



# Staten Island Advance

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## Staten Island 'Skies' on display in Wagner College Gallery

By MICHAEL J. FRESSOLA

Holland is not the first thing that comes to mind at the Wagner College Gallery this spring, where “Tiles & Skies,” a one-woman show devoted to recent work by Kristi Pfister, inhabits the small glass-walled corner gallery in the Union building.

Actually, “heaven” might be the first association. The artist, who lives in West Brighton, has several kinds of airborne, luminous atmospheric imagery in this exhibit.

Silvery cloudscape levitate on translucent filament while billowing vistas come into view on 24-by-12-inch stone tiles. The weightless filament drawings have surprising substance, even as the tile series seems weightless.

The artist’s interest in atmosphere existed before she visited the Netherlands last summer, with assistance from a Diamond Grant, an enrichment program for Staten Island Academy faculty.

But the visit clearly expanded it and it’s easy to figure out why. In a flat, low-rise country, the sky seems huge. And if the area is also wet, it will be bubbling with clouds.

Also, there’s tradition: Think of Vermeer’s amazing big-sky “View of Delft.”

Both the “Cloud Wall” and “Sky Tile” series are uplifting to behold, even when they are not portraits of skies per se.

Other issues — people, a landscape, a dog relaxing in a drawing room — enter the picture in unusual formats. Tiny 2-by-2-inch paintings are done on film; 4-by-4-inch ones were made on marble and glass.

Much of the time, the drawing — silverpoint and china marker are in the mix — is detailed and a pleasure to study. Some of the “Cloud Wall” pieces resemble etchings; other are more like paintings. Delicate colors illuminate some of these opalescent firmaments.

Tiles and tile-like formats are in the show as well, but like clouds, they predate the artist’s Low Country stay. She has been interested in the borough’s Dutch roots for some time.

“Sweet Gums,” a series of 40-by-50-inch acrylic-on-gessoed paper drawings, are very different. They’re in saturated shades of brown, blue and green, as bright and hard as the “Clouds” are delicate.