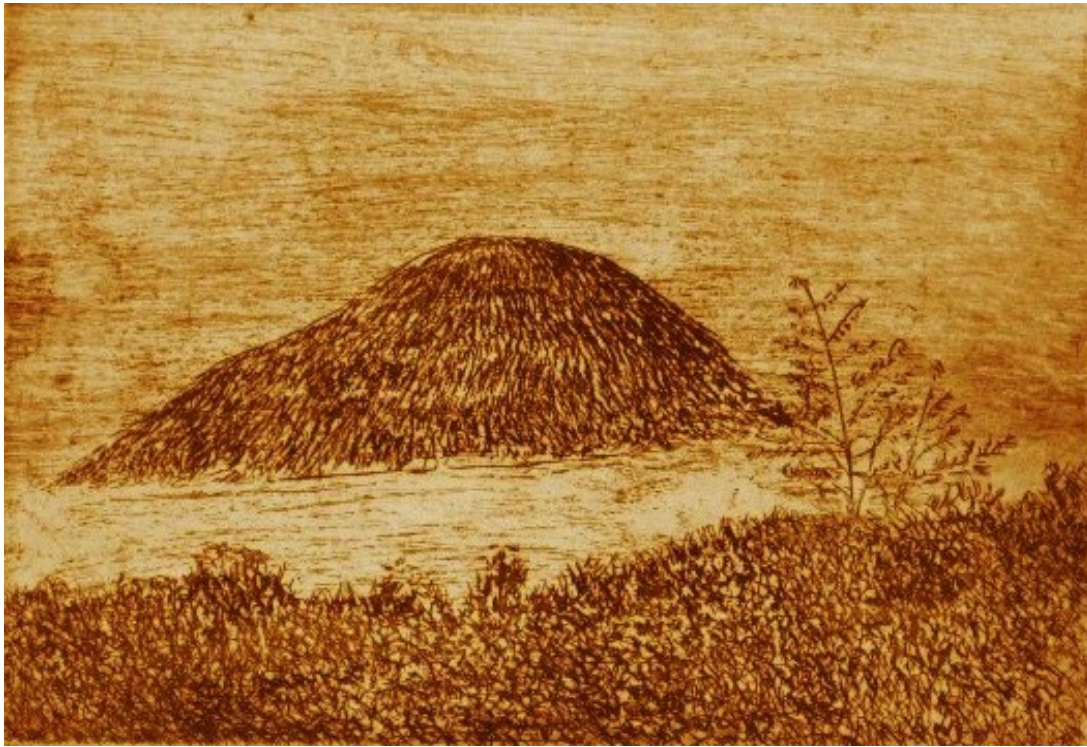


||

indonesia



1

‘Nirvana.’ Java. Indonesia.

sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate.

Mt. Merapi which hovers above a blanket of mist is an active volcano and its name refers to it as a ‘mountain of fire’. I and a male friend from Lithuania spent a night walking up to the summit of Mt. Merapi with the hope of seeing it spout red lava just before sunrise. We did not see any lava but viewing the blanket of white cloud over the surrounding landscape made me feel we had reached nirvana. This experience was accentuated by the feeling that as we climbed this steep mountain - through a windy rainy night - I felt we were akin to the spirits of Virgil and Dante travelling through the Underworld. In the morning we had passed from the cold darkness of Hades to the warm dawn light of Paradise. Mt. Merapi is the volcano on which the nearby grand Buddhist complex of Borobudur is based on. The top of this divine temple is meant to resemble nirvana itself; seeing Mt. Merapi at dawn and its mystical surrounding environ as depicted here I can well understand how it was this volcano that the ancient architects of Borobudur gained their original inspiration.



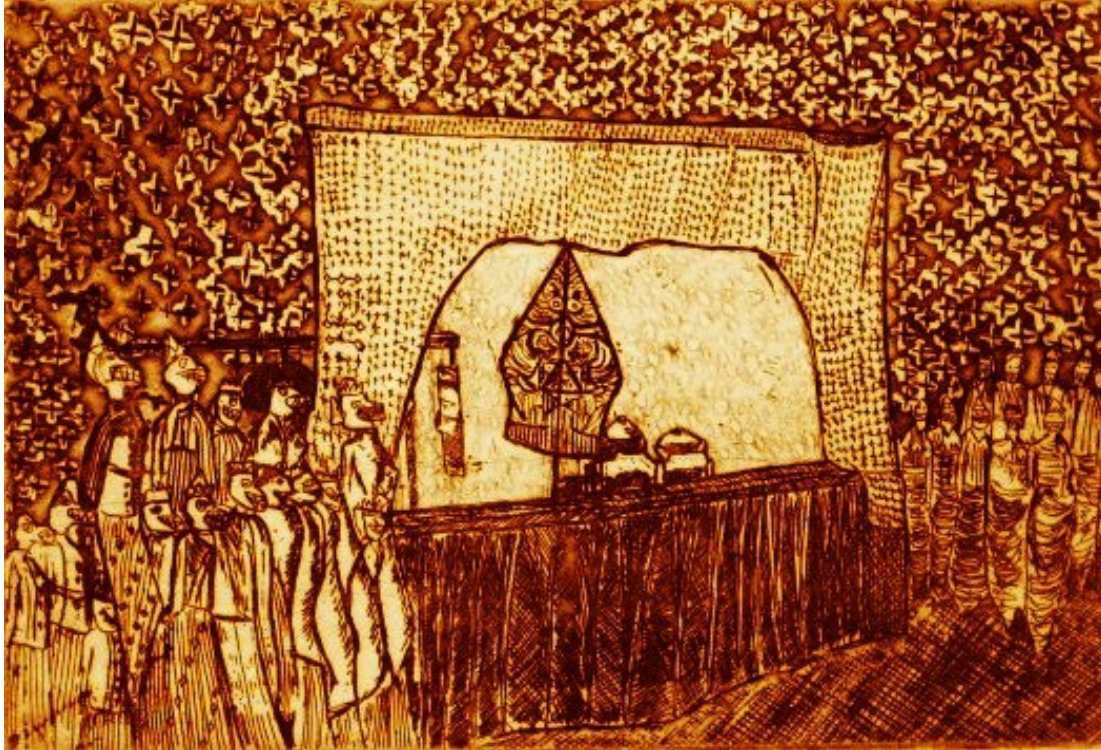
2

‘The Creation of the World.’ Ubud. Bali.

sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate.

Around July each year in Bali is a big Hindu Galungan Festival that commemorates the creation of the world. Families go to the temple in the morning to worship this event. Food is brought before the gods who come down to visit earth on this special day. After the food is blessed by priests at the Hindu temple women usually carry it away on baskets which they place on their heads. Families have a big feast akin to our Christmas lunch. In this etching you can see female beings that still wait to be fully formed in the shadows of the temple. While in the light are fully shaped women taking the food of the gods to their homes.

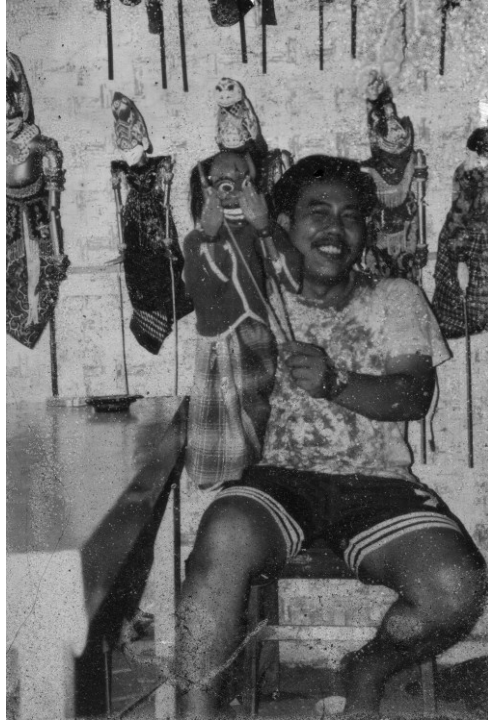




3

‘Tree of Life.’ Java, Indonesia. *sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate.*

An Indonesian puppet theatre; on the left side are rows of wooden puppets used during the play. The play was viewed during the day and differed from the usual shadow puppet play which has the puppets behind a curtain. The large leaf in the middle of the stage is known as the tree of life and is displayed before a play begins and also at the end of the play to signal to the audience that it is finished.



A puppet master.



4

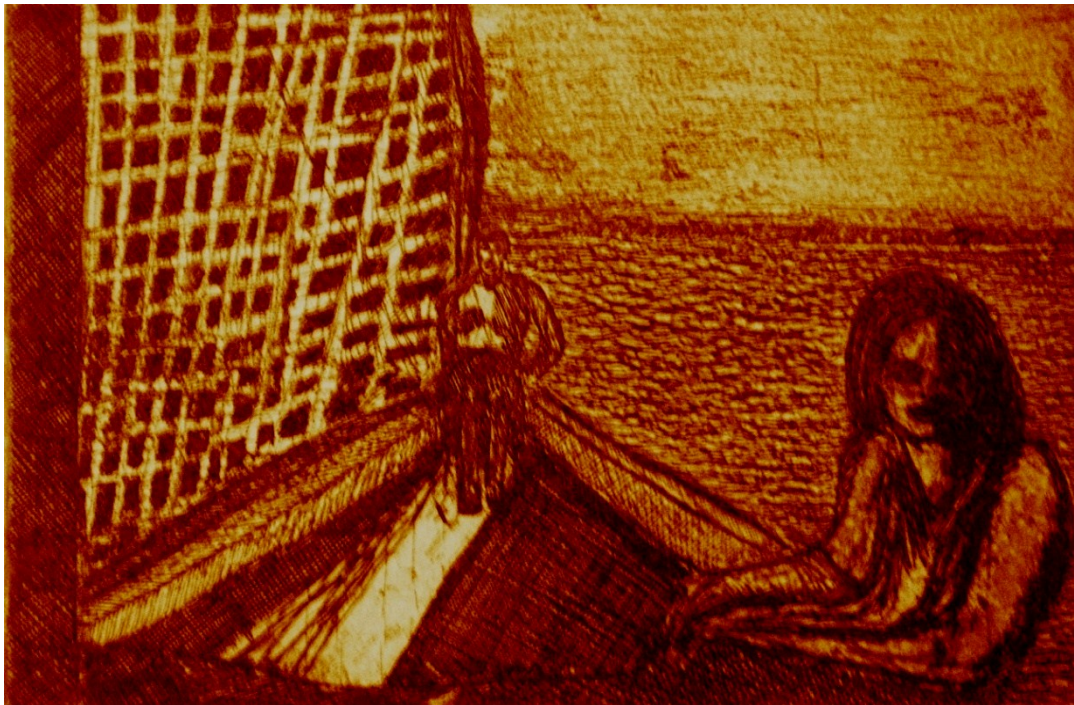
‘Pennies from Heaven.’ Flores, Indonesia.

sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate.

Leaving Flores island Kristina & I caught one of the large PELNI ferries which cruise the whole of the Indonesian archipelago. These ferries usually follow a two-week course stopping at different ports for about two hours giving just enough time to disembark and board their human cargo. These large passenger boats, which hold up to 1,000 people impeccably keep to their timetable. Sometimes there is a carnival atmosphere at the wharf when the PELNI ferry comes in as people wait to meet visiting relatives or farewell departing ones. (I still have a strong memory of two large middle-aged women in their splendid 'Sunday dresses' each holding a colourful little umbrella in one hand and waving little hankies as the PELNI left. While we waited for the PELNI to leave Flores several canoes approached the large white ship. I looked far down over the rail to see boys in these canoes call up at the passengers to drop coins; after doing so I watched as they dived into the water to collect their 'treasure.' Looking down at these industrious boys from the high vantage point of the top deck one felt like a god; I was so high up I really did feel that I was in heaven dropping coins to mortals below.



Flores wharf scene



5

‘Adam and Eve.’ Rinca. Indonesia.

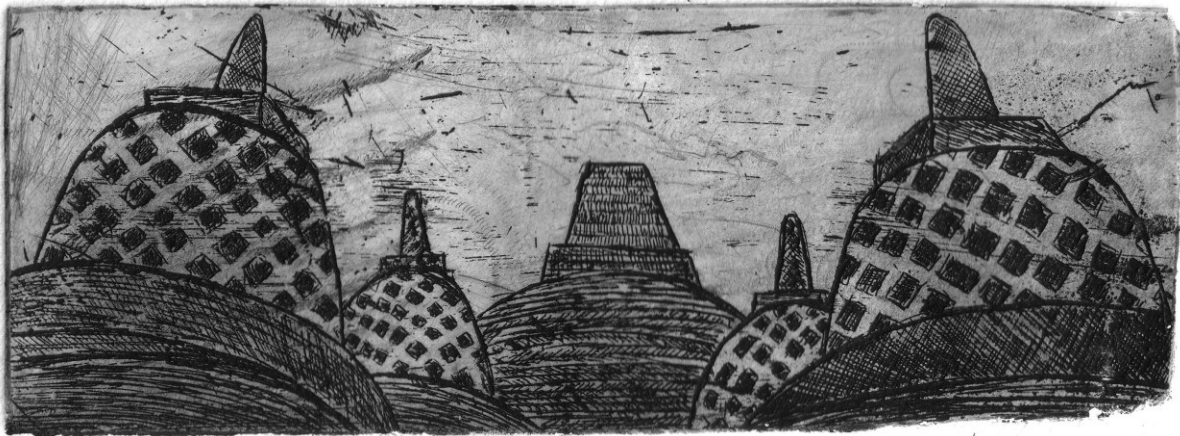
sepia on cream paper. 6"X4". copperplate.

Travelling through the islands of the Indonesian archipelago can be a real trial filled with many days of tedious waiting for small ferries which had broken down or for buses which only come once a day and so forth. However, there is the occasional magnificent day which makes it all worthwhile. Six of us travelled on a rickety boat to the island of Rinca near Flores to see the Komodo dragons. There is a sense of pre-history amidst the Indonesian islands which can make one feel that you have gone back to the dawn of time. We had a great day looking for the dragons and walking around Rinca and on the way back to Flores on the boat we saw one of those picture postcard sunsets that take your breath away. Amidst us six were a lovely Australian couple; here they are as Adam and Eve on the boat enjoying paradise.



sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate.

Anu Krakatau is the child of Krakatau which blew up in the late 1800s causing thousands of deaths. One guidebook stated the sound of the eruption could be heard in Alice Springs. Thus my travel companion Kristina and I paid homage to this ancient power of nature by going out to it on a small fishing boat. The foredeck can be seen in the foreground. A boy on the craft could speak some English and so was our guide; the volcanic island erupted large plumes of black dust into the sky every ten minutes and so he informed us that on this day 'Anu Krakatau was angry'. We spent a half hour on the island where we continued to view the blasts of Anu's temper. It seemed as we touched the warm black sandy soil we had connected with the centre of the earth itself. The trip to a nearby island - where we were going to stay overnight before heading back to the Javanese coast - was very wild, the sky suddenly becoming grey and accompanied by a strong tempest. I feared as the boat steeply swung from side to side in the stormy seas there was a good chance it would capsize. However, we safely reached the sanctuary of the next island which - along with several others - was probably a remnant of the previous Krakatau; during the night we watched Anu Krakatau continue its tantrums - which regularly appeared as small orange glows on the dark horizon. Our eventful sojourn to this volcanic island was another highlight having the same sense of journeying into a world which preceded human time; comparing favourably to our much earlier visit to Rinca. To finish on a 'technical note' I should add that the sky was devised by simply scratching steel wool over the wax which was on the copper plate.



60.

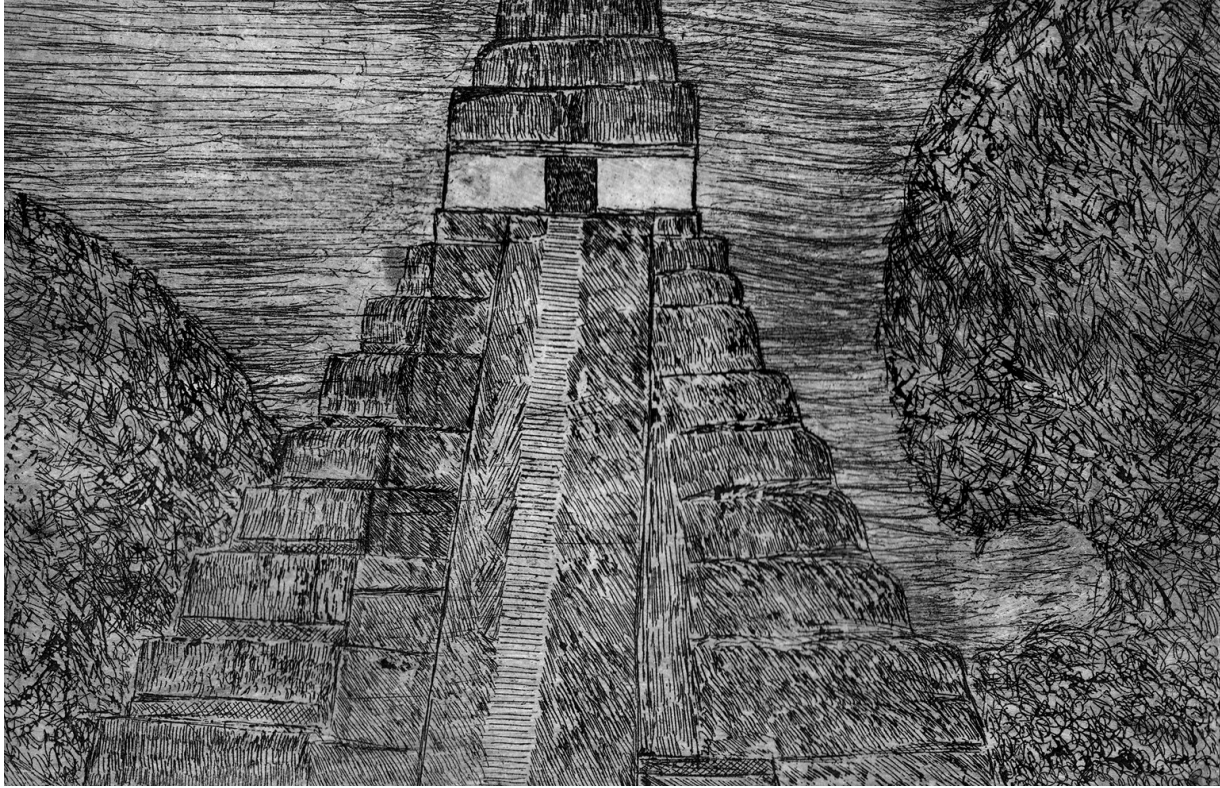
Borobudur. Java. Indonesia.

B&W. 8"X5". zinc plate.

These are some of the large bells at the top of the massive Buddhist monument known as Borobudur in Java. This cosmic monument echoes the nearby holy mountain of Mt. Merapi. You have to walk on an ascending pathway of this stone structure which somewhat resembles a relatively square ziggurat; as you do you may meditate on events in the life of Buddha which are carved into the high walls. At the spacious platform-like top you will have reached nirvana and from this open air heaven you can view the splendid surrounding countryside and Mt. Merapi itself – in the far distance – along a bumpy mountain horizon. It should be stated that within each bell is a statue of Buddha which may be touched and by which I presume the healing power of this spiritual figure may have its effect upon you.



central america



19

‘Tikal. Guatemalan Postcard.’ Guatemala. *B&W. 5.5”X8”.* zinc plate.

This image is based on a postcard of Tikal I purchased on my second trip to Guatemala in 1992. I visited Tikal in 1985 and being in Guatemala in the mid-eighties was a strange affair as it was a period of severe oppression for the Mayans. Yet wherever you went as a tourist there was a sordid ‘magic realism’ to the way such injustice was cunningly kept out of view. There was a civil war with leftist rebels but it always seemed to be happening ‘somewhere else’; if you were not aware of how vicious things really were, the occasional sightings of army trucks dropping off soldiers – the ‘upholders of national security’ - going into the jungle from the road to out-of-the-way indigenous villages would have been noted as a mere routine ‘army exercise’ - with no malicious intent. While in reality thousands upon thousands of people were being slaughtered by the military. Thus, in response I found myself involved in solidarity work for Central America for several years.



Rigoberta Menchu solidarity tour poster; Rigoberta won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. The other photo is her with Victor Hugo the President of the Guatemalan Human Rights Committee at Marrickville Town Hall. September 5, 1993.



20

‘Festival. Bluefields.’ Nicaragua. Mosquito Coast. St. Jeromes Day. October 1992.

B & W. 8" X 6". zinc plate.

‘...devils were running down the muddy street. The heavy rain was not deterring them. Intrigued by the gradually increasing numbers of demons I walked down to the main intersection of Bluefields. Many young men were dressed as old women wearing dresses that came down to their feet and sprawling over large padded behinds. These men were also wearing colourful face masks and carrying long sticks in their hands. From the intersection the road inclined gradually until it reached the market sheds which were beside the wharves. To the right on this last stretch of the road was a restaurant bar which was filled with ‘old women’ and blaring Carib music. A crowd of spectators was building up and hovering over Bluefields was a grey sky spitting water drops. I stood beside the women selling bread on a corner and watched the ‘old women’ who were coming out of the shop. They were running up to the young girls in the crowd and hitting them with their sticks. Amongst these ‘old women’ was the one wearing the dress of the U.S. flag. The crowd, filled with trumpeters, drummers and men shooting off skyrockets which they were holding in their hands, started to venture down past the wooden buildings of the main street of Bluefields. I looked over from where I stood beside the restaurant bar and noticed the lone ‘old woman’ who was tightly gripping his stick and standing to one side of the large stone warehouse which was behind him. Along the front of the warehouse was the name SOMOZA with the part of where the Z of the stone lettering broken away. I thought of the ex-dictator, of the past contra war and of the old woman whose body was covered by the United States flag and who had resumed striking several spectators...’¹

1. Short story excerpt by the artist.







21

‘Guatemalan Couple.’ Guatemala. 1985.

B&W. 4.5" X 3". zinc plate.

This is a work based on a small painting in the rustic room of a hostel in Guatemala City which - for purely monetary reasons - also doubled up as a brothel.



24

‘Fiesta.’ El Salvador.

black on grey. zinc. 5" X 6".

In 1992 - the year of the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the Americas by Christopher Columbus - I was in El Salvador for several days with other Australians from our little El Salvador Human Rights Committee. We were with an El Salvadorian friend who was back in El Salvador for the first time. As a resistance fighter against the regime he had to leave El Salvador after escaping from a death squad torture centre. It was like being with a dead man who had come back to life visiting his memories of San Salvador street battles he had had with the regime, pointing out spots on footpaths where friends had been shot down; and the notion of a resurrection literally seemed to be the case when he joyfully met other comrades who assumed he had been ‘disappeared’. (Interestingly enough these ‘*companeros-in-arms*’ still only knew their friend by his cover name which was Raul). As a delegation we visited guerrilla camps, government people, politicians, NGOs (such as doctors working in villages for *Medicine de Frontiers*), villages that had been devastated by war & massacres etcetera and essentially like a lot of other international solidarity members at the time were making it felt that ‘international eyes’ were on El Salvador so that the peace process would continue to proceed successfully. This image is based on an outdoor fiesta the people of an El Salvadorian village had put on for us as well as to celebrate a soccer win over a neighbouring village. In the little square while we were all dancing a ‘cloud’ of fireflies descended upon us and created a typically remarkable scene

of Latino magic realism. I should acknowledge the dancing couple are directly based on an image by the famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera.



22

‘Nicaraguan Boy.’ Nicaragua.

B&W. 8" X 6". zinc plate.

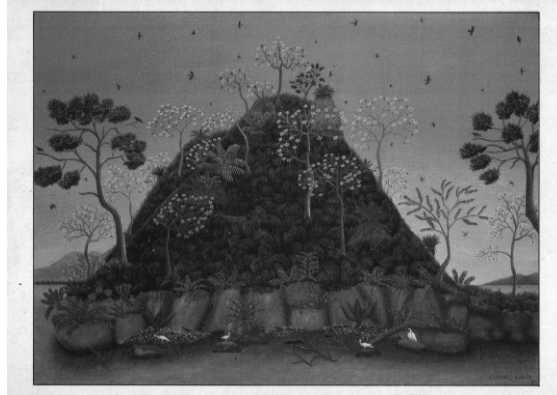
This image is based on a common scene which I saw during my second visit to Nicaragua: the beggar child selling chewing gum, cigarette lighters or other such small product. Having been to Nicaragua in 1986 when the Sandinistas were at the zenith of their power you could sense the empowerment of a whole nation which had overcome the Somoza dictatorship. Though the U.S. led contra war was taking a great toll on human life there was a sense that this bloody trial would be overcome and an everlasting peace would soon be achieved. In 1992 a peace of sorts had been achieved but it had come at the cost of a war weary population voting out the Sandinistas in order to end a conflict which had taken the lives of 10,000 innocent people. However, Nicaraguans were no longer in control of their lives having to face up once more to the usual ills of third world impoverishment. This is a melancholy portrait of a young boy struggling through his day; yet I hope - through the iconoclastic quality which I have given the work - that I have instilled him with a sense of dignity which he and his people deserve.





‘Schoolhouse. Solentiname. Lake Managua.’ *B&W. 10" X 6.5". zinc plate. Nicaragua.*

There are a community of artists that live in this region of Lake Managua known as Solentiname. However, I also consider this simple image of a schoolhouse rather remarkable in a third world region where education is typically regarded as a luxury. In my first visit to Nicaragua during the Sandinista period one could not help but appreciate the genuine efforts being made to empower the populus after so many years of dictatorship.



‘Voodoo Cross. Havana.’ B&W. 6”X7”. zinc plate. Cuba.

*‘An Afro-Cuban man asks me for the time; I give it and then end up in his place. A blackout, so candles are lit. The darkness illuminates this tall, wiry man with the flat-top haircut who speaks Creole English, taught to him by his great-aunt. Thus the family does not understand what is being said, the wife the grandparents walk about, prepare dinner. It feels like sitting on a dream stage as the host explains it is his daughter’s birthday; she is turning one, shares it with Havana’s own founding day. In this inextricable way the destiny of a city is seen in the fortunes of a child. He needs help to organise a party. The monthly ration books do not offer enough provisions. The grandmother chooses to show the voodoo dolls behind a door. Black market rum. A black market cake are stealthily organised during the week. Socks with wings for the birthday girl are bought at a U.S. dollar shop. At last in the alleyway outside the house the party proceeds with the neighbourhood children. The neighbourhood gossip asks: is the stranger an angel from heaven? A boat piñata is smashed. A shower of sweets and presents. Reggae music, dancing, voodoo rituals in the late evening, (including touching a wooden cross in a glass of water, surrounded by other glasses of water a fingertip dipped into each one then touching the cross; placing an ash cross on the father’s forehead). The smiling father with his wife beside him proudly holds up his baby birthday girl. Her winged socks a brilliant white. A Caribbean Holy Family.’ **

**Short story excerpt by the artist.*



‘The Melbourne Cup was raced on the Mexican Day of the Dead.’

B&W. 8" X 5". zinc plate.

I was inspired to do this image when I heard in Sydney on November 1 a racing commentator confidently state that the whole world's attention was on Australia's 'nation-stopping' race. I knew in Mexico that on this particular day people had another festivity foremost on their minds. The musicians with the skull heads are based on colourful cut-out designs that are familiarly used on skeleton sugar dolls that are also made for the Day of the Dead.



Three Mexican sugar skeletons at a Dance of the Dead party in the Latin American Hut at the Addison Grounds. Marrickville. Sydney.



‘Fire-eater.’ Palenque. Mexico.

black on handmade paper. 3”X4.5”.zinc plate.

On the way to going to the Palenque ruins from the station I witnessed a man putting on a fire breathing performance in the main street of the town. Naturally enough a crowd had formed around him. As the man ‘drank’ more petrol from his can to breathe out ever more fire I couldn’t help but sense a certain quiet desperation in his manner, a tragic figure unromantically compelled to perform a dangerous feat to earn some money for himself and family.

lithuania



59

‘Sleeping Beauty.’ Vilnius. Lithuania.

B&W. 6"X4". zinc plate .

This etching details the following carved wooden totem in a little out-of-the-way park in Vilnius by a wide canal.





Wooden grave heads. Nida. Lithuania.



58

‘Flute Player.’ Kaunas. Lithuania.

B&W. 5cm X 8cm. copperplate.

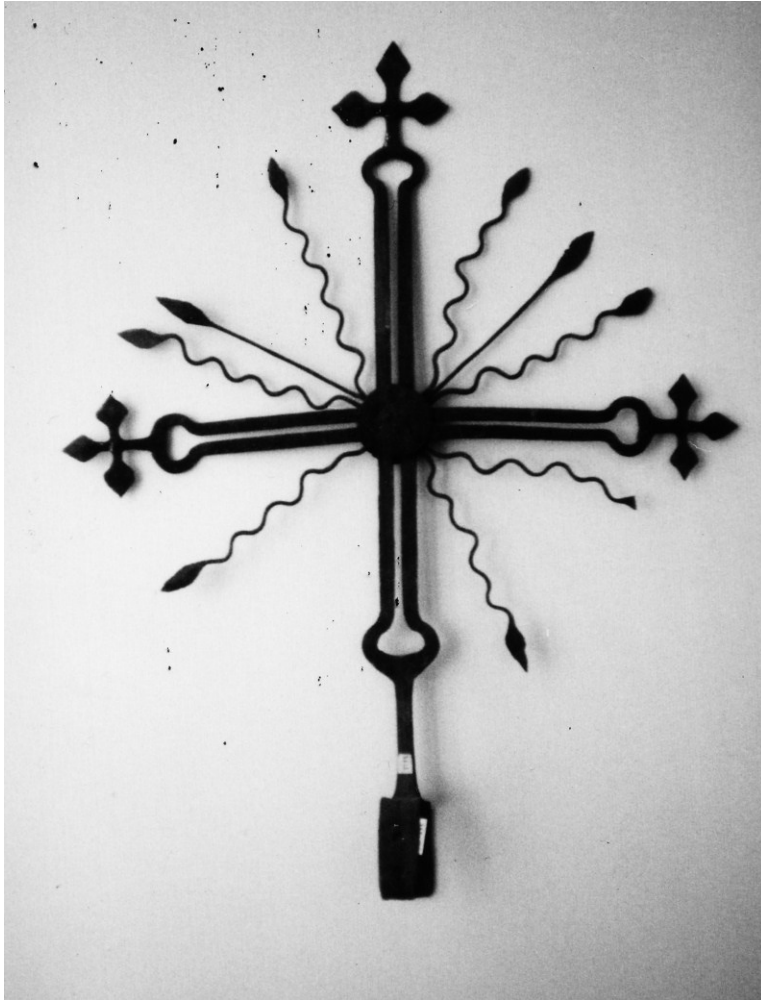
This image of a flute player is based on a statuette outside the Devil’s Museum in Kaunas. Lithuania. There is a small park dotted with statues and this one took my particular attention. Lithuania was only christianized by the Teutons roughly six hundred years ago and throughout the country there is still a strong undercurrent of paganism in its national culture. Lithuania is now a devoutly Catholic country but even on top of the crosses on the magnificent roofs of its soaring cathedrals there are metal circles with swerving sunrays jutting from them - harking back to a worship of the sun from pre-Christian days. The Devil’s Museum itself is very interesting filled only with figurines of the Devil throughout the whole world. It is not surprising to come across such a museum in a country that has a strong sense of nature worship and interest in pagan traditions. It can be said that such a mythic observation of nature is often the case throughout most of Europe but it does seem to me more so in Lithuania. After all, near a coastal town called Nida next to the Baltic Sea (a place where you can visit Thomas Mann’s holiday house) is Witch’s Hill. A forested area filled with large wood carvings of witches, devils, gods and goddesses. However, it is all rather playful. As a Lithuanian woman once cheekily commented to me: “The Devil is our friend. We can ‘trust him’. He always keeps his promises.” The flute player reflects the more mythic, sublime semblance of nature and it is an image I find especially enriching.



sculpture garden. Kaunas.



Kaunas flute player



lithuanian cross with sunrays



48

‘Winter Trees.’ Druskininkai. Lithuania.

sepia on cream paper. 6" X 4". copperplate.

This etching is based on a sketch I did of some winter trees in the Lithuanian forest (see above). Druskininkai is a town in southern Lithuania where the national icon of Lithuania - the mystical painter and composer M.K. Ciurlionis (1875 - 1911) - spent his childhood. I could feel the spiritual sense of nature which Ciurlionis himself would have experienced while walking through these beautiful woods. On a more poignant level before going to Lithuania for a short stay I had been in Krakow with Kristina - the Australian-Lithuanian friend that I was visiting - another Lithuanian friend and an Australian couple who were living in Frankfurt (and who we had met in Indonesia). We had celebrated the coming of the new 2000 millennium in this Polish city. It had been a great night enjoying the festivities in the large famous town square. However, during our few days in Krakow we also visited the nearby extermination camp of Auschwitz. Amidst the snow we walked amongst the derelict wooden huts, the guard towers and the concrete remains of the crematorium and death chambers. In the museum section were the piles of shoes and other garments of the many victims in small cubicle rooms behind large glass walls. Thus, when I drew these winter trees I was struck by the way the branches were all spread out in the manner of the many pronged Jewish candle candelabras which I had also seen; and which reminded me of the human reality of maintaining one's faith at a time of insurmountable tragedy.

