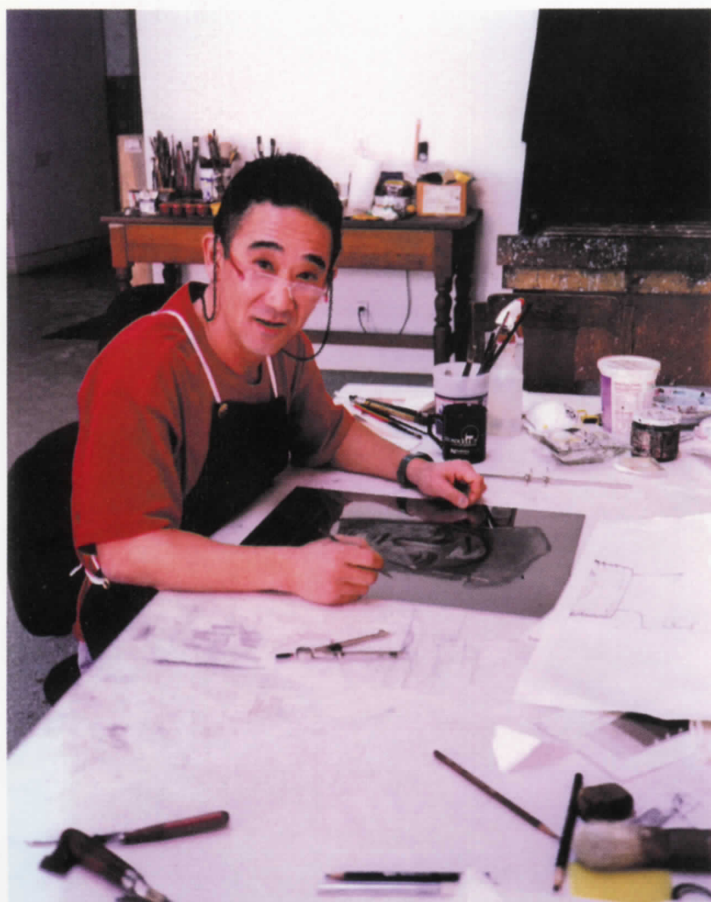


Crown Point Press
Newsletter
Spring 1999

Overview



Katsura Funakoshi, *Before the Moon Rises*, 1998. Color manipulated aquatint with spit bite aquatint, aquatint and drypoint. Paper size: 51 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 40 $\frac{1}{4}$ ”; image size: 44 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 35 $\frac{1}{4}$ ”.
Edition 40. Printed by Daria Sywulak.



Katsura Funakoshi working on a plate for the print *A Hat of Words* in the Crown Point studio, 1998.

Katsura Funakoshi

Person as Mountain

In the etching studio, you can tell Katsura Funakoshi is a sculptor. He handles a metal plate as if it is material to form, not something just to draw on. He hauls it about, propping it up to make a carefully placed mark, rubbing his fingers over the grooves he has made, seeming to cajole the image to become visible. He moves a plate from table to table, finds a comfortable spot and climbs on top. He wields a scraper with delicate precision across the face in the metal, lifting his eyes to the same face in a proof in front of his nose. He is animated, grimacing, murmuring, deep in a relationship with the being he is creating.

The beings are different this year from the ones brought to life in our previous projects with Funakoshi, in 1990 and 1993. The earlier characters were engaging but diffident, nicely dressed in suits, coats, shirts. If there was color, it was very restrained. This year we have two people, neither of whom wears conventional clothing. One appears in black and white, the other inhabits three different etchings, all abundantly colorful.

The black and white etching, titled *At a Grand Hall in the Forest*, is quite large and, as is usual for Funakoshi, is a single figure in three-quarter view. This person is not diffident, however. He wears a lightly-sketched simple undershirt, and is turning towards us but does not catch our gaze. He has a long neck and small ears. Funakoshi remarked that he is “a strange figure, like an animal.” There is an animal intensity, a human grace, a complicated, meditative expression. He could be a character from Shakespeare’s woods. Maybe he is Inari, a Shinto god who carries messages to other gods and can change at will from man to fox to youthful woman. (This is my own conjecture—Funakoshi was raised a Catholic.)

The personage we see in the color etchings is beautiful and mature—strong and far seeing. It could be a man or a woman. Funakoshi says it is a man, but adds that “actually it is a person, so it’s not a problem if somebody thinks it is a woman.” The face rises out of what Funakoshi describes as “a scarf, a cloud, or a drift of snow—he cannot have lapels or a collar, since he is a mountain as a person, or a person as a mountain.” The largest etching is titled *Before the Moon Rises*. Printer Daria Sywulak wanted to know if the person in it could be wearing a priest’s collar and vestment. Funakoshi seemed surprised at that idea but not dismissive. “At the beginning, I just looked for a color. I didn’t have one in mind ahead of time. I didn’t intend it to be symbolic in that way—but, after the fact, color can have meaning.” Another printer suggested heat, emotion, the fire within the earth as the source of the figure’s garment-color. I, myself, think the mountain is in a kind of haze—its original green and gray are changed to warmer hues by an odd but penetrating light.



Katsura Funakoshi working on a plate for the print *Before the Moon Rises* in the Crown Point studio, 1998.



Katsura Funakoshi, *Smell of Snow*, 1998. Color spit bite and soap ground aquatints with aquatint and drypoint. Paper size: 21 x 26"; image size: 13³/₄ x 18¹/₄". Edition 40. Printed by Daria Sywulak.

However you interpret the color, it's easy to see the person as a mountain. On one shoulder is a house, on the other a hill covered with green. "He is," Funakoshi mused, "so much bigger than the hill, so much bigger than the house. Human beings sometimes do sad or bad things, but on the other hand they are so beautiful and so big, like giants."

The mountain person appears again in *A Hat of Words*, the second of our three color images, and in this print he is also a giant. Funakoshi's skill in conveying this is remarkable, as the image is only a quarter the size of the large print and only the head of the person is shown. His face, broad and chiseled like a monument, rises on a long and curving neck from layers of blue (water? sky?) rimmed with transparent white (foam? clouds?). His green hat could be a whole forest. Behind him is the pink haze of the mountain itself.

The third color image, *Smell of Snow*, is the smallest (though not very small). The head, which we see in profile with the now-familiar layered collar and a hint of shoulder, is framed by an extraordinary expanse of sky and mountains in drifting light and pale blue shadows. The person wears a tight-fitting cap, and it is a shock to notice it is cut away at the back so a second small face, his inner self perhaps, can look out and breathe the air. Funakoshi has carved a camphor wood sculpture of the person as mountain, in the same general form as he appears in the largest of these prints (*Before the Moon Rises*). At the back of the sculpture's head the small face also appears.

Camphor wood is Funakoshi's primary medium. He carves it in persuasive detail and rubs colors into it. The

wood he uses is green, so it cracks, and the sculptor's chisel marks remain visible. "At the same time you see that you are looking at a block of carved and painted wood," David Bonetti wrote in the *San Francisco Examiner*, "you *feel* you are confronting a living human being." And, in *Sculpture* magazine, Janet Koplos explained that "it is the tension between the assertive factual character of the wood and the striking, insistent presence of the people somehow caught in this unexpected material that makes these works memorable."

Aquatint is not an unexpected medium for a figure study, but it is surprising to find the process so visible and the figures at the same time so real. Funakoshi's faces seem to be those of real people. Yet the drawing marks that create them are unselfconsciously visible, with no sleight of hand, no bag of tricks. The fact that these real people are monumental and metaphoric, characters in a reverie, makes them even more compelling and complex.



Katsura Funakoshi, *A Hat of Words*, 1998. Color manipulated aquatint with spit bite aquatint, soft ground etching and drypoint. Paper size: 27¹/₂ x 22¹/₂"; image size: 18³/₄ x 14¹/₄". Edition 40. Printed by Daria Sywulak.

"I'm not a logical person," Funakoshi said to me. "These things come from drawing and feeling, not from logic." Probably there is a drift away from logic in our times, right now. The best artists are able to distill or encapsulate something in the air, a mood that's not yet fully noticed. Maybe the demeanor of the people Funakoshi has created is a balancing sign for our culture, which has lately appeared so mired in triviality (another non-logical approach).

Funakoshi lives and works in Tokyo, and was born in 1951 in Iwate, Japan, a small town in the countryside. He told me that the school he attended most of his life stood in front of a mountain that rose straight up from the ground. "That mountain got into my head," he said, "in its whole size."

—Kathan Brown

Katsura Funakoshi's most recent solo exhibitions were at the Ibara Museum, Okayama, Japan (1997); Annely Juda Fine Art, London (1996); the Nishimura Gallery, Tokyo (1995); the Stephen Wirtz Gallery, San Francisco (1994); the Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York (1994). Funakoshi represented Japan in the 1988 Venice Biennial. He exhibits regularly at the Nishimura Gallery, Tokyo.



Katsura Funakoshi, *At a Grand Hall in the Forest*, 1998. Manipulated aquatint with drypoint. Paper size: 40 1/2 x 30 1/2"; image size: 29 1/4 x 23 1/2". Edition 30. Printed by Daria Sywulak.

Notes

In the Crown Point Gallery

Katsura Funakoshi: 1990-1998, featuring new releases.

Also on exhibit are new etchings by **Wayne Thiebaud**,
April 20 - May 29

Visit Crown Point Press and Karen McCready Fine Art at **Art 1999 Chicago** May 7 - 11, Festival Hall, Booth #E110, Navy Pier.
On exhibit will be our new releases as well as other prints.

In New York

Karen McCready, our New York representative, will exhibit

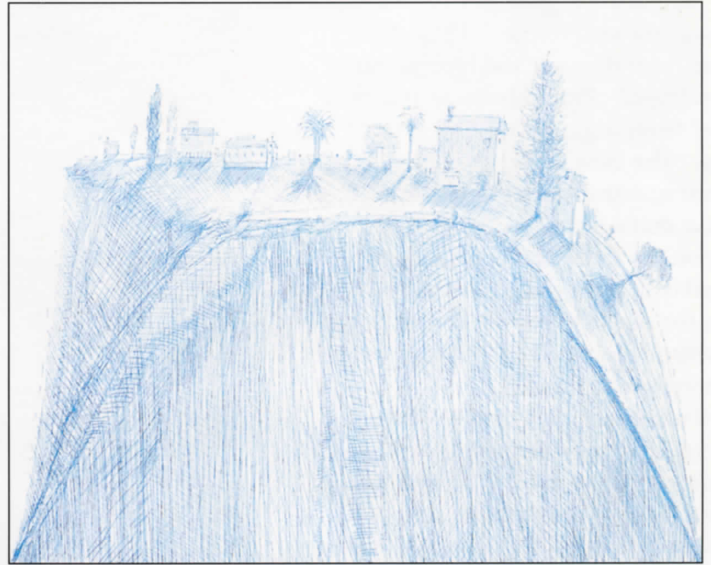
Spirit of Zen: The Invisible Thread, with prints by **John Cage, Tom Marioni** and others, May 14 - June 26. Please visit the gallery at **Karen McCready Fine Art**, 425 W. 13th St., New York. (212) 243-0439 www.karenmccready.com.

You can still order the video **ink, paper, metal, wood: 35 Years at Crown Point Press**, written and narrated by **Kathan Brown**. Hear stories about Crown Point and see artists at work in the Crown Point studio, and in Japan and China. We have made a limited number of videos, so order one now before they are all gone!

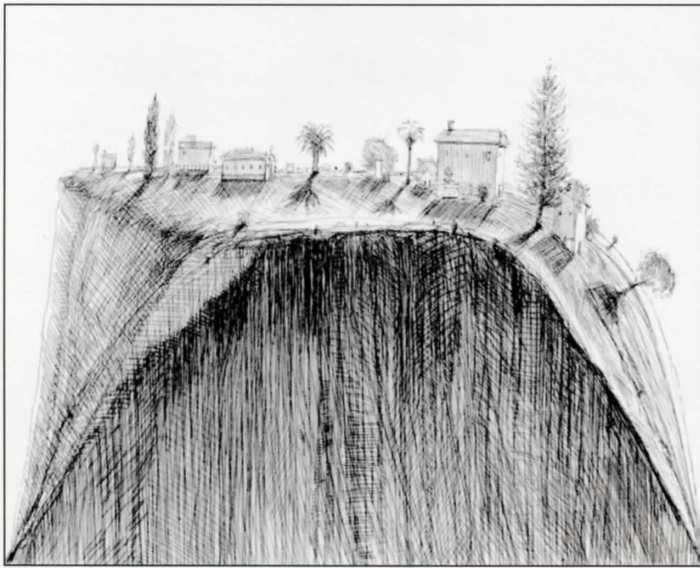
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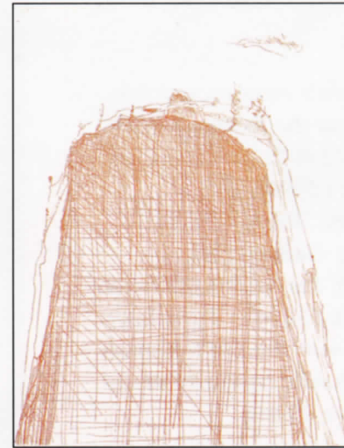
Wayne Thiebaud, *Mountain Cloud*, 1998.
Hard ground etching. Paper size: 12 x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ ";
image size: 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Edition 25.
Printed by Daria Sywulak.



Wayne Thiebaud, *Estate #2*, 1998. Hard ground etching with drypoint printed in blue.
Paper size: 18 x 20"; image size: 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Edition 25. Printed by Daria Sywulak.



Wayne Thiebaud, *Estate #1*, 1998. Hard ground etching with drypoint.
Paper size: 18 x 20"; image size: 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Edition 25. Printed by Daria Sywulak.



Wayne Thiebaud, *Red Mountain*, 1998.
Hard ground etching printed in red.
Paper size: 12 x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; image size: 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ ".
Edition 25. Printed by Daria Sywulak.

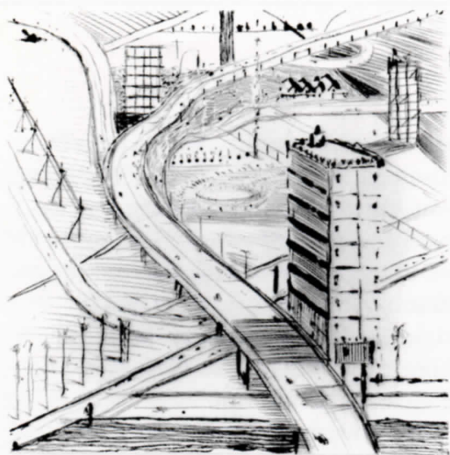
Some Little Gems

Wayne Thiebaud New Releases

Wayne Thiebaud once said that in working with landscape he doesn't want to just "see a pretty place and try to paint it." What he wants is to "manage it, manipulate it, or see what

I can turn it into." He thought it would be interesting to try to get rid of the horizon line. "Whether it's up, down, helicopter view, world view, valley view—to try to get some sense of the loss of the convenience or comfort of standing and looking at things." He doesn't work from photographs. He makes sketches in

actual landscapes, recording what he calls "visual hunches," then uses them and his imagination to develop drawings or paintings. Thiebaud drew these little gems, one drypoint and two hard ground etchings, directly on copper plates during a weekend he spent working at Crown Point just at the end of 1998.



Wayne Thiebaud, *Freeway Building*, 1998. Drypoint.
Paper size: 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 12"; image size: 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ ". Edition 35.
Printed by Daria Sywulak.

Actually, he drew only the drypoint completely at that time. The two etching plates had been started earlier.

Drypoint, in which the artist simply scratches the metal with a sharp tool and does not use acid to set the image into the plate, is an especially sensual medium. The character of any single line comes mostly from the burr thrown up at its edge. If the tool digs deep, the burr is strong and the line rich, thick, fuzzy. If the tool barely grazes the metal, the line is delicate and clear. I read somewhere that fans of Asian brush painting often enjoy re-drawing the images in their minds, following the track of the artist's hand which is measurable in strong or faint

deposits of ink. From a helicopter view of Thiebaud's *Freeway Building*, we can do the same, gliding gently down the freeway, lightly touching a circular pond and shadows around it, bearing down heavily for strong horizontal shadows to define the shaded side of the building. The cars on the freeway are little jabs; the first vehicle has a wheel and a moving shadow, the others are simply lozenges, triangles, then dots. We quickly grasp that the vertical topknotted lines in the foreground are palm trees, and a similar row with extra legs are man-made supports for a power line. The palm trees and power line by themselves occupy almost the entire left side of the picture, while the right side is full of incident. Thiebaud gives us an amazing ride through this landscape.

The two hard ground etchings, which Thiebaud decided to release in both color and black and white versions, are a different story. In both images, our vantage-point is low. We confront a network of lines, or a sheer rock wall, depending on how you want to look at it. Raising our eyes, we see there are things on top. *Red Mountain* and *Mountain Cloud* are from the same plate, but in *Red Mountain* the mountain dominates. The black and white version emphasizes the cloud, which your eyes fix on after traveling

up the face of the cliff. Hard ground etchings are drawn through a wax coating on the plate, which is then submerged in acid. The acid bites the lines into the metal and at the same time takes away the drypoint burr. The *Mountain* etchings were bitten once to a uniform depth, so the lines are all the same weight. Shadows are created when several lines clump together.

The *Estate* etchings are mostly hard ground, but Thiebaud has added a soft layering of drypoint over the entire face of the cliff, digging it more deeply into the shadows. In this version, when your eyes get to the top you find not squiggles of trees and a cloud but houses, mowed grass, pruned trees. How do these people get to their neatly-cared-for estate? What do they think about the way they are living, up there alone in the sky? In the blue version, *Estate #2*, you begin to wonder if this estate might not be in heaven.

Sometimes Thiebaud is called a Pop artist, but unlike Pop art his work is not about irony. He has said his paintings of pie wedges are triangles on round plates and at the same time celebrate Mom's apple pie and pie in the sky. There is nothing detached about Thiebaud's point of view. His humor is good-natured. He really likes the subjects he draws or paints.

Design: Brent A. Jones
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20 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.974.6273
FAX 415.495.4220
email: gallery@crownpoin.com

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