



Shortly after I arrived at the University of Michigan, I was invited to a social event that allowed me to meet some of my colleagues and their spouses. I especially enjoyed talking to a painter and his wife, a psychiatric social worker. I was determined to get to know them and immediately invited them and their children to dinner. As a single parent/artist/professor, I was always behind: on housecleaning and grocery shopping, course preparation, exhibition planning, grant writing, studio time. All too often, I failed to reserve time for Julia, time we needed for relaxing and playing together. Only the fact that life in a new town was lonely would have induced me to

engage in hostesslike activities for an entire precious weekend day. By that evening, though, I felt prepared and eagerly awaited my company. I was dumbfounded when I answered the door and saw one wife, two children, no colleague. "Oh," my colleague's wife quickly explained, "he needed some time in the studio and wanted me to take off with the kids and leave him to work. So here we are." Of course I wanted to know them both and would have been happy if she as well as he had become my friend, but instead (with his wife's cooperation) my colleague had erased our professional equality and made my invitation serve his needs. I was hurt, and I was furious.

When critics reviewed this work, they sometimes suggested the images had something to do with a woman trapped in a kitchen, longing for release. I began the series thinking I was responding to the many joking questions people asked about my response, as a transplant from California, to Michigan weather. But, ultimately, if the set of images succeeds, it's because it suggests, I think, something more complex about the tensions and pulls of the world inside and the world outside "home"—which included my university responsibilities.

Above: *Countertop Landscapes and Skylines* series, silver print with water-soluble wax pastel, all 13 3/8 inches × 14 inches, 1979

Middle: *Countertop Moonscape*; collection of Amon Burton, Jr., and Linda Burton

Bottom: *Countertop Barns*; collection of Suzanne Hanson

Top: *Countertop Industry*; collection of Abby Stewart and David Winter

Opposite: *Countertop Snowing*, water-soluble wax pastel and gouache, 6 1/2 inches × 6 1/4 inches, 1980

