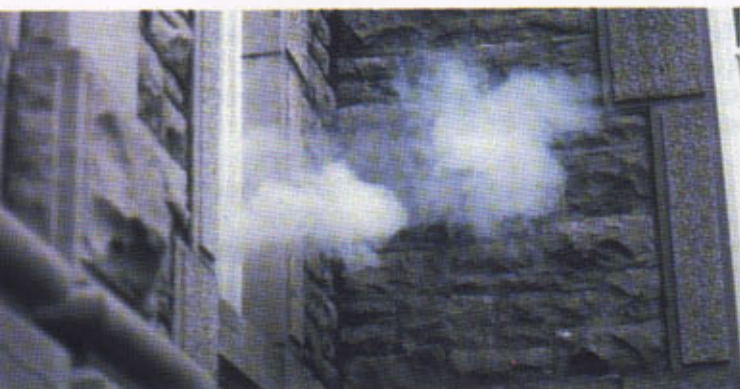


# SLIPPING IN AND AWAY

GERMAINE KOH



## 1.

Often, the best thing is to disappear. Pass undetected. There are many ways to do this. You can be smaller, or quieter, or more transparent, than anyone expects. Or you could be everywhere, blending into the world. You could be so fleet that they wonder if you ever were there. You could be a puff of smoke.

You can walk away. Make a point of it. Make a show of it, even. They will wonder where you're going. They will want to come along.



## 2.

Sometimes it's good to stay around, too.

It might seem that you're not doing much. You might just sit and watch. You might do the same thing over and over and over again, or move things from one place to another, or take them apart and put them back almost exactly as they were. People will think you're innocent, and they'll leave you to your own devices. Let them underestimate you.

You can bide your time. Go slow. Yield to traffic.





### 3.

Observe the lay of the land; take stock of your surroundings. Every element could be significant. It helps to spread out, disperse. Maintain as many points of contact as possible. The more ordinary your means, the more ground you can cover.

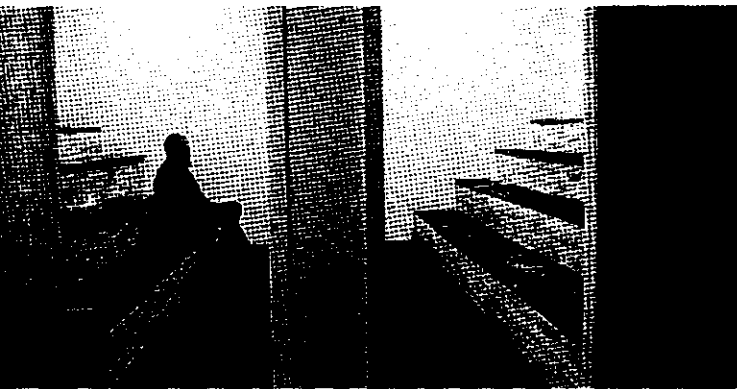
Look around you. You will find that many common objects can be used as tools. Examine these carefully. They can tell you much about their habitats and the people who made them. You can also enlist the local populace directly; they will know the best way.



### 4.

Listen to local stories. Try to speak the native dialect. Adapt yourself to the prevailing conditions and customs.

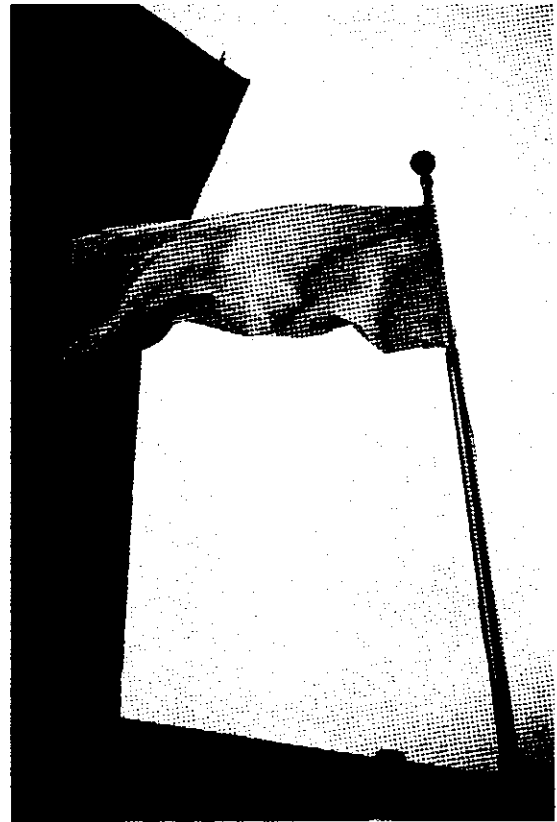
You can make do with very little.



## 5.

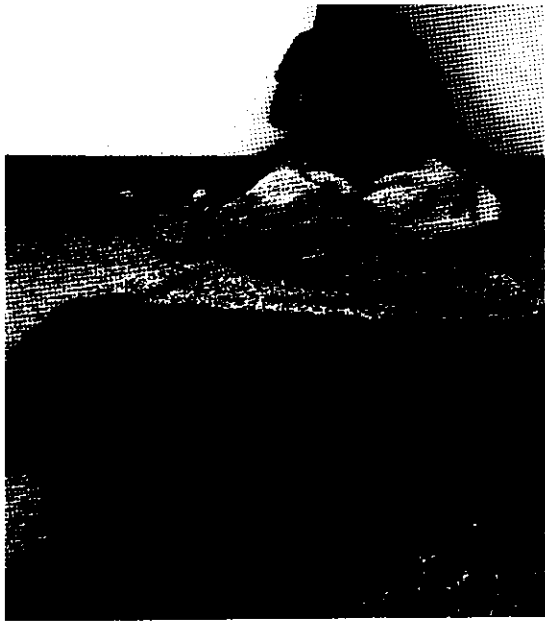
In times of crisis, play dead. Move so slowly as to seem inert. Be indistinguishable from your surroundings. Give up your identity; be anonymous. Working unnoticed, you can make modest changes that will take hold. Though almost invisible, your actions will have an effect, in time. It is likely that you will be forgotten.

Be quiet. Be weak. Turn the other cheek. Sometimes surrender is the best way to slip in.



## 6.

Other times, you have to hold your ground. When faced with an unacceptable situation, you may need to provide some resistance. Learn to give with the punch, to fall and roll. Learn how to be solid and stubborn. Developing a certain stupidity helps you face the world openly. You're not trying to escape, so you have to like the impact.



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## 7.

At times, it helps to play by the rules. Often the existing procedures actually let you do what you want.

Still, you don't want to lie. There's no point in pretense and no honour in disguise. You shouldn't do anything you can't believe. You can stay silent, though. You can also change the topic. You can waver, be ambiguous, equivocate. Keep something in reserve. Let them work it out on their own.

## 8.

Sometimes you can work on forgetting. People worry about forgetting. They don't like to feel that things are slipping away. That gets their attention. It also helps to mention things already lost. Sometimes that leads them to think about those that are still here.

Pay attention. Take care. Always be prepared.

Let them wonder.

### Figures:

1. *Prayers*, 1999, computer interface capturing office activity and retransmitting as Morse-encoded smoke signals. Photo: G. Koh
2. *Watch*, 2000, week-long performance for storefront display window. Photo: P. Klygo
3. *Poll*, 1999, metal fence post planted in well-worn walking path. Photo: G. Koh
4. *Thanksgiving*, 1999, set of coupons distributed in *The Globe and Mail*. Photo: G. Koh
5. *Forum*, 2000, site-specific installation using abandoned books. Photo: G. Koh
6. *Surrender*, 1999, white flag. Photo: G. Koh
7. *Knitwork*, ongoing since 1992, unravelled used garments with documentation. Photo: D. Clearwater
8. *Sightings*, 1992-1998, series of offset postcards printed from snapshots found in public places, editions of 2500. Photo: G. Koh