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Elements in Art

Best-known for her large-scale landscapes of volcanoes, Philadelphia painter Diane Burko turns to images of water in her new exhibition, inspired by visits to Iceland in 2002. *Diane Burko: Earth Water Fire Ice* opens Wednesday at the Locks Gallery, 600 Washington Square South, with a reception from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Sept. 10. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays (the exhibit will not be open this Saturday). The exhibition runs to Sept. 30.

An artist's travels. Diane Burko grew up in Brooklyn and attended graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania. Walks along the Schuylkill turned her from an abstract expressionist into a landscape painter. On trips to the western United States, Italy, and France, she took photographs that she later composed into paintings. On a trip to Costa Rica, she saw an active volcano and began a series of paintings on that theme. She visited sites all over the world, sometimes flying and hiking close to eruptions.

Waterfalls and snow. Burko traveled to Iceland in 2002 looking for a new setting for her volcano paintings. She did paint the snow-covered dormant craters, but also found herself drawn to the island's waterfalls. "The waterfalls have all the qualities of abstract paintings," she told Justin Spring, the author of the exhibit's catalog. "Contrast, color, edge—that's what painting is all about for me." Burko's characteristic use of luminous color and heavy texture keeps her waterfalls from being simply dreamy postcards. As with the fiery scenes in her volcano series, the plumes of water and snow in these works are not background, but insistent substances that we see in a new way.



Diane Burko, *Godafoss #3*, 2003, oil on canvas, 60 x 84 inches