



Art Gallery

Main: 338 Main Street • Huntington, NY 11743 • 631/427-5165

Kristin Johnson

TOTEMS II

MAY 3– MAY 29, 2006

“Travels with Kristin” - THURSDAY MAY 11, 7:00 PM, a lecture & slide presentation

ARTIST RECEPTION - SATURDAY MAY 13, 2:00-4:00 PM, with slides at 3:00 PM

Artist's Statement

Growing up spending summers basking in the simplicity and openness of rural life outside Ithaca, NY, I had the pleasure of listening to my adoring Swedish grandparents tell “sagas of the old country.” The school years were spent on Long Island, where rolling fields were exchanged for sand and waves. As a supposed “grown-up,” I headed for the “big city of dreams” where I spent ten exciting, Bohemian years downtown.

In the summer of ‘85, I went back to the source of many childhood stories, bonded for life with my extended family in Sweden and backpacked around Scandinavia. Thus began the “wanderlust,” and the fortunate solo journeys to 24 countries to date.

The camera became a way to make deeper connections. After I ask permission, there is sometimes a long wait before the subject becomes less conscious of the camera. Children, usually the most approachable, and the elderly, at times overlooked, became favorite subjects. I am particularly drawn to “environmental portraiture,” which places the subject in a personal landscape. Texture and design are also elements I look for.

During many magical, often ten-hour, days in the darkroom, I was often in quest for the “perfect B&W print.” As my travels continued, slides provided both richness of color and ease of storage. In the early and mid ‘90’s, working as a studio assistant in Tribeca, NYC, I learned how to do Polaroid transfers using existing slides, a Polaroid machine, hot, wet watercolor paper, and a brayer. This allowed me to break free of the fastidiousness of the darkroom. It offered the spontaneity and giving up of some control that I found somewhat analogous to throwing pottery. If you overwork it, chances are it will collapse.

While shooting the photos for the *totems*, I think about how the images tell a story about a location, theme, or sequence of events. The rest of the process has evolved from playful exploration. The surface surrounding the images gets painted; the edges are ripped and burned; and melted beeswax is painted on the paper before baking the piece in

the oven. The wax and heat make the work more archival, somewhat transparent and smell honey sweet.

I build sculptures with driftwood and other found objects from my copious collection of “things that can be used to make other things” and then nail or screw the paper right on. When I am able to be fully present in the flow of making this work...well, it’s like the spirit described in the book, Zen and the Art of Archery, “one has to get out of the way of oneself.”

I thank you for looking and invite you to make up your own visual stories.

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