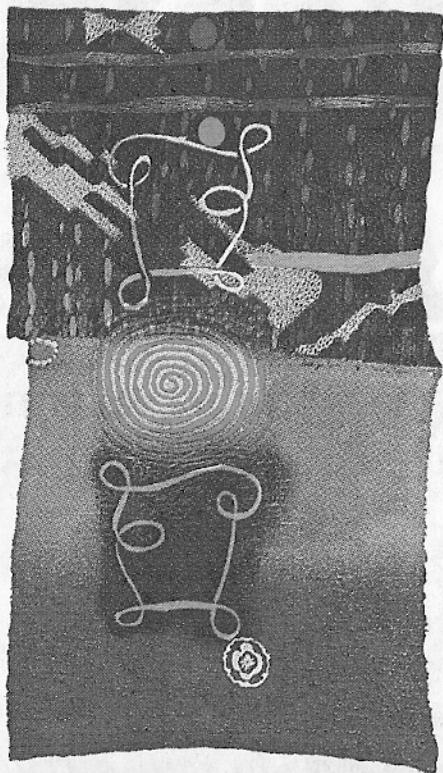


ARTISTS *at home*

CREATIVE COUPLE KAREN KUNC
AND KENNY WALTON SHARE A
PASSION FOR RURAL LIVING

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DIANE MULLINS



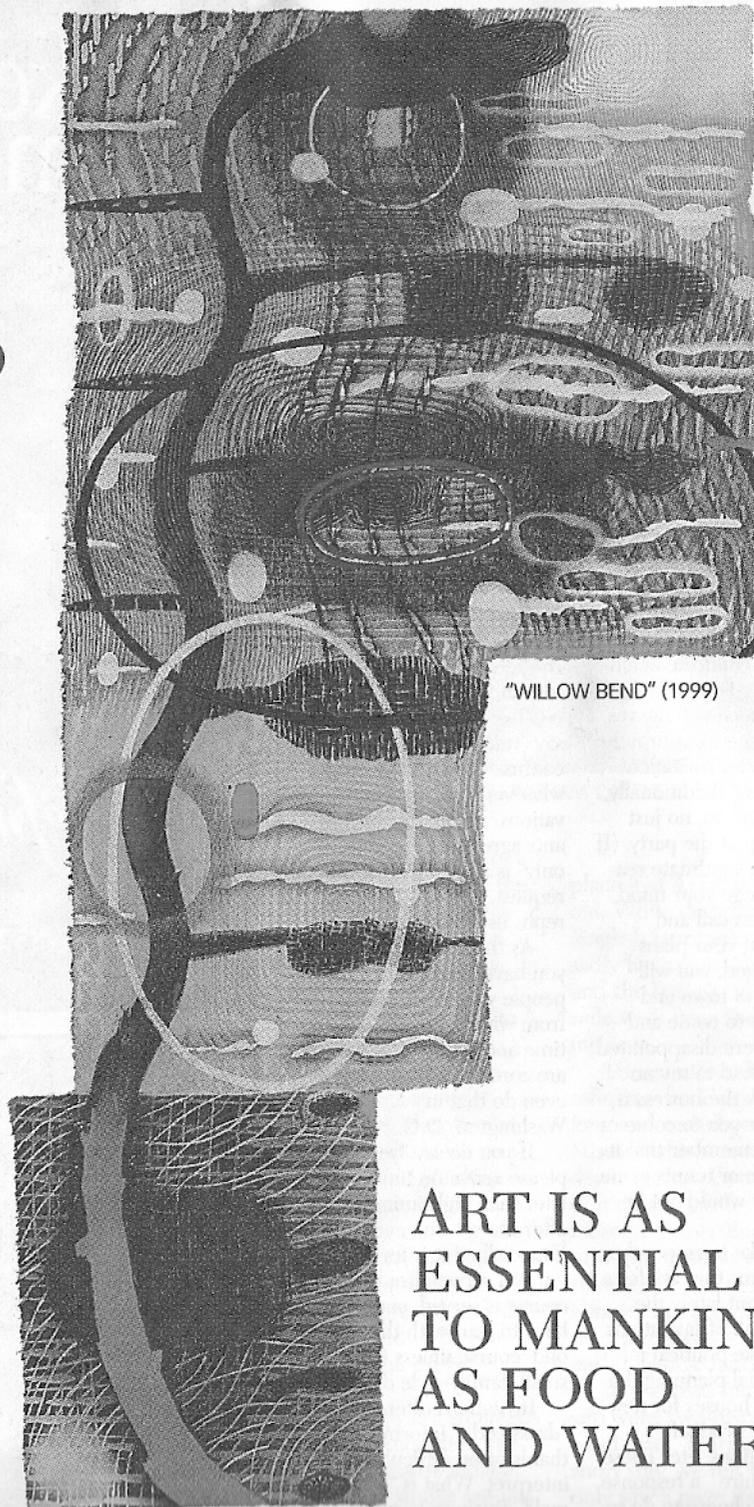
"INDIGO RAIN" (2000)

Sketching out a few small squiggly doodles on an old piece of scratch paper, Karen Kunc holds the whole world in her hands: A world of winding trees, twisting rivers, budding sprouts and rolling hills racing across the prairie or a landscaped horizon.

Both Kunc, the internationally known print artist who earned Nebraska's prestigious Governor's Art Award for 2000, and artist-husband Kenny Walton, who is internationally known for his skill and design in hand-blown glassware, are deeply inspired by their environment.

They own a small acreage nestled amongst cornfields, prairie grasses and wild game. The couple's century-old renovated farmhouse serves as refuge from the hubbub of big city lights, busy art dealers and gallery actions.

"I like it because art dealers and art fans can't find it," said Walton.



"WILLOW BEND" (1999)

ART IS AS
ESSENTIAL
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AS FOOD
AND WATER



LEFT: WALTON'S ONE OF A KIND SQUARE GLASS VESSELS. BELOW: KUNC AND WALTON AT HOME

HER SIGNATURE COLOR AND STYLE STAMP KUNC AS ONE OF THE BEST CONTEMPORARY ABSTRACT LANDSCAPE ARTISTS OF THIS ERA. HER WORK IS IN DEMAND IN HALF-A-DOZEN HIGH CULTURE GALLERIES STRETCHING FROM NEW YORK CITY TO CHICAGO TO DENVER TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

HAND-BLOWN GLASS AND PRAIRIE GRASS

Walton, who caters to a wide variety of glass aficionados, works nonstop to produce enough glassware to satisfy curators at the Smithsonian Institute, Philadelphia museum of Art Craft Shows and many other national shows. He built a separate workshop to hold his large inventory of colored glass rods, specialized equipment, and several kilns, especially the 2,500-degree furnace designed to turn glass into a workable substance similar to bubbling honey.

The perfection and design found in Walton's hand-blown glass pieces is considered museum quality. Walton pumps out bold colors and candy-cane stripes embedded in vessels and paperweights. Much care and craftsmanship is required to handle and work with high-risk factors such as fire and glass. Considered a rare art form, he taught himself the art of glass blowing during the early 1970s

as an art student studying sculpture and ceramics in college.

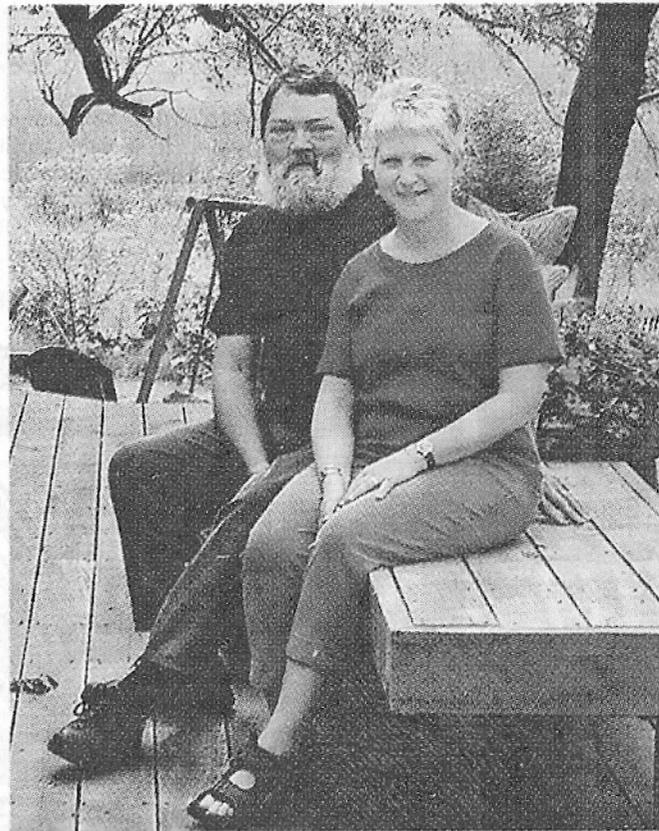
His art has gained much popularity over the years because of the bold colors and shapely designs, reminiscent of primitive ocean life forms or fossils buried deep in the earth's surface.

HAND-MADE

"I like things that are made by hand, whether it's jewelry or art," said Kunc, a University of Nebraska professor of Art and Art History studies. "It brings more meaning to the piece."

And by her hands, she will turn a 2x2 inch pencil drawing into a 4x5 foot piece of wood, inked with golden ponds, burgundy trees, milky-blue rivers and olive stems. Carefully rolling the hand-carved block through a small press in her workshop, colorful images appear on soft Japanese rice paper to create another one-of-a-kind limited addition.

Spectacular splashes of



earthen colors define Kunc's signature style of artistic boldness, uncharacteristic of other print block artists across the nation who stay with traditional colors.

Her signature color and style stamp Kunc as one of the best contemporary abstract landscape artists of this era. Her work is in demand in half-a-dozen high culture galleries stretching from New York City to Chicago to Denver to Washington, D.C. Her international exhibits include shows in Iceland, India, Poland, Switzerland and Japan.

"People saw my work and wanted to buy it. That sparked me and spawned a desire to create," Kunc said of her 20-year-old business. "Sell or not, I have a need to create something."

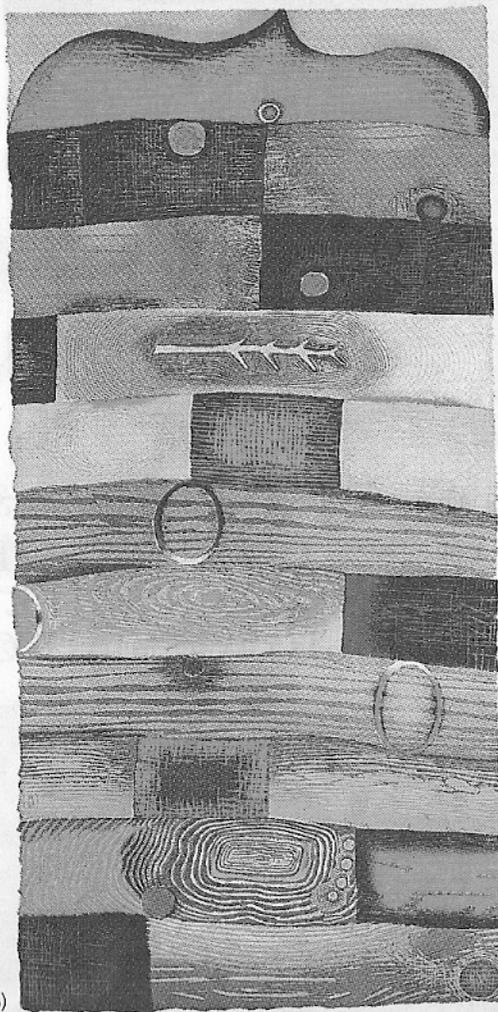
Kunc explains how her unique designs take shape: "I start with a basic idea and incorporate meaningful thoughts and visions as I work through the many stages to the

final design. Each block changes a little bit more as I carve out more," she said of the 80-to-100 hour process required in block printing. "It's an odd combination of science and nature, unusual shapes and patterns, that look appropriate in the environment."

The print titled, "Willow Bend," was one in a series of prints on "Wind & Water" themes. Depending upon the viewer and the point of view taken, the picture could be interpreted as a tree growing from the ground up or as an aerial view of a winding river through the prairie. The three-dimensional perspective comes into play if the large circles are understood as rain drops splashing among fields of grain.

"Abstract art can be defined as a different way of looking at the world through realism or symbolism," said the Under Pressure Print

"SCRAP GATE" (1996)



KUNC PREFERS THINGS MADE BY HAND, WHETHER IT'S JEWELRY OR ART

Club board member. "One characteristic of all good abstract artists is not having a firm definition. People have many different meanings and what they relate to is an individual perception."

"Broken Code" is an example of nature interlocked with science. Could the design be a bird's eye view of fish ponds linked by small creeks, or a series of crop circles in Iowa, or a broken strain of DNA as seen under a microscope?

"Art is a part of human nature," she said. "Since the dawn of man, we've made things to decorate our lives and our environment because without it, our lives would be empty." Kunc adds, "Art is as essential to mankind as food and water." □

"SILKEN GLOW" (1999)

