

## KEIKO AND TREE

By Howard E. Smith

The forests. Ah, the forests. Working alone the ancient artists of China and Japan sought out the rugged rocks, the rushing streams, and twisted trees. Deep in the forest, dwarfed by high cliffs and mist-covered peaks, human beings, as seen in the paintings, became "little people" going on with their work at the edges of the wilderness. In the paintings, these figures become hardly discernable compared to the grandeur of nature.

The Asian forests have always been the place of unseen forces, ghosts and spirits. There live the tree deities, which the Hindus called the apsaras. There, too, in Japanese groves stood decorated Shinto shrines and in China hidden pagodas. For the Asian artists no theme was as challenging and meaningful as their forests landscapes. The rustling bamboo leaves. The ghost-white mists lying in many strata, which constantly revealed and concealed the mystic landscapes.

Most of us today mistakenly believe that the forest landscapes paintings are defunct, forgotten. But that is not so. Thanks to Keiko Miyamori the tradition is flourishing and alive. She has inherited 3500 years of Asian art and put it to good use.

The great stump comes to mind. Those who walked under the rotunda in the hall looked up in an astonishment as they saw a thousand roots pointing down at them. They look so alive. So mythic. One could immediately feel their spirit. As most viewers looked upward they knew full well that they stood in a magical place. And, of course, the serene rotunda, so comfortable with its own existence, greatly magnified the barbaric wildness of the threatening roots. But, the juxtaposition of the calm, white walls of the rotunda and the uncanny black textures of the twisting roots made a resolution difficult. What was going on? Something ineffable slipped beyond our comprehension.

In Keiko Miyamori's work we see the tradition of the ancient Asian artists. For centuries they placed twisted pieces of wood and also strangely shaped rocks on their tables. Though they lived in simple, impeccable, bare rooms, they wanted to have something wild, untamable, enigmatic next to them. Keiko Miyamori is an inheritor of a great legacy. She will carry the great tradition forward into the next millennium.

Keiko Miyamori's solitary ventures into the Pennsylvania woods has impressed many. To really appreciate the trees she does frottages, a form of rubbing, with washi paper. Among the trees she burns wood in smoky pits to produce her own special charcoal. Her spirit, her ability as a craftsperson comes forth. Her sensitive attention to details, and desire to follow all the processes come forth to the full.

She, more than anyone I can think of, is a person of the forest.