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Works by R.I. printmaker Allison Bianco require a closer look

Though at first Bianco's lushly colored prints look like typical summer gallery fare, her work isn't nearly as sweet as it seems.

By Bill Van Sicen • Posted Jul. 23, 2015 at 12:01 AM



"Sunset Mast," a screen print by Allison Bianco, is part of an exhibit of Bianco's works at Cade Tompkins Projects in Providence. Courtesy of Cade Tompkins Projects

PROVIDENCE, R.I. -- At first glance, the lushly colored prints on display this month at Cade Tompkins Projects look like typical summer gallery fare. The work of Rhode Island printmaker Allison Bianco, they include images of sailboats bobbing on azure seas, fishing boats outlined against orange sunsets and, in one of the show's signature pieces, a view of Matunuck village topped by a dramatic, multi-hued rainbow.

Look closer, though, and you'll find that Bianco's work isn't nearly as sweet and summery as it seems. Those sailboats? Most of them appear to be in the process of sinking or capsizing. The fishing boats? They're not doing much better (although one, a brave little trawler called the Sea Wolf, appears to be holding its own). And Matunuck? It's about to be swallowed up by a tidal wave of near-biblical proportions. What's going on here?

As it turns out, Bianco's bright colors and nautical settings are something of diversionary tactic. Her real subject is the potential devastation caused by global warming. The result: a Technicolor vision of the apocalypse that should hit Rhode Islanders right where they live. Through July 31 at Cade Tompkins Projects, 198 Hope St. in Providence.