

Journal of the Print World®

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works of fine art on paper*



ROBERT KIPNISS
CELEBRATES 55 YEARS OF PRINTMAKING
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ROBERT KIPNISS

CELEBRATING 55 YEARS OF PRINTMAKING

Article and cover image captions
contained in this article

Robert Kipniss, *A Song of Leaves* (2013), mezzotint, 19 ½ x 19 ¼ in. (plate); 24 ¾ x 22 5/8 in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by Weinstein Gallery, San Francisco, edition of 80. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

Robert Kipniss, *The Life of Trees at Night* (2013), mezzotint, 7 ¾ x 7 in. (plate); 14 ¾ x 11 ¼ in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 30. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

Robert Kipniss, (cover, lower left) *Moon at Morning* (2014), mezzotint, 4 ¼ x 4 ¼ in. (plate); 10 x 9 in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 25. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

Robert Kipniss, (cover, upper right) *Trees, a Composition* (2014), mezzotint, 9 ¼ x 11 ½ in. (plate); 14 x 15 ¾ in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 40. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

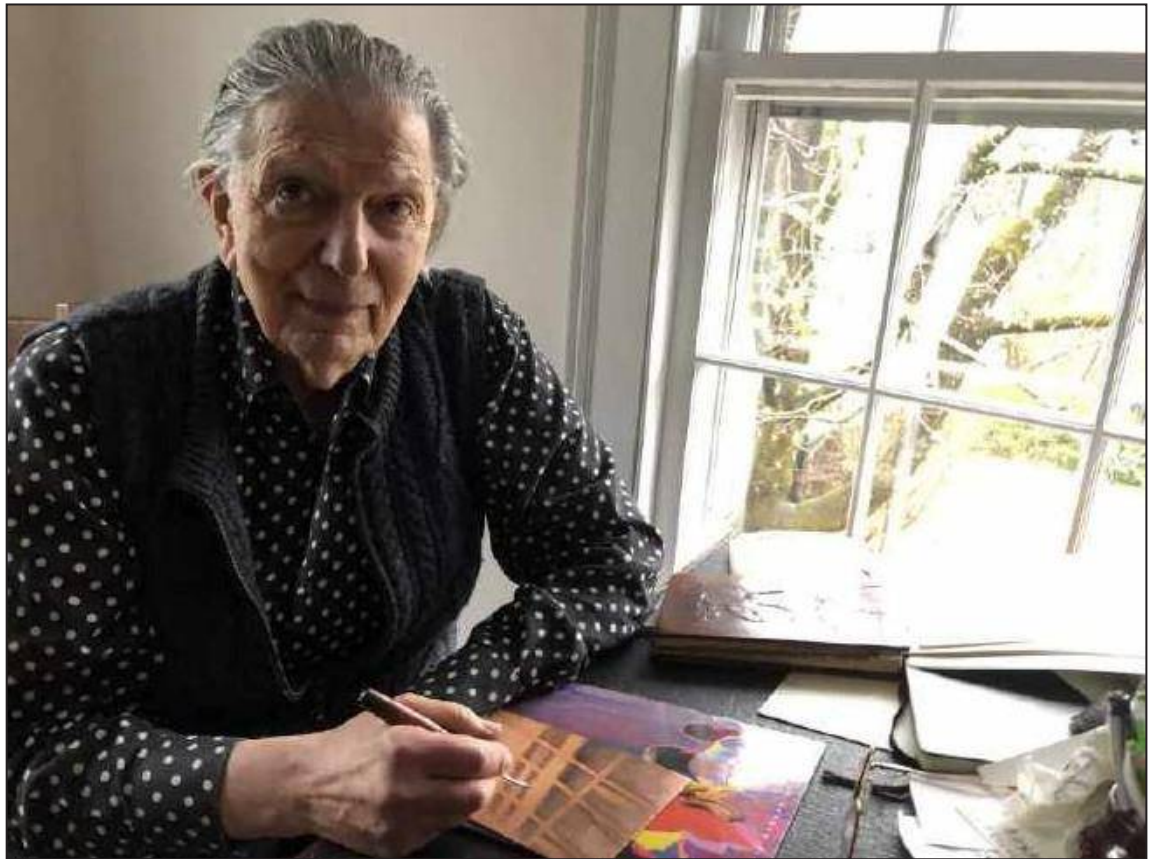
Robert Kipniss, *Hillside with Pale Tree* (2016), mezzotint, 13 7/8 x 9 ¼ in. (plate); 19 x 13 ¼ in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 20. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

Robert Kipniss, (cover, lower right) *Window With Shade, Chair, Vase & Tree* (large plate) (2018), 11 ½ x 9 ¼ in. (plate); 16 ¼ x 13 3/8 in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 18. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

Robert Kipniss, *Distances* (2018), mezzotint, 7 x 7 ¾ in. (plate); 12 ¼ x 12 in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 18. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

Robert Kipniss, *Slope With Five Trees* (2020), drypoint, 6 ¾ x 6 in. (plate); 12 ½ x 10 ¾ in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 18. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.

Robert Kipniss, (cover, upper left), *The White Star II* (2022), mezzotint with chine collé, 3 x 3 in. (plate); 8 ½ x 8 in. (sheet). Printed by Anthony Kirk Editions, published by the artist, edition of 10. © 2022 Robert Kipniss.



Robert Kipniss at work on the plate for *Three Near Trees* in his home studio, December 2020. Photo by Laurie Lisle.

by Sarah Kirk Hanley

Robert Kipniss's art, which centers the transcendent power of the natural world—particularly trees—has long spoken to the eternal theme of humankind's experience of the natural environment. He has consistently cited the restorative experience of escaping to the woods as the wellspring of his art: "When I am in these places, I find a deeper part of myself that brings me peace." In a career that now spans over seven decades, Kipniss has found endless variations in this subject through painting, drawings and printmaking, but the latter has become increasingly dominant.

At 91, Kipniss remains intensely engaged in his practice, remarking "Even after all these years I still find making art deeply fulfilling and exciting."

Since 1967, the artist has created over 700 original lithographs and intaglios. He explains, "It isn't work as much as it is an indulgence of an all-consuming pleasure drive." Printmaking remains a daily activity that grounds him and provides joy; the only changes that have come with advanced age are a reduction in the number of impressions printed, and the dimensions of the plates with which he works. Since 2017 he has worked in medium and smaller formats, 12 inches and under in any di-

rection; editions are 18 and fewer impressions, with no artist's proofs.

Kipniss's accomplishments and passion for printmaking are clear in the numerous awards he has received, solo museum exhibitions, public collections that house his work, and the sumptuous publications covering this aspect of his work, notably *Robert Kipniss: Intaglios, 1982-2004, catalogue raisonné* by Trudie A. Grace, with an essay by Thomas Piché, Jr. (Hudson Hills, 2004) and the exhibition catalogue *Seen in Solitude: Robert Kipniss Prints from the James F. White Collection* (New Orleans Museum of Art, 2006), with an insightful essay by curator Daniel Piersol. The latter is a retrospective of his prints in all techniques, with an emphasis on the mezzotints. For the dedicated collector, there is also a 1980 catalogue raisonné of the graphics by Karl Lunde, primarily covering early lithographs.

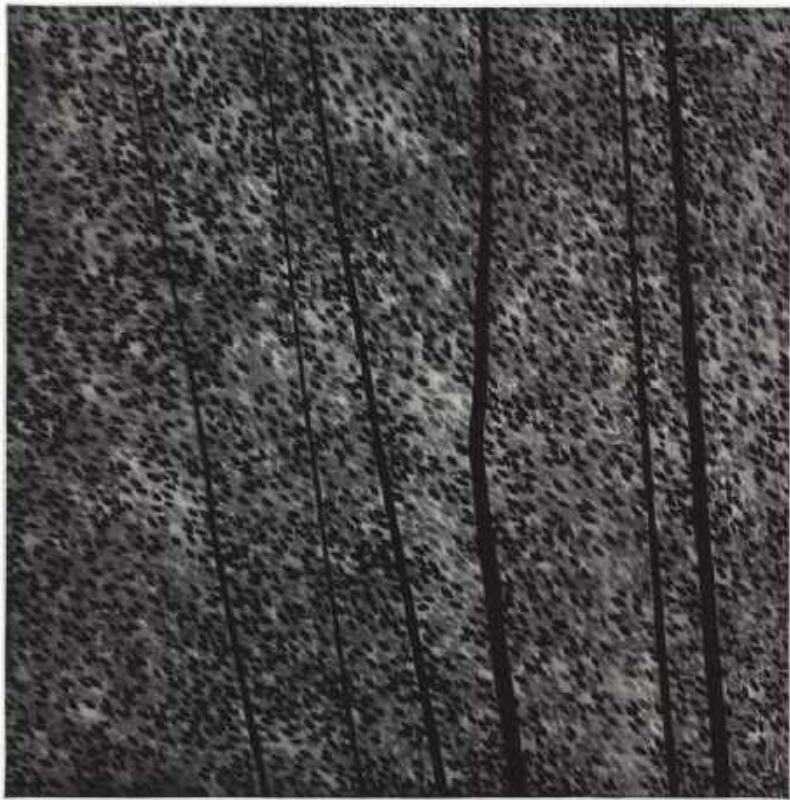
Since 2009, the last year in which his prints were discussed in these pages, Kipniss has created 132 editions, with another in progress at the time of writing. The landscape surrounding his early-19th-century home in northwestern Connecticut, with its densely wooded, rolling foothills accentuated with historic farms, has been a primary

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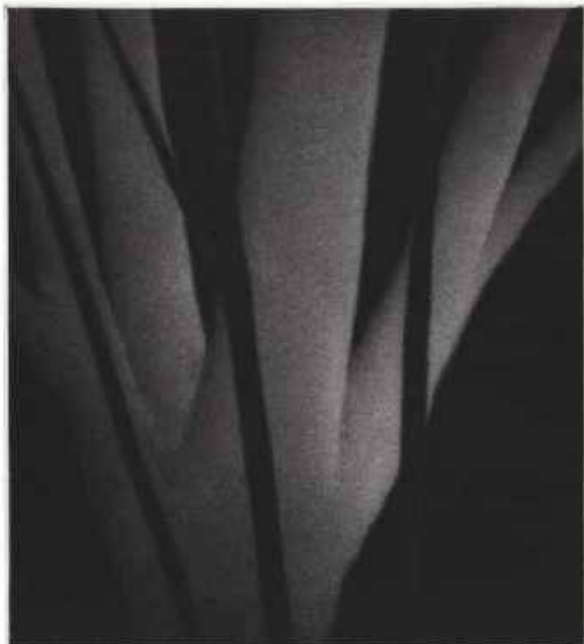
inspiration. Kipniss’s signature subjects and style remain central: in subtle chiaroscuro, he presents dramatic, dream-like images depicting features of the natural environment, with occasional cameos of dwellings or other evidence of human occupation as seen from both the exterior and interior.

Mezzotint is the technique for which he is renowned, and it remains his preference for its ability to achieve dense shadows. However, he has also engaged in drypoint “when I wanted to employ larger open areas in the composition, and when I sought to have the imagery seem to emerge from the air.”

Kipniss has worked exclusively with master printer Anthony Kirk since 2003. The artist praises Kirk, saying “it was immediately apparent that he was excellent” when they began working together. In the first decade of their collaboration, they worked together at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking (CCP) in Norwalk, Connecticut, where Kirk was employed. In 2013, Kirk established his own press, Anthony Kirk Editions, in North Salem, New York, where they continued their partnership.



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Kipniss’s landscapes and still lifes show that our experience of nature, whether outdoors or in, offers the potential for a rich internal transformation. To know Kipniss’s art is to be transfixed and moved by the power and beauty of the natural world.



Robert Kipniss, Slope With Five Trees (2020), drypoint, 6 ¾ x 6 in. (plate); 12 ½ x 10 ¾ in. (sheet).

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