

PART ONE

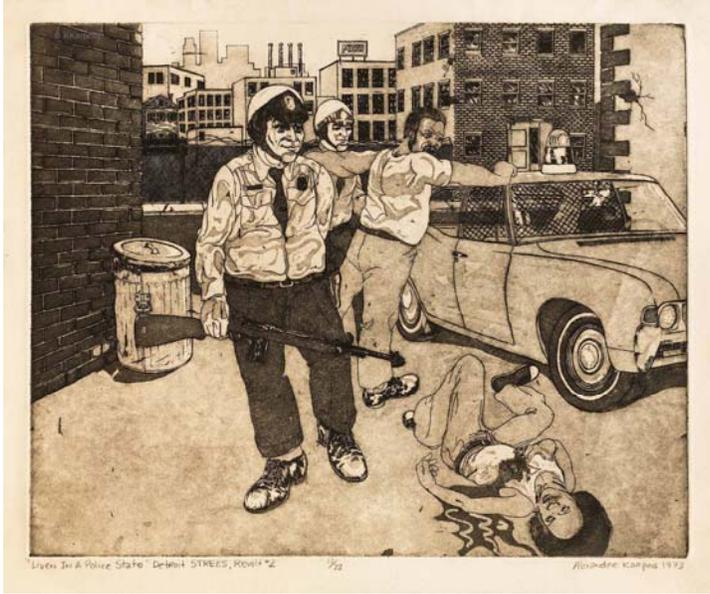
A Social Realist in America (prints 1973-1990) - Aleksandrs spent two decades (1971 to 1990) in the U.S.A. studying art while preparing to emigrate to Latvia. He completed a Bachelors of Fine Arts with high honors at the University of Minnesota in 1990 followed by a Masters of Fine Arts in Latvia in 1993. After graduating from the Latvian Art Academy, he taught printmaking at an art college in Rēzekne, Latvia where he inspired his students to pursue social realism. In his master's thesis he wrote: "In my early development as a socially conscious artist I was moved to do images of social injustice in America... Behind the glitter and mass media controlled consumer society there exists an ugly side of American society, which begs to be brought to the fore. I dedicated my life and talent to the cause of social justice in America. Not merely satisfied with some kind of social reform, I used my talent as a weapon for revolution. My images went straight for the throat and attacked evil in both empires [USA and USSR] with all my passion and soul. My prints are meant to shock the viewer; there is no symbolism or metaphor to obscure my message. Realistically rendered, these images of social injustice are very real and must be presented as such in all their ugliness. I want my images to be understood for what they are, a visual act of dissent."



Aleksandrs Karpovs made a number of self-portraits throughout his career as an artist. The first of these, "**Self portrait**" (1973) 18x33, contains three etchings as a single print. Left: He depicts himself orphaned at age 13, living among the desperately poor in America. Center: Aleksandrs on a sailboat. Right: Aleksandrs as a traveling artist "hitchhiking" across the USA.

A Meeting of two old Friends (1973) is another self-portrait from this period.



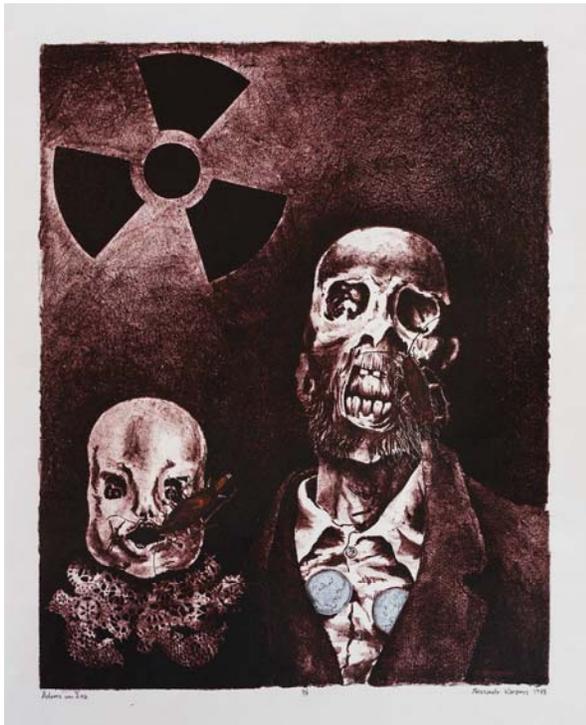


The 1973 etching with aquatint “ **'Liven' in a Police State**” (1973) 30x38 shows two policemen who had just gunned down a black boy walking home from the cinema with his father. Aleksandrs wrote in 1993, “The event shown here is only one example of the brutality the predominantly “white” police were capable of during the suppression of Afro-American dissent. This is an actual event that took place in Detroit in 1972... of the special police units that began to be formed in order to suppress violence in inner cities throughout America. The ultimate in institutionalized racism in America”.

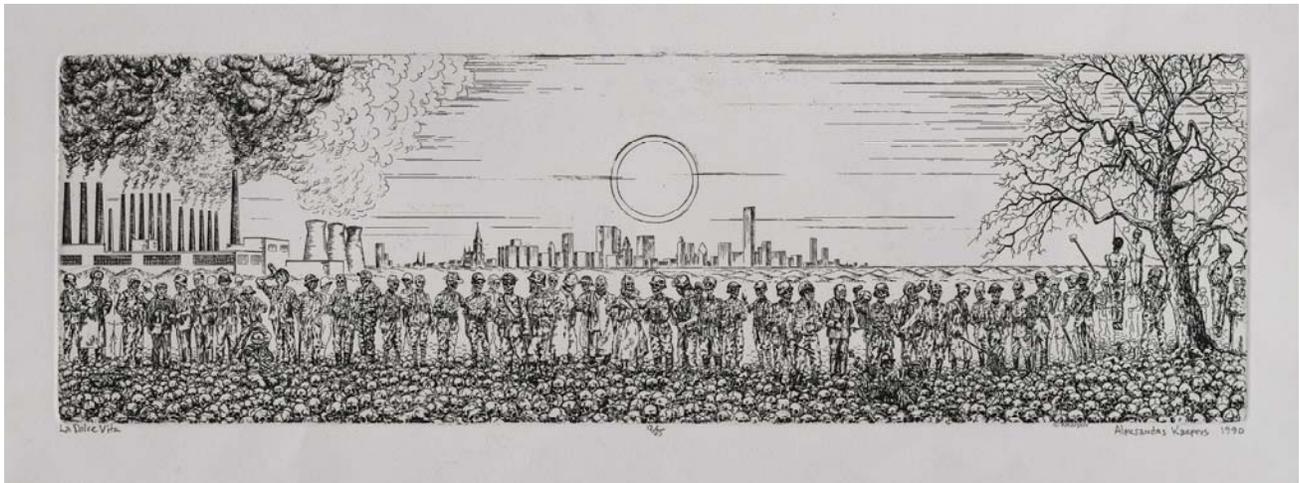
You Can't Pull Out All The Weeds (1989) is among his last works in the United States. On the wall is a portrait of Che Guevara. The quote in Spanish states “ I envy you because you are in the United States. You are in the heart of the beast”. Several of these prints were splashed with the blood of black inner city gunshot victims brought into the Minneapolis County General hospital where Aleksandrs was working.



Another example of Aleksandrs' later work in America is the lithograph “**Country 'Liven', USA**” (1989) 59x73. In this print, a farmer in the mid-western U.S. has already killed a bank agent and prepares to end his own life. Suicides among American farmers were common during the 1980s, often associated with a foreclosure, as the banks repossessed property.



“My personal involvement in the Greenpeace movement in America led to one of the most generalized political images I have produced, **“Adam and Eve”**, (1989) 44 x56, wrote Aleksandrs in 1993. “...if the countries of the world do not eliminate nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants and the nuclear waste they produce, humankind will no longer inhabit this planet. The image is purely meant to shock the viewer into this realization....One is a man and the other is an infant. Crawling on their faces are two large cockroaches, the one with an egg sack is ‘Eve’ and the other one is ‘Adam.’... On the man’s chest are two coins: one a Soviet (Russian) ruble with Lenin’s bust, the other an American Kennedy half-dollar. The coins symbolize the two greatest culprit’s who produce the most nuclear waste and have the largest nuclear arsenals in the world.”



“La Dolce Vita” (1989) is the last in an American context. This print combines the artist’s distaste for crimes against nature and humanity. Indeed, in the “Sweet Life” we see the perpetrators of murder and crimes against humanity from various countries, including the U.S., celebrating atop their harvest of human skulls or ‘killing fields’. Under a hanging tree, soldiers and police of every nation are shown as brothers in arms in their victory over life. Behind them, our civilization is destroying the life of the planet itself with pollution and fallout from the nuclear power plants at Three Mile Island, in the U.S.. **“La Dolce Vita,”** and **“Adam and Eve”** are prescient, given nuclear proliferation and disasters such Chernobyl and Fukushima, which dwarf Three Mile Island. Add global-warming, and the smokestacks fueling the “Sweet Life” become more ominous. Aleksandrs’ message was indeed ahead of his time.