



Detail of *Ojigi*, a life-size, cast-glass sculpture of a kimono by Karen LaMonte, on view through November at the New Mexico Museum of Art, in Santa Fe.

those boys as though they were my own. But it was Dr. Giordano's elderly mother, Lucia, whom we came to care for the most. She followed us from one room to the next as we dusted and mopped and not once did she ever stop talking. *Molto bene. Perfetto! Basta così.* And for many years after her death her memories of the old country would continue to linger with us as though they were our own: the mozzarella, the pomodori, the Lago di Como, the piazza in the center of town where she went shopping with her sisters every day. *Italia, Italia, how I long to see it one last time.*

It was their women who taught us the things we most needed to know. How to light a stove. How to make a bed. How to answer a door. How to shake a hand. How to operate a faucet, which many of us had never seen in our lives. How to dial a telephone. How to sound cheerful on a telephone even when you were angry or sad. How to fry an egg. How to peel a potato. How to set a table. How to prepare a five-course dinner in six hours for a party of twelve. How to light a cigarette. How to curl your hair so it looked just like Mary Pickford's. How to wash a lipstick stain out of your husband's favorite white shirt even when that lipstick stain was not yours. How to talk to a

husband. How to argue with a husband. How to deceive a husband. How to keep a husband from wandering too far from your side. *Don't ask him where he's been or what time he'll be coming home and make sure he is happy in bed.*

When they were unhappy and had no one to talk to they told us their deep, darkest secrets. *Everything I told him was a lie.* When their husbands went away on business they asked us to sleep with them in their bedrooms in case they got lonely. When they fell in love with a man who was not their husband we kept an eye on their children while they went out to meet that man in the middle of the day. We brushed invisible specks of lint from their blouses, retied scarves, adjusted stray locks of hair so they hung just so. "You look beautiful," we said to them, and then we sent them on their way. And when their husbands came home in the evening at the usual hour we pretended not to know a thing.

Some of them dismissed us without any warning and we had no idea what we'd done wrong. "You were too pretty," our husbands would tell us, even though we found it hard to believe this was true. Some of us were so inept we knew we