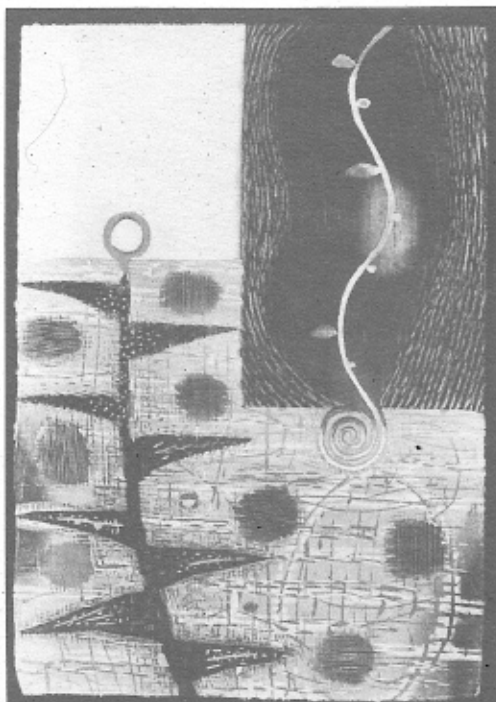
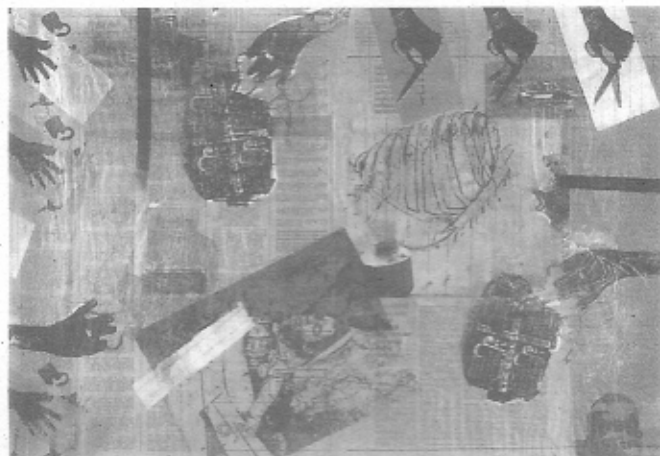


Away Again

by Karen Kunc

Karen Kunc is a Professor of Art at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, recognized this year with the Nebraska 2000 Governor's Award as Artist of the Year.



Kunc was a Visiting Professor at the University of Michigan, Winter 1999. She gave a workshop in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 1995, and was a Fulbright Scholar in Jyväskylä, Finland, Spring 1996; she will return to Finland this Spring to teach a workshop at the Academy of Fine Arts, Helsinki.

Rafi Haque (Bangladesh), **Only One World**, 1995. Color monoprint from xerographic copy used as a paper-plate lithograph, printed on newspaper chine collé, 22½ x 32¾".

Karen Kunc, **Growth & Decay**, 1999. Color woodcut, 20 x 14".

Opposite:

Maija Kumpulainen-Sokka (Finland), **Untitled**, 1992. Color woodcut, 6 x 4".

Karen Kunc, **Scrap Gate**, 1996. Color woodcut, 42 x 20".

Dear Family, I'm off again to see what is in the world — away from home, to a new studio somewhere, for new ideas, new hopes. Each new beginning always assumes an optimistic tone and belies my uncertainty, the risk of another adventure, my true emotions at, once again, leaving for a while. I know about the loneliness to come, but also how this means independence and clarity of purpose. I crave new experiences, quiet time to examine my thoughts and ways of working, to acquire a self-consciousness about my own time, rebuild inner resources, rely on my own confidence.

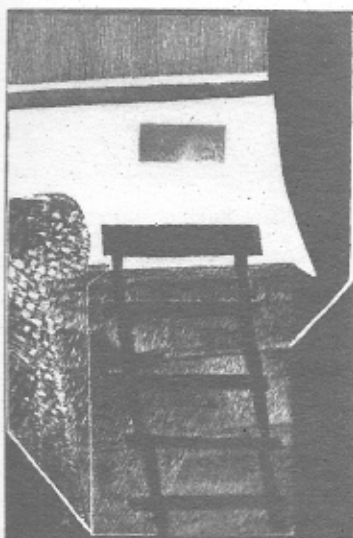
I have been away from home — my comfortable schedule, ongoing projects, friends, family and students — for a variety of residencies during my 20-year career. This includes totally supported fellowships and occasions as a visiting artist for short durations, too many times to count; although this category is more about my role as a teacher or guest celebrity, every movement watched by impressionable students, it also allows for sharing and comparing, and usually in great company. I have been in residence for as little as two or three days to two months at a time. Three times I have been away for full semesters as visiting faculty. And I also count two years as a visiting professor waiting for the tenure track position I now hold, while home and husband were 1500 miles away. This all gives me a great variety of places in my experience — rural, idyllic retreat to urban immersion, as "someone" or as a nobody.

My greatest desire is "all that time" that looms ahead. Time alone, uninterrupted, to hear again my own inner voice, to live in my mind. I look forward to working, reading, exploring, being productive, even prolific. But the duration of the residency defines a measure of time — how much can I fit in as the days tick off, and the tasks expand to fill the allotted time, whether short or long. There even seems a pattern to being away: at first I feel odd, struggling to begin, working anyway, and out of that resolves the great mid-point realization that "something is happening," the ideas and creativity are flowing. I know that half way through is when, no matter how long the real time is, things start to happen.

You all know the best part about being away — losing your routine, the daily pressures. “Away,” I know the phone is rarely ringing for me! I can establish a new work pattern, though it usually turns out to be the one I have always maintained. But there is a simplicity now, fending only for myself. I allow myself the time to go to concerts, lectures, visit every museum. (The more dusty, off-the-tourist-track places, the better.) My normal life has self-imposed limits on pleasures so that I can sanely meet my responsibilities to family, teaching, studio. “Away,” I have the opportunity to see what it is like to be an independent artist (or at least to play at the illusion) while safely in my continuing support structure. Yet I am aware of my luxurious situation and the duality of positions I enjoy, especially as other artists jealously quiz me about my employment status, whether I have children, my commitments and freedoms.

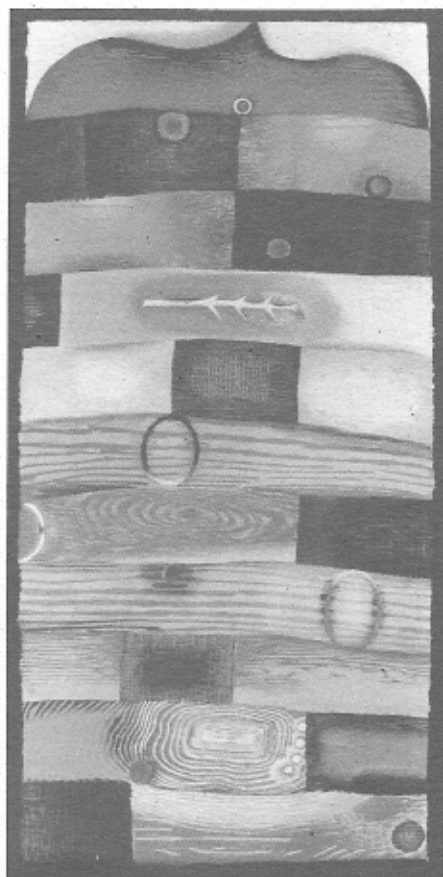
While away, I try to refresh my eye, to see what it is that I look at. New visual information sparks my sight, yet I find that I look at similar categories of things: I am making a vast visual dictionary of odd fenceposts, twisted branches, makeshift benches! I am constantly reminded of home and all the memorable places I have been. I find conceptual connections to my ongoing life work, and add new concepts; I gain an impression of others’ lives in concert with their natural world; I theorize about how different people have developed concessions towards personal dignity in crowded countries. I see the human impact, large and small, on landscapes from wild Icelandic windswept farms, to centuries-old gardens of contorted olive trees in Tuscany, to walled Zen sanctuaries of artfully artificial nature in Kyoto.

My works created in these various situations are markers of the time spent, the experience, the sharing. They are a cachet of memories, impressions, my own color-take on a place and time.



I work by generating lots of ideas in quick thumbnail sketches that often begin with doodling and memories. Then I select one that gives me some graphic playfulness and simplicity, plus some indications of meaning on several levels — the suggestion of the source or reference to an object, event or experience along with a larger idea that interests me in general. I usually discover the latter meaning while I am working on a piece, when it reveals itself to me, the physical time spent in making and looking allows me to recognize what the piece is about. I continually use the sketches as reference, but soon the piece takes on a life of its own and becomes resolved through the color and the complexity that I can't plan. In fact, I rarely ever make color sketches for any of my work.

Scrap Gate was inspired by my recent trip to Bangladesh. A sense of the exotic, pattern-filled market crowds the spaces of the woodcut with sari weavings and unusual wild edibles. My on-going interest in the mutual influence on and intersection of mankind and nature is expanded by these new works. I continually discover that my sources and ideas very often come from the most mundane and quickly perceived sights. This reinforces the process of spontaneous sketching and my selection of an idea that seems so unknown. *





Kirsi Neuvonen (Finland), *Adam's Appletree*, 1997. Color etching and aquatint, 9 3/4 x 7 3/4".

* Thanks to Atlantic Papers for donating 100% cotton Albrecht Dürer Paper, made by Hahnemühle, for our original print.

* Thanks to Darrell Hyder of the Sun Hill Press, North Brookfield, Massachusetts, for printing the image, and very special thanks to the artist, Walter Askin.

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* The text and cover of the journal are printed on Mohawk Options Sand, an acid-free paper of 100% post-consumer fiber; for a swatch book, call 800/the-mill.

While away, I am anxious to fit in and no longer feel like an outsider, I am worried about how I will do. I want to earn respect by my work, my work habits, by working in the same space with other artists, to prove my worth by my honesty of purpose and openness. I always forget the benefits and let the fear of the unknown, the doubt about my decision to go loom in front of me. But the commitment I've made actually comes to pass, and I'm off again. And, once again, I am pleasantly surprised to find out at the end that a great new body of work and ideas can be generated. Recently, it seems that my real production of artwork has taken place largely through these various kinds of professional excursions. "Away" is where I can work in the ideal that we all have of studio time, but rarely experience in real life. I go away with the idea of asking for the magic to happen again.

*Well, I must close now. I'll be home sooner than you think and I will feel some reluctance when it is time for my sojourn to end. I will be really busy at the end, I am sure, wanting to do everything I've missed. By now I would have finally figured out the things I am interested in, where to go, whom to see; I will have made friends and contacts. My adventurous excursions will be further along both in the studio and in my surroundings. I will have established a bit of a life here. Yet you all know how much I miss home when I'm away, and how much I crave to go away again while I'm at home. What a pattern to my life — difficult and rewarding — an artistic life, now with deep reservoirs filled for the months ahead at home. See you soon! **

The American Print Alliance

Common Ground, our travelling exhibition, has shown in Virginia, Colorado, California, Oregon and Iowa. It's at Midland College, Texas, till April 10 and Arizona State University, August 26 to September 8. There are spaces in the schedule over the summer, so please e-mail (printalliance@mindspring.com) or call (770/486-6680) if you have space available in your area. For information about entering our next travelling show, check our internet site, www.printalliance.org; bookings for it will start in January 2001.

Also look to the internet for announcements about another *Print & Paper Fair* in the Atlanta area. If you would like ideas and suggestions for planning a similar event wherever you are, please ask! Like the *Printmaking Dialogue Day* which was a great success at the Savannah College of Art & Design last Fall, the Alliance holds these events to help the artists who happen to be nearby and to learn ways to foster local interest in printmaking and papermaking among artists and collectors.

The increased excitement at our internet site confirms that everywhere is somewhere local and our net community is there, so thanks again to our designer Lyn Bishop and our webmaster Jenn Landefeld. We need a few more volunteers to help keep our calendar current and post new information, especially technical articles and professional resources. Please give a little time for your own good cause.

One of our most enthusiastic volunteers is Walter Askin. Besides creating the dingbat extravaganza for our letterpress print, he has donated a whole set of his extraordinary glyphs that will be available on a disk for Mac or PC as the Askin Dingbat Font. So please stay tuned!

And once again we are happy to express our special thanks to Bob Toth at Arches Paper for a patron's grant towards publication of this acclaimed journal, so that we can continue to provide it to you at the original price. *