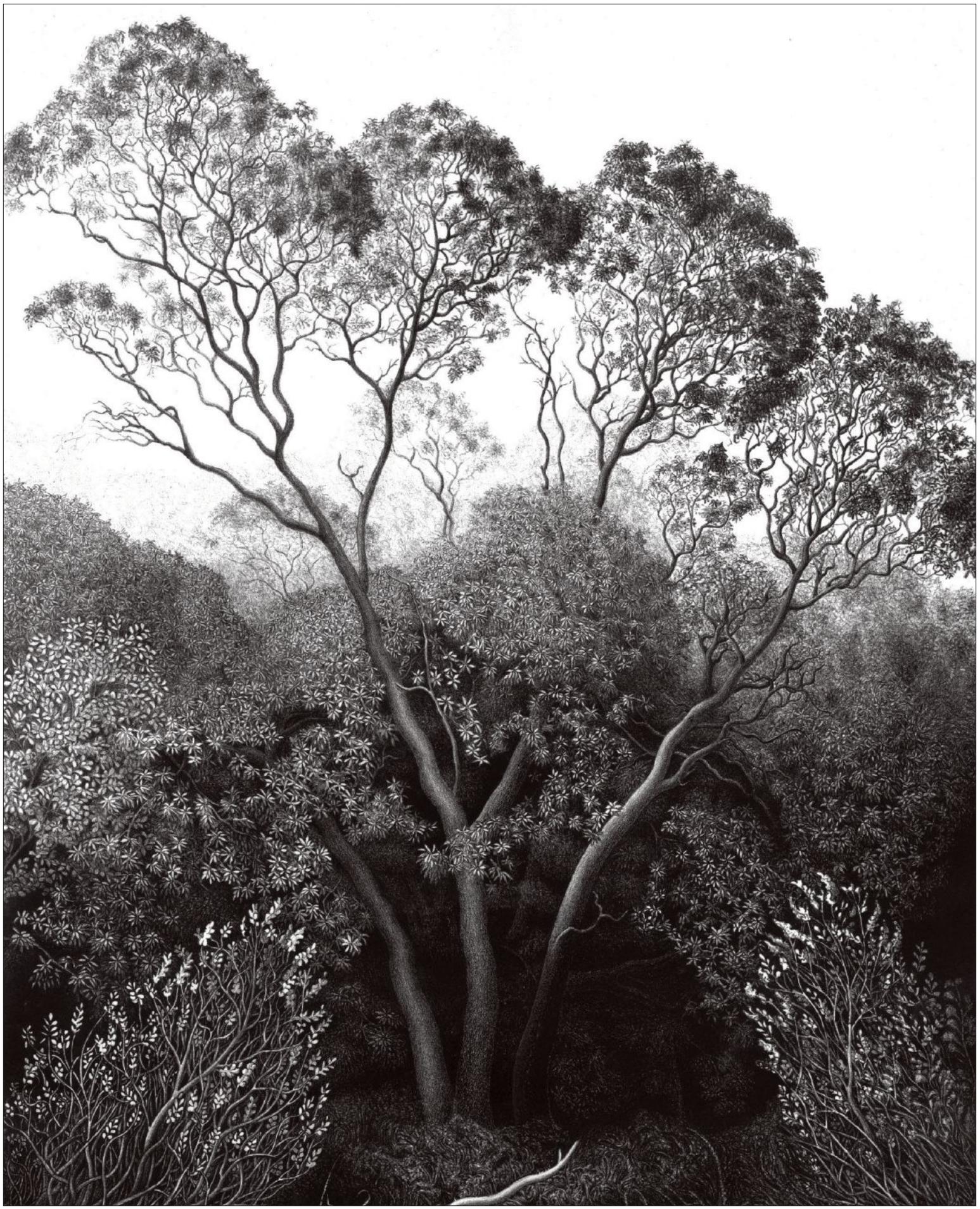


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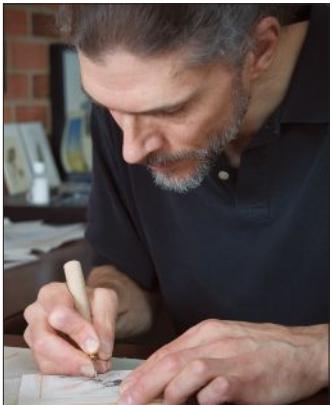




PRINTMAKER WILLIAM TUTHILL

From Science to Art

MOVING THE STUDIO OUTDOORS | BY CRAIG R. GRALLEY



William Tuthill

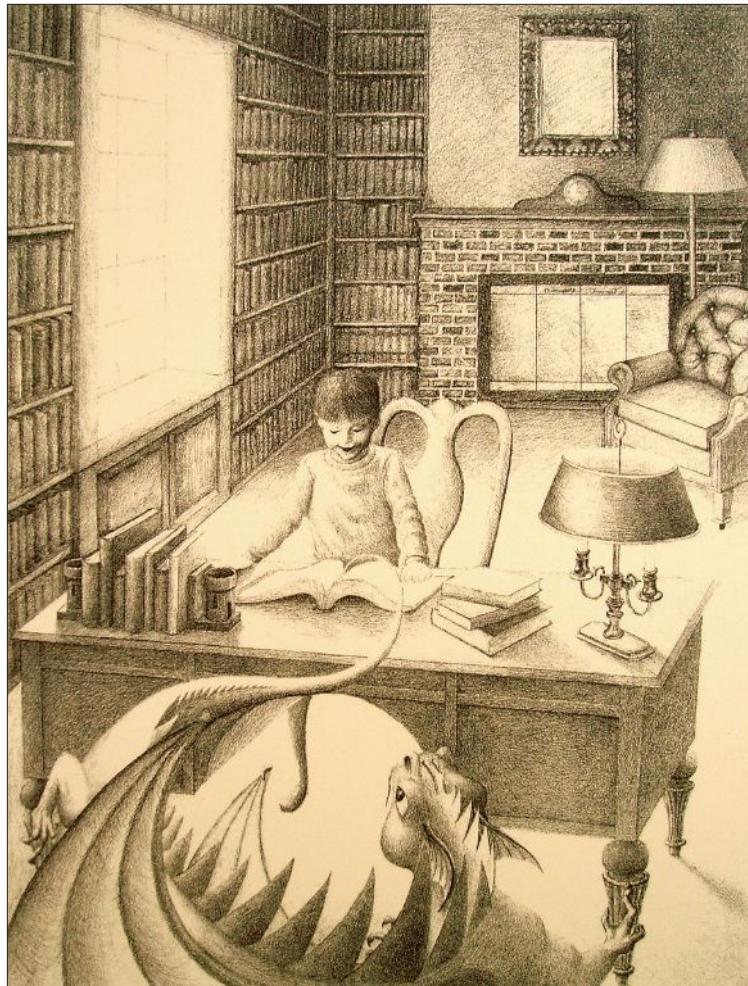
There is a place near the river, down a narrow lane, tucked back in the woods. It's the kind of place Emily Bronte could have had in mind when she wrote:

*Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.*

At the end of this peaceful path you will find the woodland studio of Great Falls artist and printmaker Will Tuthill. Will greets me at the door of his Toad Stone Studio. Inside it's a bit cramped. That's because in the middle of the room there's a large piece of cast-iron equipment with a wooden hand crank.

"It's a turn-of-the-century Fuchs and Lang lithographic press," Will says. There is an intensity in his speech and an excitement that's infectious as he begins to tell me about printmaking and how lithographs are made. It's a physically demanding and creative process that involves drawing a design on stone, etching it with acid and applying ink. Turning the crank on this antique press rolls the print through and pressure transfers the image from the stone onto a piece of clean white paper.

Will is passionate about his craft and he's perceptive, as well. He sees my attention has shifted to the studio's walls, which are adorned with examples of his work. All of his black and white lithographs are richly detailed. Most of them are scenes of nature, and one in particular has captured my attention. It's a lithograph of



Will's quick to add he has no intention of using his press to reproduce US dollars. While he's had many visitors on the Great Falls Artist Tour, he has no desire for the Treasury Department to come knocking on his studio door.

a majestic and ancient madrone tree, its multiple trunks bent upward, its spreading limbs intertwined with those of similar species. The print has powerful lines that reflect a strong emotional content. He calls this piece "Berkeley Madrone Grove," after the location in California that provided the inspiration for this creation.

The piece has a spirit and vitality that resonates with many, evidenced by the blue ribbons that dangle from the print's simple black frame. It was shown at the Corcoran Gallery of Art as part of its *Botanical Treasures of Lewis and Clark* exhibition in Washington, D.C., and received the Juror's Award at the Pacific States Biennial National Print Exhibition, in Hilo, Hawaii. Currently the print is installed in Hawaii's State Capitol in Honolulu.

Over time and through training, Will has transformed himself from a scientist who dabbled in art to a full-fledged and highly talented artist. The scientist within him was nurtured at the University of California, where he received a degree in computer science. He then continued with graduate studies in engineering at the University of Massachusetts.

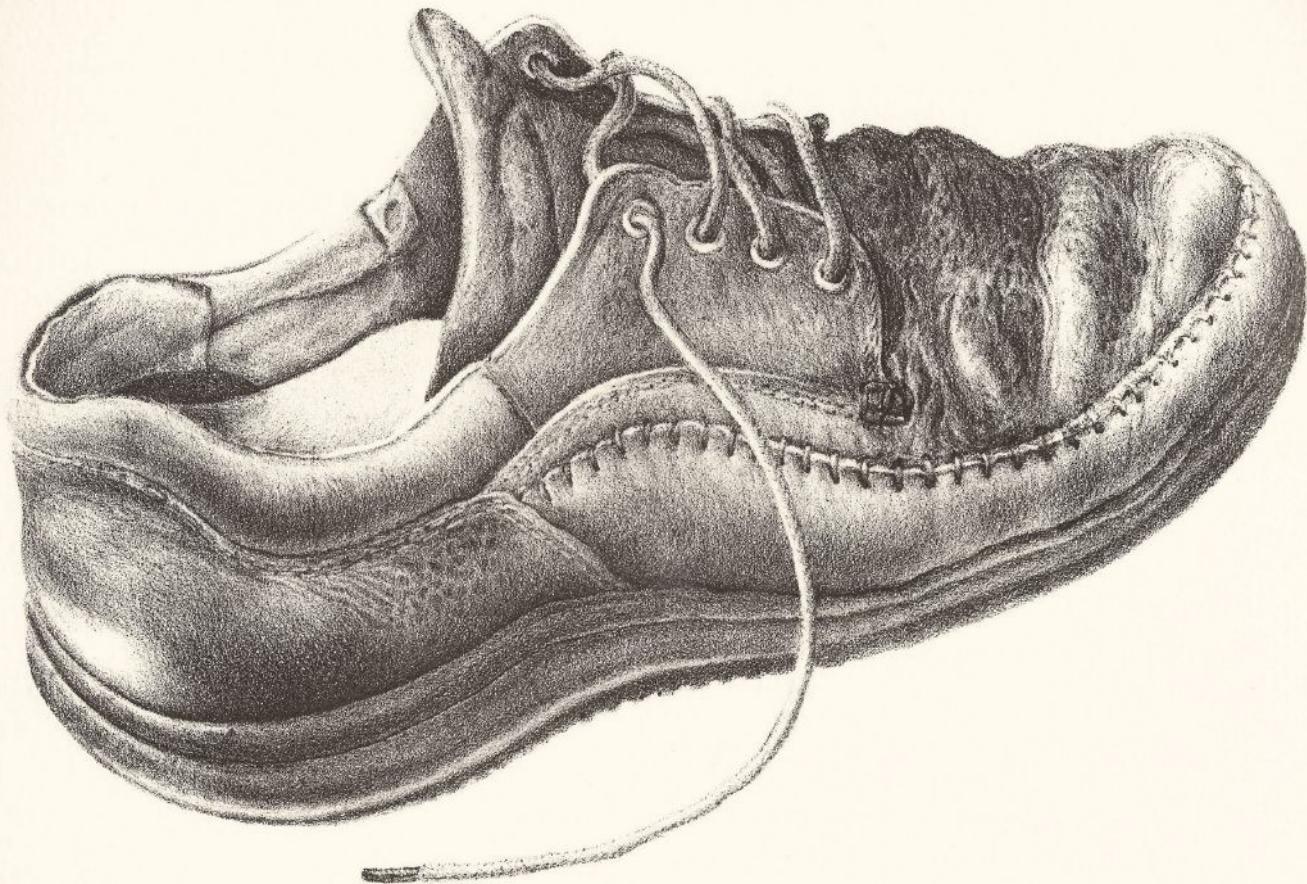
The early 1990's were a heady time in the world of technology, and Will found himself in the middle of it as a computer engineer with Sun Microsystems. "I achieved more than I ever dreamed possible," Will says. It was intellectually stimulating, but as the years passed,

he realized he needed more, something to nourish his heart and soul. So he fed these artistic sensibilities by taking a sabbatical at the Corcoran School of the Arts and Design in Washington, D.C.

Studying at the Corcoran was a turning point in the development of this artist. When he began drawing botanical scenes, he says, "something clicked." It was there that Will also found himself drawn to the work of M.C. Escher, the Dutch graphic artist who explored themes of infinity and self-reference through his prints, such as "Drawing Hands." When world-class printmaker Scip Barnhart introduced Will to lithography, his direction as an artist was set. Barnhart became Will's friend and mentor.

At first, one might think it unusual for a scientist to turn to art, but looking at the work in Toad Stone Studio one can see where both intersect. Science requires methodical planning, execution and great precision—qualities inherent in the exacting process of creating a lithographic print. But science, like art, also demands creative inspiration and it's that spark that forms the nexus for both.

His work requires an attention to detail, and Will says one of his challenges is to remain focused. His passion for printmaking and his artistic creativity aren't limited to lithography. He takes me into the next room where woodblock prints rich with color are displayed on the walls. It is a centuries-old Japanese printmaking style,



Page 36: "Berkeley Madrone Grove," lithograph, 23" x 16"

Page 37: "Little Guardian," lithograph, 4" x 6"

Above, top: "Faithful Friend," lithograph, 8" x 11"; and "Evening Preyer," Japanese woodblock print, 8 5/8" x 6 3/8"

Opposite, left: "White Dove," lithograph, 3 1/2" x 4"; and "Veracity: Volume I," photolithograph of graphite drawing, 12" x 9"



called *moku hanga* and it, too, is an exacting process that requires a separate carved block for each color added to the print. The focus of his piece, "Evening Preyer," a play on words, is a great blue heron in silhouette against an evolving evening sky.

As I make my way back to the door Will mentions that he frequently takes a morning walk down by the river to center himself and prepare for the day. I understand the importance of contemplation in his life when I pass by a hall and notice Will has produced a series of pen and ink mandalas—spiritual symbols used in eastern religions to aid meditation. I find myself captivated by his "Focus Mandala." Recently, more than a dozen of Will's pen and ink mandalas were on displayed at the Great Falls library.

As I exit Toad Stone Studio, I have one final question. "What's next?" Will tells me he's thinking about creating currency; denominations that can be appreciated for the artwork on the bills themselves or can be redeemed for his prints.

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William Tuthill
www.toadstonestudio.com