

Carol Summers

Touchstone for Printmakers

Karen Kunc

It was a great honor to bring recognition to Carol Summers as the Mid-America Print Council 2004 Outstanding Printmaker. Mr. Summers accepted his award on October 8 at a reception during the biennial MAPC conference *Printmaking Relevance/Resonance* held at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Summers graciously conducted a gallery talk of his solo exhibition in which he described the stories and places that influenced over 50 years of magically colorful and dynamic woodcut prints.

Carol Summers deserves this award for his achievements and presence as a world renowned printmaker since the 1950's, which was recognized by the MAPC Awards Committee who made the selection from nominations by the membership. Summers was born in 1925 in Woodstock, New York, and currently lives in Santa Cruz, California. He attended Bard College, and received a BA in 1951. He won a grant from the Italian Government to work in Italy, and lived in Siena in 1955, and he also received a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1959. He has taught and presented his work at countless schools, art centers, museums, workshops around the world. He has lead tours to Rajasthan, India, focusing on folk art from 1995 -1999. His work has been exhibited around the world, and is in numerous permanent museum collections.

Carol Summers is known for his bright and colorful woodcut prints that carry his inimitable abstract style depicting landscapes of mountains, meteor showers, rainbows, waterfalls, and shrines. For me, I believe that the content of his woodcut prints evolve out of his meditations on the timeless and evocative landscapes of sacred sites and the stories of folk legends. His life-long integrity to his art has lead him to search for universal sources and understandings through extensive travel to other cultures, and this is reflected in his simple way of life and wisdom.

Carol Summers was one of the first artists whose work I admired when I was a young printmaking student. How could I not be impressed as his work graced the cover of my printmaking textbook in 1973! – Jules Heller's *Printmaking Today*. Summers' work was described in that book, and in every

other printmaking book that followed. His personal and innovative printing techniques, using both sides of the paper, ink saturations, puzzle-like woodblocks, and special roller inkings have brought his work to world-wide recognition and distinction. Summers' personalized approach to printing epitomizes the inextricable link between the artist's hand, his style and process, and inspirations – his work could not happen any other way, and is graphically powerful – and memorable – due to this holistic balance.

In my first teaching position at the Columbus College of Art and Design in 1978, I chose Carol Summers as my first visiting artist – the artist I admired the most. This was a major "coup" for me when he accepted and presented an inspirational lecture and demon-

stration in his quiet, self-effacing manner, with important words and artistic insights. Many years later I have again sought this artist as the touchstone of artistic purpose and personal direction, that has not wavered in the face of today's art fads and theoretical machinations. This recent en-counter with and recognition of Carol Summers marks a full circle of time that is personally significant to me, and I hope to others who seek relevance through examples in the lives of influential artists. I have continued to admire Summers for his consistency of vision and purpose, and for the amazing wealth of images that create a substantial and important body of work that is recognized around the world.

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Carol Summers delights the audience before he is honored as the 2004 MAPC Outstanding Printmaker.