

COLBY SEMPEK

Elephants, 2006
Archival pigment print, 16 x 24 in



COURTESY: THE ARTIST

KARI WERGELAND

Scene Change

*The bones of the woolly mammoth
discovered near Trona Pinnacles—
cones, ridges, towers, and tombstones—
may mean humans once hunted in these parts
long before a silver Star Trek backdrop
came down behind this cathedral city.*

When a wide black cloth floated over six million people,
only battery-operated devices sufficed.
The World Wide Web,
and all of its useful information,
vanished—bits and bytes—
along with the lights.

*Now children come to walk on the moon.
Humans dressed as apes have frolicked
amongst the tufa for the big lens.
Yet the desert tortoise has meandered here the longest,
having left its tracks in the dry earth
for roughly three million years.*

“They’re selling battery-operated radios
and flashlights at the Radio Shack...”
Fortunately, I still had mine,
so I heard this announcement,
even though half the stations
couldn’t broadcast into rush hour.

*Fresh water still bubbles into saltiness
to feed the spires and knobs
inching up through Mono Lake.
Interpretive signs on tufa towers explain why.
And one to two million birds arrive annually
to feast on brine shrimp.*

Kari Wergeland has received recent acceptances from *Kansas City Voices*, *New Millennium Writings*, and *Wisconsin Review*. She holds an MFA in creative writing with an emphasis in poetry from Pacific University. For eleven years, she wrote a monthly children’s book review column for the *Seattle Times*. She currently works as a librarian for Cuyamaca College in El Cajon, California, and lives part time on the Oregon Coast.