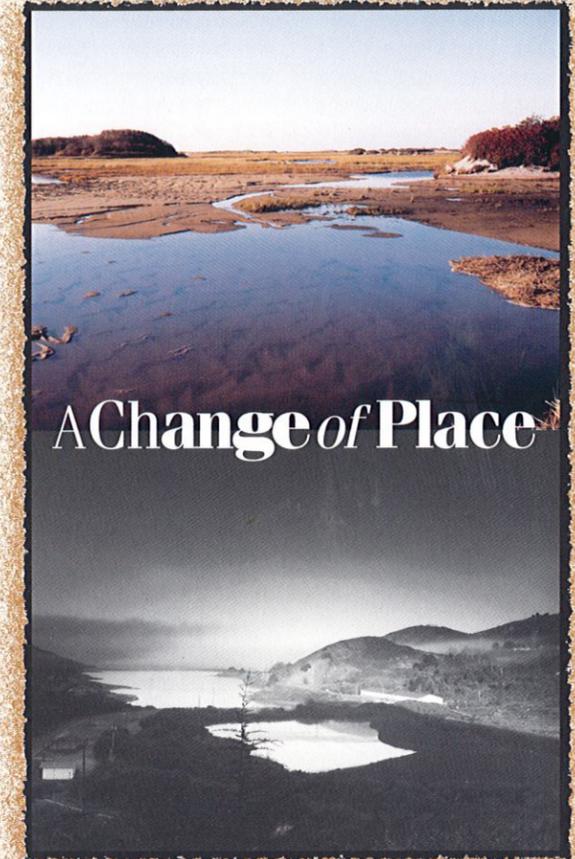




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Ohio Arts Council Presents



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A Change of Place

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Ohio Arts Council Artist Residencies  
January 29 - April 1, 1998

Curator: Holly Blake, Residency Manager, Headlands Center for the Arts

# A Change of Place

## Residencies Changed Artists' Work

The artists selected for the Riffe Gallery exhibition *A Change of Place: Ohio Arts Council Artist Residencies* are among 30 Ohio Arts Council Fellowship recipients awarded three-month residencies at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts, or Headlands Center for the Arts in Sausalito, California, between 1991 and 1997. These nine artists use a range of media and take different approaches to visual art. They were chosen primarily because they share a willingness to allow their art making to be influenced by their environments.

Residency programs help artists gain broader perspectives and a deeper involvement with their work. Temporarily moving hundreds of miles from your permanent home requires you to completely restructure your life. But these artists didn't simply move to a new location, they traveled to a place structured to be artistically challenging. Within a new and stimulating environment amazing things can happen.

A successful residency is measured less in terms of the volume of work created than in the chances the artists take. Artists whose work is in *A Change of Place* have all pushed and expanded the parameters of their work. Although there are similarities in their work, the central unifying element of *A Change of Place* is the effect of residencies on artists' work.

**Elise Mitchell Sanford** — known primarily for her photographs of older people dressed as their favorite role models — photographed the turn-of-the-century military buildings that make up Headlands. She hadn't photographed architecture in years and suddenly found the prospect very exciting. When she returned home, she put aside her new-found interest in

architecture. Two years later, it resurfaced when she decided to photograph the now-closed Civil War era mental hospital where her son had been a patient. Using a photo emulsion transfer technique, Sanford manipulated the emulsion, distorting the image and creating a sculpted surface — a radical act since most photographers pride themselves on technical seamlessness.

**Gretchen Stevens Cochran** collected starfish, crabs and kelp on the beach at Headlands and recreated them in drawings and with crocheted wire. When a freak summer storm washed large pieces of bullwhip kelp onto the beach, Cochran's residency took an unexpected turn. Fascinated by the shape of the kelp, she decided to cast one in latex, a process and a material new to her.

Last summer, when Cochran returned to Headlands to complete her casting project, the beach failed to yield large kelp. Acting on a tip from the people at the hardware store in Sausalito, Cochran drove south to Pebble Beach to find the plants. The result is *Bull Kelp*, a field of large, sensuous, sperm-like floor-to-ceiling latex ribbons. The installation is a dry-dock version of a Pacific Ocean field of kelp, activated by wind instead of ocean currents.

**Gilda Edwards** gathered materials for her work in the hills and on the beaches of Headlands. From driftwood, glass, leaves and pods, Edwards fashioned a totem series and began developing the notion of power that has informed all of her subsequent work.

After Headlands, Edwards worked to honor her relatives and ancestors by creating the large sewn basket reliquaries displayed in this exhibition. These reliquaries are made

from the type of baskets that hold funeral flowers. Edwards continued to pursue both bodies of work during her recent residency at the Fine Arts Work Center and started two painting series there as well. Those paintings and prints often are studies for future basket pieces or have used the totem figures as models.

At Provincetown **Sean Foley** felt the presence of Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell, Helen Frankenthaler and other famous painters who have worked there. Foley counterbalanced that historical weight by focusing on doodling rather than painting. He took to doodling during every spare moment, at coffeehouses, on the beach and in traffic, incorporating an occasional coffee stain into the work when necessary. Before Provincetown, his doodles were a minor diversion and Foley kept them separate from his paintings. Now, they overshadowed the paintings and demanded a presence in them as well. Since his residency, Foley continues to work in a looser, more improvisational style, blending the doodles' playfulness with more structured narrative elements in his paintings.

Improvisation also played a role in **Walter Zurko's** residency at Provincetown. His elegant minimalist wood sculptures with their plainly stained and chiseled surfaces quietly activate the space surrounding them. Unable to obtain the wood he normally uses, Zurko at first scrounged for materials around the Fine Arts Work Center, making art from such things as an old ironing board.

Surprisingly, Zurko found his richest source of supply at the local landfill. Wood he found there dictated that he keep his shapes simple, but he took pride in his new recycling ethic and continues to work

occasionally with recycled materials. One of the pieces in this show, *Apron Form*, originally was a desk top.

A few years ago in London's Heathrow Airport, **Malcolm Cochran** saw a young member of an East Indian family washing the feet of an older family member. The scene stuck in his mind and Cochran decided to reinterpret it for Headlands summer Open House, even though he had never used a performance element in his work before. Cochran used the feet of the staff, artists in residence and the Open House audience to execute his project. Although foot washing is charged with meaning, particularly in the Christian religion, Cochran's primary interest was in the gesture as a sign of obeisance. In its final form, *Washing Feet* is a video sculpture with Cochran's hands shaping the piece as they wash.

Before she went to Provincetown, **Karen Snouffer** was interested in ceremonial and sacred objects. At Provincetown, she discovered the iconographic qualities of simple kitchen utensils, furniture and toys, and began drawing and displaying them.

Snouffer's attempts to heighten our awareness of mass-produced objects ultimately dictated that she portray them in epic fashion. When she went to Headlands the following year, drawings of utensils exploded across the walls of her studio and began to stretch across the ceiling surface as well. Since her residencies, Snouffer has expanded her celebration of the mundane to include industrial materials, such as the metal racks, pliers and screen material of *Ordinary Secrets*.

**Jim Duesing's** computer journal is an animated interpretation of his adventures

in San Francisco, at Headlands and with members of the Headlands community. Shortly after his arrival Duesing began keeping a journal. As a film maker whose work is driven by dialogue, he was intrigued by the way international residents whose English was limited communicated with each other. He found that the melting pot at Headlands mirrored the diverse communities that make up San Francisco, a city where you can visit numerous ethnic and national enclaves and engage in *Cultural Tourism*.

Although Kay Willens' work has retained many of the same conceptual concerns over the years, notably, nature/culture, self/place and history/memory, the photographic skills she developed at Headlands led her to experiment with video. Her video installation *Mirage* explores Willens' long standing interest in optics as a metaphor for self-knowledge, cultural identity and memory, intangibles that shimmer at the horizon of human experience.

Ultimately, a change of place is both a gift and a necessity, something designed to break up routines and suggest new patterns. A residency is not a vacation or a temporary relocation. It's a leap of faith.

*From an essay by  
Holly Blake, Residency Manager,  
Headlands Center for the Arts,  
Curator of the Exhibition*

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The Ohio Arts Council, a state agency established in 1965, builds the state through the arts — economically, educationally and culturally — preserving the past, enhancing the present and enriching the future for all Ohioans. The Council believes the arts should be shared by the people of Ohio. The arts arise from public, individual and organizational efforts. The OAC supports and encourages those efforts.

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The Riffe Gallery, operated by the Ohio Arts Council, showcases the work of Ohio's artists and curators, and the collections of the state's museums and galleries.

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