of the prints impart a dreamlike quality that begs for the space somewhat unexpectedly added to it.

The prints are almost an exhibit on their own. A mini-installation is made of 110 tiny non-representational images, each titled with a woman's name.

Larger two-dimensional works were composed on-site. "We wanted the print work to go hand-in-hand with collaboration and process and material," says Tray. "It was a lot of just figuring out what the material

could offer us, other than just being for the sculptural piece."

"Sumbioun" is a first for the arts center, which has established an endowment to sponsor works by emerging artists.

"This has been a real turnaround for us. It's not something we usually do," says center executive director Carol Cruickshanks. "The process is what makes it so intriguing, and they had such a refreshing commitment to making art, and cooperating with each other to do it. Individually, it would be impossible."

"Sumbioun" is on view through April 12 at the New Hope Arts Center at 2 Stockton Ave. in New Hope. Hours: noon to 5 p.m. Friday through Sunday. Information: 215-862-9606; [www.newhopearts.org](http://www.newhopearts.org). Artists' website: [Factory418.com](http://Factory418.com).

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