ELLEN CAREY

Press Pack

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ELLEN CAREY

BORN 1952, New York City, NY

EDUCATION

1978 MFA, State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY

1975 BFA, Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2018 Solo Exhibition, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX (forthcoming)

2017 *Dings & Shadows*, M+B, Los Angeles, CA

2015 *Polaroid 20 x 24 Self-Portraits,* M+B, Los Angeles, CA

2014 *Let There Be Light: The Black Swans of Ellen Carey,* Akus Gallery, Eastern Connective State, Willimantic, CT

2009 *Struck by Light: Ellen Carey (1992-2009),* Saint Joseph University Art Gallery, West Hartford, CT

2004 *Photography Degree Zero/Matrix #153,* Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT (brochure)

2002 *Mourning Wall/Birthday Portrait,* Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago, IL (brochure)
Photography Degree Zero: New/Now, New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT

2001 *Mourning Wall,* Pamela Auchincloss Project Space, NY, NY

2000 *Mourning Wall/Family Portrait/Birthday Portrait,* Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT

1997 *Family Portrait/ Birthday Portrait,* Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH

1992 *Back to the Future: The Work of Ellen Carey,* The National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC (catalogue)

1987 *Ellen Carey: Survey 1978-1986,* International Center for Photography, NY, NY

1986 *Self-Portraits in Polaroid 20 X 24,* Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT

1985 Concord Gallery, New York, NY

1984 Texas Gallery, New York, NY
1983 Memorial Union Art Gallery, University of California, Davis, CA

1982 University Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM

1981 *Painted Photograph: Figures & Forms,* Concord Gallery, New York, NY

1978 *Painted Self-Portraits,* HallWalls, Buffalo, NY

1976 *Ellen Carey & Cindy Sherman: Photo Bus Show,* CEPA Gallery, Niagara Frontier Transit System, Buffalo, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2019 *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology,* MIT Museum, Cambridge, MA (forthcoming)

2017 *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology,* WestLicht Museum for Photography, Vienna (forthcoming)
re:collection, Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, IL
The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, TX

2016 *Changed*, Ricco Maresca Gallery, New York, NY
Next Wave Art, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, NY
Fresh: KCAI Alumni, The Epsten Gallery, Kansas City Art Institute, KS
Photography is Magic, Aperture Gallery, New York, NY
big nothing, curated by Richard Caldicott, Sous Les Etoiles, New York, NY
Stopping Down, two-person show with Judy Coleman, Be-hold, Yonkers, NY
Chemistry: Explorations in Abstract Photography, Garrison Art Center, Garrison, NY
Collected, Pier 24 Photography, San Francisco, CA
The Unbearable Lightness - The 1980s, Photography, Film, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
Matter of Memory: Photography as Object in the Digital Age, George Eastman Museum (GEM), Rochester, NY

2015 *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology,* Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cambridge, MA
Photography Sees the Surface, curated by Aspen Mays, Higher Pictures, New York, NY
Part Picture, curated by Chris Wiley, Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto, Canada

2014 *Altarations: Built, Blended, Processed,* Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL

(Catalogue)
After Life, Luckman Gallery/Fine Arts Center, California State University/Los Angeles

2013-2014 *The Polaroid Years: instant Photography and Experimentation,* Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY; Norton Museum, Palm Beach, FL; curator Mary-Kay Lombino; book w/illustrations/tour/reviews
A Democracy of Images: Photographs from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; brochure with illustrations; SAAM curator: Merry Foresta

2009-2014 *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography,* Aperture Foundation, NY

2012 *Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avant-Garde in the 1970s*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; catalogue w/illustrations/reviews; AKAG curator Heather Pesanti
Focus: New Photography Acquisitions, New Britain Museum of American Art, CT

2011 *Process(ing),* Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, Paris, FR
The Minimalist Aesthetic, The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT
Recollection: Thirty Years of Photography at The New York Public Library, New York, NY
2009 *Color Field Photography,* The Princeton Arts Council, Princeton, NJ (brochure)

2006 *femme brut (e),* Lyman Allyn Art Museum, New London, CT (catalogue)
The Persistence of Geometry, Cleveland Museum of Art, OH (catalogue, cover ill)
Shifting Terrains, Wadsworth Atheneum Musem of Art, Hartford, CT (brochure)

2003 *This is Not a Photograph,* DePaul University (Chicago); UNorth Texas (Denton); Bowling Green University (OH); UC La Jolla Art Gallery (CA); Bayle Art Museum, Charlottesville (VA); College Art Gallery, Northfield, MN (catalogue); Pamela Auchincloss Projects, NY

2002 *American Visions: Highlights from the Photography Collection*, Whitney Museum, NY (book)

2000 *American Perspectives: Photographs from The Polaroid Collection,* Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of photography, Tokyo, Japan (book)

1997 *Eye of the Beholder: The Avon Collection*, International Center for Photography, NY, NY

1996 *From Transition to Abstraction,* Center for Photography at Woodstock, NY

1995 *Moholy-Nagy and Present Company,* Museum at The Chicago Art Institute, Chicago, IL
Abstract Photographs, Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD

1994 *Issues and Identities: Recent Acquisitions in Contemporary Photography*, Museum of the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Life Lessons, The Museum at the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL (brochure)

1994-1993 *Fiction of the Self,* curated by Michael Coblyn and Trevor Richardson, Weatherspoon

Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC; Herter Art Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA; Palazzo de Exhibitions, Rome, Italy; Museum of Modern Art, Nice, France (catalogue/tour 1993 – 1994)

1993-1991 *Departures Photography 1923–1990,* Independent Curators Inc. (ICI) by Edmund Yankov/Andy Grundberg, catalogue/tour: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA; Denver Museum of Art, CO; Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, NE; Pittsburgh Center for the Arts, Pittsburgh, PA (1991–1993)

1991 *Mixing the Medium: Beyond Silver Photography,* Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (brochure)
The Ruttenberg Collection, Museum of the Art Institute of Chicago, IL

1990 *Selections 5,* Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France (catalogue)

1989 *Fotografie, Wissenschaft und neue Technologien,* Kunstmuseum, Dusseldorf, GR (catalogue)
The Photography of Invention: American Pictures of the 1980's, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC (tour / book)

1988 *Appropriation and Syntax: Uses of Photography in Contemporary Art,* Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
Complexity and Contradictions, Zilka Art Gallery, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT
New Surrealism, The Catskill Center for Photography, Woodstock, NY (catalogue)

1987 *Poetic Injury: The Surrealist legacy in Postmodern Photography,* Alternative Museum, NY
Portrayals, International Center of Photography Midtown, NY, NY (catalogue)
Spirals of Artificiality, Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY (catalogue)

1986 *Modern Art at Harvard*, Sackler Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
P, 303 Gallery, NYC
Self Portrait/Photography (1840–1985), National Portrait Gallery, London UK (catalogue)

1985 *KCAI Centennial,* The Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, MO

1984 *HallWalls/Ten Years,* Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (catalogue)
The Heroic Figure, 17th Saõ Paulo Biennial, Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (SA & NA tour/catalogue); curated by Linda Cathcart

1983 *Contemporary Self-Portraiture in Photography,* MIT Hayden Art Gallery, Cambridge, MA
Three Dimensional Photographs, Castelli Graphics, New York, NY
Pace/MacGill, NY, NY

1982 *Altered States,* University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL
Contemporary Photography as Phantasy, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA (tour/catalogue)

Photo Start, The Bronx Museum, Bronx, NY (catalogue)
Some Contemporary Portraits, The Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX

1981 *Carey, Dwyer, Simmons, Skoglund,* Texas Gallery, Houston, TX
The Markers, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA (catalogue)
Photo, Metro Pictures, NYC, NY
Points of Departure, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, NYC, NY
Contemporary Photography, Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

1980 *HallWalls/Five Years,* The New Museum, NYC, NY (catalogue)
The Hoffer Memorial Collection, Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY

1979 *Altered photographs,* P.S.1/Center for Urban Resources, Long Island, City, NY
Ellen Carey, Larry Williams, Marcia Resnick, Chicago Center for Contemporary Photography, IL

1977 *In Western New York,* Albright-Knox Gallery (AKAG), Buffalo, NY (catalogue)
Where N/ When, HallWalls, Buffalo, NY
1976 *Images of Women,* Portland Museum of Art, Portland, ME
Recent Portraiture, Renaissance Society of University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (brochure)

1975 *Colorado National,* University of Colorado, Boulder, CO
Five Women Photographers, CEPA Gallery, Buffalo, NY

1974 *First Light,* Humboldt State University, Eureka, CA
Subject: Women, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Lawrence, KS

ARTIST TALKS & LECTURES

2017 Artist Lecture, Amon Carter Museum, TX

BOOKS, CATALOGUES, PERIODICALS

Adrian, Dennis. Recent Portraiture. Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago, IL; 1976; brochure
Bannon, Anthony. Painterly Photographs. Washington Projects for the Arts (WPA), D.C.; March15-May 1, 1980; catalogue with illustrations
Cathcart, Linda L. The Heroic Figure. Rio De Janeiro Museum of Modern Art, Brazil; U.S. Information Agency and The Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX: 1984-1985 (tour): catalogue w/illustrations
Cathcart, Linda L. The New Photography. The Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX, January 17 -February 22, 1981; booklet with illustrations
Cathcart, Linda L. HallWalls: Five Years. New Museum, NY; Washington Projects for the Arts (WPA), Washington D.C.; A Space, Toronto, CAN; Upton Gallery, SUNY at Buffalo, NY; 1979-1980; catalogue/ill
Coke, Van Deren. The Markers. San Francisco MoMA CA; May 29-July 26, 1981; catalogue w/ill
Coleman, A. D. Photofusion. Pratt Manhattan Center, NY; January 12-31,1981; catalogue w/illustrations
Coleman, A. D. The Grotesque in Photography. Ridge Press and Summit Books; March 1977; book w/ill

Denson, G. R. Figures: Forms and Expressions. Albright-Knox Art Gallery (AKAG), Buffalo, NY; November 30, 1981-January 3, 1982; catalogue/illustrations
Denson, Robert. Poetic Injury: The Surrealist Legacy in Post-Modern Photography. The Alternative Museum, NY; pp. 14, 20, 36; catalogue/ illustrations
Fleischer, Donna. The Black Swans of Ellen Carey: Of Necessary Poetic Realities. Akus Gallery (ECSU) Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), Willimantic, CT; January 9-February 20, 2014; cat/ill
Frascella, Lawrence. Aperture. Technology and Transformation, Aperture Foundation, NY; #106, Spring1987, back cover
Grundberg, Andy. Mourning Wall. Real Art Ways, Hartford, CT (2000); Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP), Colombia College, Chicago, IL; 2000 revised 2002; brochure with illustration
Grundberg, Andy. American Visions: Highlights from the Photography Collection. Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; July 2002; book/ illustrations
Grundberg, Andy. See: A Journal of Visual Culture. Friends of Photography, Ansel Adams Center, San Francisco, CA; cover, issue 1:4, 1995; periodical
Grundberg, Andy. Content and Discontent in Today's Photography. Independent Curators Incorporated ICI/NY; 1985; brochure w/ill
Grundberg, Andy and Ed Yankov. Departures: Photography 1923-1990. Worcester, MA (catalogue)
Grundberg, Andy and Jerry Saltz. Abstraction in Contemporary Photography. Emerson College, Boston, MA; catalogue with illustrations
Hagenberg, Roland. Soho, Egret Publications. NY; 1987; book w/illustrations p. 137
Hagenberg, Roland. Untitled '84. Pelham Press, NY; 1984; book w/ill p. 50
Hagenberg, Roland. East Village. Pelham Press, New York, NY; 1985, Art City; book w/illustrations
Hartshorn, Willis. Ellen Carey: Survey 1978-1986. International Center of Photography, NY; brochure w/ill
Hirsch, Robert. Exploring Color Photography: From Darkroom to the Digital Studio. McGraw Hill, NY; book with illustrations pgs. 11 & 309
Hitchcock, Barbara. The Polaroid Book. Taschen, Los Angeles, CA; book with illustrations
Honnef, Klaus. Lichtbildnisse, Rheinisches, Landesmuseum, Bonn, GER: March -June 1981; book w/il
Hunt, Bill. Delirium, Aperture Foundation, NY; 1997; magazine/periodical with illustrations
Jacobs, Joseph. Faces Since the 50s. Center Gallery, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, PA; March 11-April 17, 1983; catalogue with illustrations
Laster, Paul and Renee Ricardo. The Spiral of Artificiality, HallWalls, Buffalo, NY; catalogue; pgs. 4 8 ill
Liebowitz, Herbert. Parnassus: Poetry In Review, Poetry in Review Foundation, NY; 1986; book p.248, ill
Lingwood, James. Self Portrait: Photography 1940-1985. National Portrait Gallery, London, UK: book ill
Lombino, Mary-Kay. The Polaroid Years: Instant Photography and Experimentation, The Frances Lehman Loeb Center for the Arts, Poughkeepise, NY; book Delmonico-Prestel, NY, pgs. 44, 46, 47, 64-67, 221
Luciana, James. Black and White Photography: An International Collection. Rockport Publishers, Gloucester, MA, 1999; book with illustrations
McCaughey, Patrick. The Colt 4, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT;1992;catalogue w/ill
Miller, Denise. Photography's Multiple Roles. Museum of Contemporary Photography (MoCP), Columbia College, Chicago, IL: 1998; book with illustrations; pg.20
Naef, Weston. New Trends. Shevsha Publishing Company, Tokyo, Japan; June 1984; book w/illustrations
Ottman, Klaus. Strange Attractors: The Spectacle of Chaos. Kaos Foundation, Chicago, IL; brochure w/ill
Parker, Fred. Contemporary Photography as Phantasy. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, CA; June 19-August 15, 1982; catalogue with illustrations
Peasanti, Heather. Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avant-garde in the 1970s, The Albright-Knox Art Gallery (AKAG), Buffalo, NY; March 30-July 8, 2012; catakogue with illustrations; pgs. 28-37,103-110

Pickover, Dr. Clifford. Mazes of the Mind. St. Martin's Press, NY; 1991; book w/illustrations
Potter, Tina. Dark Décor. Independent Curators Incorporated/ICI, NY; 1995; catalogue w/illustrations
Rexer, Lyle. Photography's Antiquarian Avant-Garde. Harry N. Abrams Inc., NewYork, NY: 2002; book w/illustrations, pgs. 128-129; 138-139
Rexer, Lyle. The Edge of Vision: the Rise of Abstraction in Photography, Aperture Foundation, NY; 2009; book with illustrations: pgs. 147-169.
Richardson, Trevor. Fictions of the Self:The Portrait in Contemporary Photography. Weatherspoon Art Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC; Herter Art Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA; 1993; catalogue with illustrations
Roberts, Pamela. A Century of Colour Photography: From the Autochrome to the Digital Age. Carlton Books Ltd., London, UK; 2007; book with illustrations; pgs. 189, 247
Rohrbach, John. Color: American Photography Transformed, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX; University of Texas Press, Austin, TX, 2013; pgs 230 (ill) & 436n31
Rosenbloom, Naomi. A History of Women Photographers, Abbeville Press, NY: 1994; book/ill
Rosoff, Patricia. Innocent Eye: A Passionate Look at Art, Tupelo Press, North Adams, MASS; 2012 book w/cover, essay & ill; pgs, 103-107.
Spagnoli, Jerry, Casting the Light. Catalogue with illustrations
Sobieszek, Robert A. and Deborah Irmas. The Camera "I": Photographic Self-Portraits from the Audrey and Sydney Irmas Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Harry N. Abrams Inc., NY; 1994: catalogue with illustrations; pgs.118, 211
Stainback, Charles. Portrayals. International Center of Photography: ICP/Midtown, NY; 1987; catalogue with illustrations; pgs. 18, 33, 38
Verre, Phillip. Photo Start. Bronx Museum of the Arts, NY; September 14 – December 5, 1982; catalogue
Stokes, Lowery Sims. The Persistence of Geometry: Form, Content and Culture in the Collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art; catalogue w/illustrations; cover and pg.115
Walsh, Michael. Back to the Future: The Photography of Ellen Carey. The National Academy of Sciences, Washington DC; June 1992; catalogue with color illustrations
Westerbeck, Colin. The Intuitive Eye: The Ruttenberg Collection, Chicago, IL (catalogue)
Fotografie, Wissenschaft Une Neue Technologien, Kunstmuseum, Dusseldorf, GER; 1989; pgs.78-81 ill.
Young American Photographers, Lustrum Press, NY; 1974; book
Artfinder, Special Photography Issue. Egret Publications, NY; catalogue illustrations; pg. 71
Selections 5, Photokina, Cologne, GER; 1990; book with illustration

ARTICLES, ESSAYS, REVIEWS

2017 Ollman, Leah. "Review: Ellen Carey's Photograms Turn Plain Paper Into a Topographic Head Trip." Los Angeles Times, April 10

2016 *The Polaroid Project: At the Intersection of Art and Technology*, MIT & FEP
Big Nothing, The New Yorker, August 1, 2016
Furman, Anna. *Pushing the Outer Limits of Photography,* The Cut, July 25, 2016
Kordic, Angie. *These Abstract Photographers Redefine Perception of the Real,* Widewalls, June 14
Barry, Tim. *Interview with Ellen Carey, Poet with a Lens, Less années 1980, Centre Pompidou, Paris,* Aesthetica, March 30
Los Angeles: Ellen Carey, Self-Portraits Polaroid, L'oeil de la Photographie, January 6

M+B

2015 *Mining 'Color's Mother Lode,'* PDN Photo of the Day, December 2
Griffin, Jonathan. *Ellen Carey,* Frieze, November 26

2014 Fleischer, Donna. *The Black Swans of Ellen Carey: Of Necessary Poetic Realities,* Akus Gallery, Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU), Willimantic, CT (essay)

2012 Kino, Carol. *Renaissance in an Industrial Town.* New York Times, Sunday, May 6; ill.

2005 Rexer, Lyle. *Abstract Photography*. Art on Paper, NY: March/April, color ills.

2004 Marsh, Joanna. *MATRIX 153*: *Ellen Carey-Photography Degree Zero*. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT; brochure w/ illustrations.

2003 Baker, Kenneth. *Ellen Carey in Berkeley,* Art Review. San Francisco Chronicle; Jan, ill.

2002 Profile: Rob and Nancy Grover. Art On Paper, NY; July/August, ill

2001 Pollack, Barbara. *Mourning Wall*, *National Reviews*. ArtNews; February, p. 159
Rexer, Lyle. *Ellen Carey at Real Art Ways*. Art in America, NY; June, ill
Rosoff, Patricia. *The Unbearable Lightness of Being Ellen Carey: Energy Producing Brightness*.
Schwabsky, Barry. *Mourning Wall at Real Art Ways*. Art On Paper, NY; April/May, ill

2000 Miller-Keller, Andrea. *Whitney Biennial Curators Interview,* ARTFORUM, NY, March
Perrée, Rob, *Weer Kunst In Het Warenhuis?,* Kunstbeeld, Amsterdam, February, pgs. 37-39, ill
Zimmer, William. *A Family Album with No Pictures*, New York Times, NY; Dec. 10, p. 35, ill

1999 Glueck, Grace. *Female*. Curator; Vince Aletti, Wessel & O'Connor Gallery; The New York Times, NY; September 17 p. 26, ill
Helfand, Glen. *Marco Breuer, Ellen Carey,* San Francisco Bay Guardian, CA; March 10-16
Jenkins, Steven. *Phenomena: The Poetics of Science*. Camerawork: Journal of Photographic Arts; Ansel Adams Center, San Francisco, CA: Vol.26 #1, Spring/Summer, pgs.33-35

1998 Boxer, Sarah. *Beauty in a Variety of Disguises.* The New York Times, NY; Sep 19
Newhall, Edith. The New York Magazine, NY; September 14, p. 129
Schwabsky, Barry. *Ellen Carey: Pulls-Ricco/Maresca Gallery,* ARTFORUM, NY: Vol. 37

1996 Aletti, Vince. *Voice Choice, Ellen Carey*. Village Voice, New York, NY; November 26, p. 9
Chambers, Karen. *Ellen Carey.* Review, New York, NY; December 1, pp. 30-31
McNally, Owen. *The Art of Acquisition*. Hartford Courant, CT; January 21

1995 Dorsey, John. *Capturing the Abstract in Photographs*. The Sun, Baltimore, MD, ill

1994 Aletti, Vince. *Voice Choice: Ellen Carey*. Village Voice, NY; December 27; p.5
Hagen, Charles. *Ellen Carey: Jayne Baum Gallery.* The New York Times, NY; December 23, p. 26
The Camera I, Photographic Self-Portraits from Audrey and Sydney Irmas Collection, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA: July/August ill

1992 Wilson, Janet. *Ellen Carey's Revealing Disguises.* The Washington Post, DC; Aug 22, ill
The portrait and self-portrait, The Center for Photography at Woodstock Newsletter, NY
Photographs by Ellen Carey Now on Exhibit. Arts in the Academy, Washington, DC

1991 Hagen, Charles, *A Group with Night on Its Minds*, The New York Times, NY; August 23

1990 Grundberg, Andy. *Abstraction Returns to Haunt Photography*. New York Times; Feb. 26

1989 Jones, Bill. *Born Again: Seeing the End of Photography*. ARTS, NY: October, pp 72 – 28, ill
Lehman, Edith. *Reflections: Woman's Self-Image in Contemporary Photography*. Images Ink, Vol. 4 #1,pgs. 26-27, ill
Zimmer, William. *Photographs with Surprises*. New York Times, NY; April 30, p.22, ill.

1988 Calnek, Anthony. *Chaos in New York*, Contemporanea Magazine, NY; July-August, pp 20-21, ill

1987 Ottman, Klaus. *Photo Mannerisms*, Flash Art, Milan, Italy; Nov/Dec; #137, p.72 ill
Ottman, Klaus. *Mannerism Anti-Mannerism*, Flash Art, Dec.1986/Jan.1987, #131, pp. 64
Stretch, Bonnie Barrett. *Contemporary Photography*. Art and Auction, NY; Vol. IX #10, May, pgs. 145-146, ill
Westfall, Stephen. *Reviews: Ellen Carey at ICP & Simon Cerigo*. Art in America NY; November, Vol. 74, #11, ill
Technology and Transformation, Aperture, NY: Spring 1987, #106, back cover ill

1986 Caley, Shaun. *Review: Ellen Carey at Art City*, Flash Art, Milan, Italy; #129, Summer p.72, ill
Cork, Richard. *Photography-Seeing the Self*. Vogue, London, UK:Vol.143, #10, p. 14, ill
Frailey, Stephen. *Context as Content: Contemporary Photography and its Function in Esquire Magazine*. Center Quarterly, Woodstock, NY; Vol.7 #3; Spring pp. 6-9, ill
Siegel, Jeanne. *Geometry Desurfacing: Ross Bleckner, Alan Belcher, Ellen Carey, Peter Halley, Sherrie Levine, Phillip Taaffe, James Welling.* ARTS, NY: Vol.60 #7, March, pgs. 26-32, ill
Annual Museum Previews. Art in America, NY; August, Vol.74 #8, p.35
Artwork: Ellen Carey. Bomb, NY; Winter
Knode, Marilu. *Ellen Carey at Pace/MacGill Gallery*, Manhattan Arts, NYC, NY, Oct.16

1981 Crossley, Mimi. *The New Photography,* The Houston Post, TX: p.6E
Kalil, Susie. *Photographic Cross Currents*, Artweek, NY;Vol. 2, February 7

1979 Lifson, Ben. *Redundant Kisses*, *Engaging Ambiguities*. The Village Voice, NY; June 11

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL
Baltimore Museum of Art, MD
Benton Art Museum, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, FR
Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH
Dallas-Fort Worth Art Museum, TX
Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY
Heckscher Museum, Huntington, Long Island, NY
International Center of Photography, New York, NY
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY
Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX
National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, MO
New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT
New York Public Library, New York, NY
Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL
Perez Museum, Miami, FL
Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University, Hamilton, NY
Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI
Ruttenberg Foundation, Chicago, IL
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
San José Museum of Art, San José, CA
The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, OH
The Sir Elton John Photography Collection
University Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

ELLEN CAREY

Ellen Carey (b. 1952, New York, NY) received her BFA from Kansas City Art Institute and MFA from The State University of New York at Buffalo. Her work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at such institutions as the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT and International Center of Photography, New York, among others. A suite of Carey's *Self-Portraits* was recently acquired by the Centre Georges Pompidou and included in their recent exhibition, *The Unbearable Lightness – The 1980s: Photography, Film.* Upcoming group shows include *The Polaroid Project* which will travel to the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX, MIT Museum, Cambridge, MA, and WestLicht Museum for Photography in Vienna. Recent group shows include *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography* at the Aperture Foundation, New York; *Part Picture* at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto; and *The Persistence of Geometry* at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Carey's work can be found in the permanent collections of The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; and The Cleveland Museum of Art, among others. Ellen Carey lives and works in Hartford, CT, where she teaches at the University of Hartford.

M+B

ELLEN CAREY

Selected Portfolio

612 NORTH ALMONT DRIVE, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90069 TEL 310 550 0050 FAX 310 550 0605 WWW.MBART.COM

Ellen Carey
Installation View of *2016 Aperture Summer Open: Photography is Magic*, group exhibition at Aperture Gallery, New York
July 14 – August 11, 2016

M+B

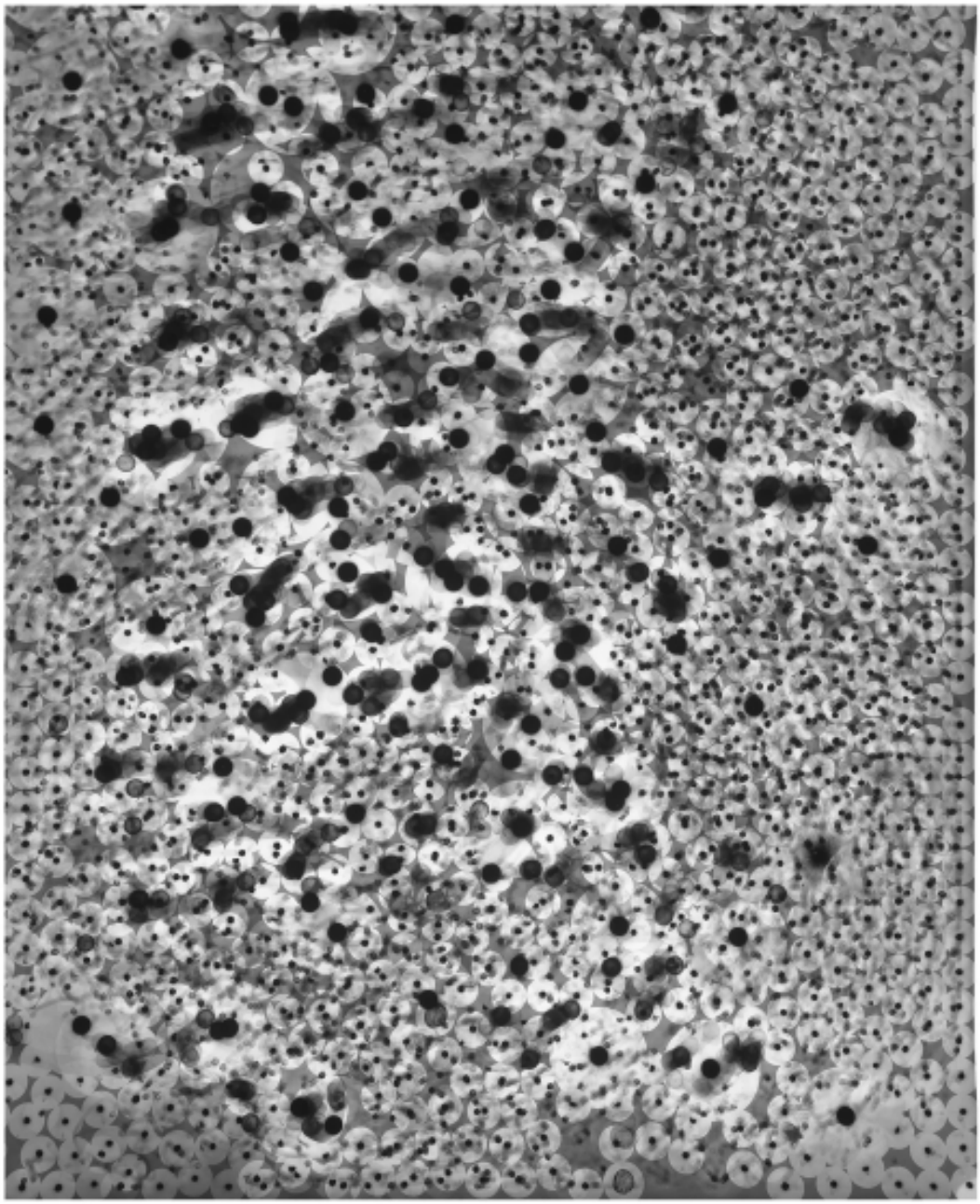
Ellen Carey
Dings & Shadows, 2014
unique chromogenic print on glossy paper
24 x 20 inches (61 x 50.8 cm)
(ECa.03.1502.24)

M+B

Ellen Carey
Dings & Shadows, 2015
unique chromogenic print on matte paper
24 x 20 inches (61 x 50.8 cm)
(ECa.03.1506.24)

Ellen Carey
Installation View of *big nothing*, group exhibition at Sous Les Etoiles Gallery, New York
June 16 – August 19, 2016

M+B



Ellen Carey
Zerogram, 1998
black and white fiber print toned photogram
20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

M+B

Ellen Carey
Installation View of *Polaroid 20 x 24 Self-Portraits*, solo show at M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
November 6, 2015 – January 16, 2016

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M+B

Ellen Carey
Installation View of *Polaroid 20 x 24 Self-Portraits*, solo show at M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
November 6, 2015 – January 16, 2016

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M+B

Ellen Carey
Portrait, 1986
unique 20 x 24 Polaroid
33 x 26 inches (83.8 x 66 cm)
(ECa.04.0123.33)

M+B

Ellen Carey
Self-Portrait, 1984
unique 20 x 24 Polaroid
33 x 26 inches (83.8 x 66 cm)
(ECa.04.0102.33)

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M+B

Ellen Carey
Self-Portrait, 1985
unique 20 x 24 Polaroid
33 x 26 inches (83.8 x 66 cm)
(ECa.04.0131.33)

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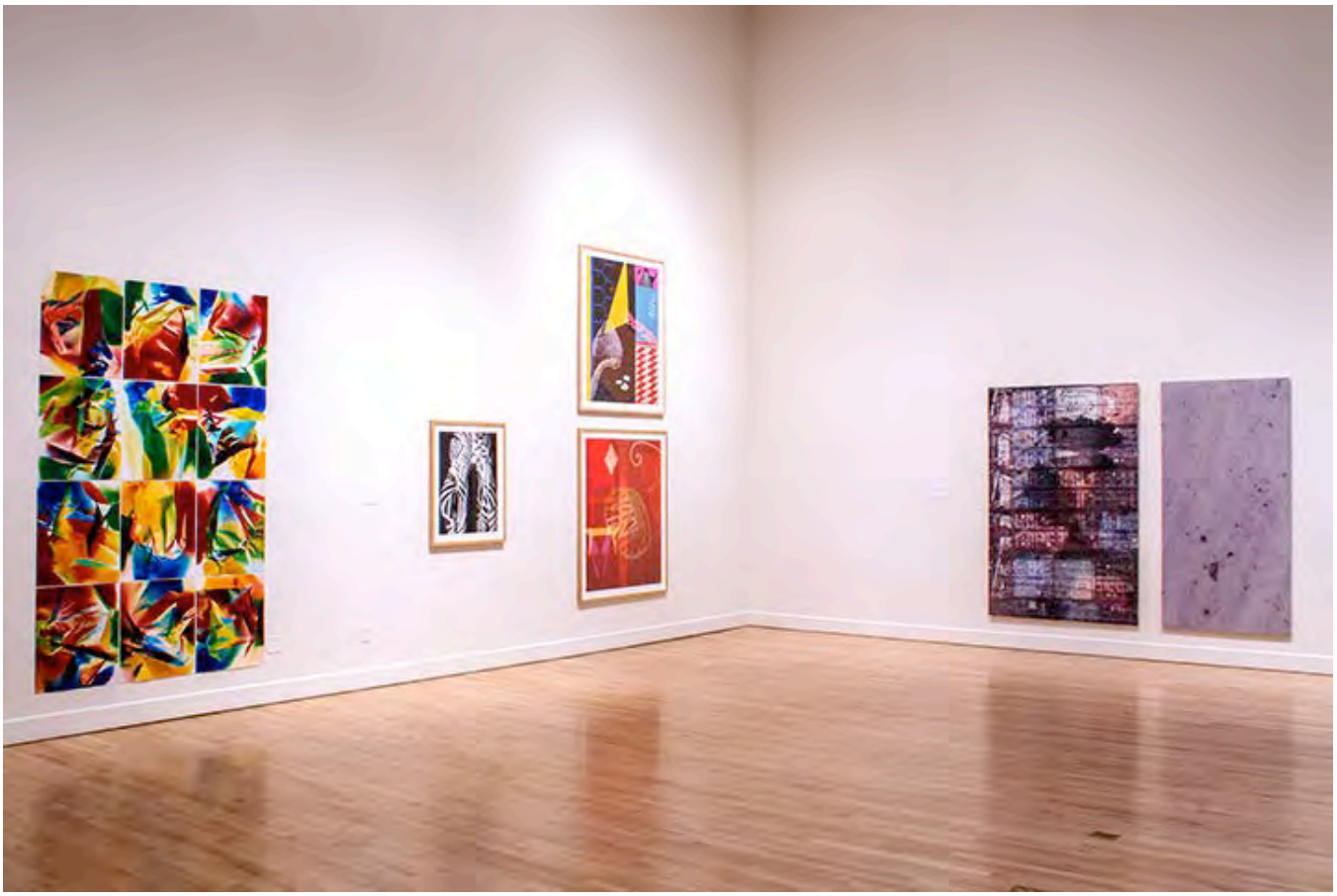

Ellen Carey
Installation View of *Altarations: Built, Blended, Processed*, group exhibition at
Schmidt Center Gallery at Florida Atlantic University
November 21, 2014 – February 28, 2015

M+B

Ellen Carey
Dings & Shadows, 2013
unique chromogenic print on glossy paper
24 x 20 inches (61 x 50.8 cm)
(ECa.03.1301.24)

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Ellen Carey
Dings & Shadows, 2013
unique chromogenic print on glossy paper
24 x 20 inches (61 x 50.8 cm)
(ECa.03.1305.24)

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Ellen Carey
Dings & Shadows, 2012
unique color photogram
40 x 30 inches (101.6 x 76.2 cm)
(ECa.03.1204.40)

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Ellen Carey
Installation View of *Ellen Carey: Mourning Wall*, solo exhibition at
the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Columbia College, Chicago, IL
March 22 – May 18, 2002

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Ellen Carey
Pulls & Rollbacks, 1996
Polaroid 20 X 24 Color dye-diffusion transfer prints
96 x 22, 98 x 22, 97 x 22 inches (243.8 x 55.9, 248.9 x 55.9 x 246.4 x 55.9 cm)
(Eca.01.9601.98)

M+B

Ellen Carey
Pull with Rollback (Blue), 2002
Polaroid 20 X 24 Color dye-diffusion transfer print
60 x 22 inches (152.4 x 55.9 cm)
(Eca.01.0201.60)

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Ellen Carey
Pull with Starts & Stops, 2004
Polaroid 20 X 24 Color dye-diffusion transfer prints
70 x 22 inches (177.8 x 55.9 cm) (each)
(Eca.01.0401.70)

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Ellen Carey
Birthday Portrait (Pulls & Rollbacks), 1997
Polaroid 20 X 24 Color dye-diffusion transfer prints
75-1/2 x 22, 79 x 22, 82 x 22 inches (191.8 x 55.9, 200.7 x 55.9 x 208.3 x 55.9 cm)
(Eca.01.0502.75)

M+B

Ellen Carey
Pull with Filigree and Pod Mix (Purple Blue Pull), 2005
Polaroid 20 X 24 Color dye-diffusion transfer prints
60 x 22 inches (152.4 x 55.9 cm) (each)
(Eca.01.0504.60)

ELLEN CAREY

Press and Press Releases

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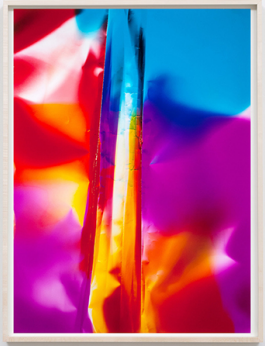

ELLEN CAREY
DINGS & SHADOWS

March 18 – April 22, 2017

Opening Reception

Saturday, March 18, 2017 from 6 to 8 pm

M+B is pleased to present *Ellen Carey: Dings & Shadows*, the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. The show runs from March 18 through April 22, 2017, with an opening reception on Saturday, March 18 from 6 to 8 pm.

One of the country's foremost experimental photographers, Ellen Carey's pioneering work spans several decades and anticipated major themes in contemporary photography. As part of the avant-garde group at SUNY Buffalo, Carey studied alongside Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo and Hollis Frampton, and first exhibited her work at the legendary Hallwalls artist-run space. The artist has been the subject of several major institutional shows and is in the collections of the Whitney Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago, among others. Throughout her career, Carey has expanded the boundaries of abstraction in the medium. From the complex patterns in her early *Self-Portraits* from the 1980s, to the minimalist parabolas of her 20x24 Polaroid *Pulls* in the 90s, through to the current *Dings & Shadows*, each subsequent series marks an increasing focus on abstraction and color.

Carey's new work investigates the very fundamentals of capturing color on paper through light utilizing the photogram process and signals a return to the darkroom after years of working with the famed 20x24 Polaroid camera. Traditionally, photograms are made through a cameraless process by placing an object onto photosensitive paper and exposing it to light, thus creating a shadow-image. However, Carey eschews using any objects in the darkroom and instead uses only light, color and the actual paper itself to create the works. In complete darkness, she first creases and bends large sheets of photo paper. Once the paper has been shaped, different parts are exposed to and activated by light. Finally, the paper is flattened and processed. By removing the referent—the pictorial sign that has been the hallmark of photography—Carey is able achieve purely abstract compositions.

While the photogram usually introduces chance operations because results are not entirely predictable, Carey's versions enjoy a play between skillful control and improvisation. In these works, one can see traces of the artist's physical engagement with the material. It is through this performative action—the deliberate, sculptural "dings" and fluid transitions of color—that an alchemical magic occurs. The creases and folds create a relief map of geometric shapes and ridges and work in combination with photographic color theory to create bold, jewel-like abstractions.

Ellen Carey (b. 1952, New York) has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at such institutions as the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT and International Center of Photography, New York, among others. Her work was recently acquired by the Centre Georges Pompidou and included in their exhibition, *The Unbearable Lightness – The 1980s: Photography, Film*. Upcoming group shows include *The Polaroid Project*, which will travel to the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth; MIT Museum, Cambridge and WestLicht Museum for Photography in Vienna. Recent museum group shows include *A Matter of Memory* at the Eastman Museum, Rochester; *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography* at the Aperture Foundation, New York; *Part Picture* at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto and *The Persistence of Geometry* at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Carey's work can be found in the permanent collections of The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C. and Cleveland Museum of Art, among others. Ellen Carey lives and works in Hartford, CT, where she teaches at the University of Hartford.

Location:	M+B, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069
Show Title:	Ellen Carey: Dings & Shadows
Exhibition Dates:	March 18 – April 22, 2017
Opening Reception:	Saturday, March 18, 6 – 8pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm

For press inquiries, please contact info@mbart.com. For all other inquiries, contact Shannon Richardson at shannon@mbart.com or Jonlin Wung at jonlin@mbart.com.

# # #

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Ellen Carey
Installation View of *Dings & Shadows*, solo show at M+B Gallery, Los Angeles
March 18 – April 22, 2017

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Los Angeles Times

Ellen Carey's Photograms Turn Plain Paper Into a Topographic Head Trip

By Leah Ollman
April 10, 2017

Ellen Carey, *Caesura*, 2016, photogram, 40 x 30 inches

Ellen Carey's new works at M+B deliver generously on optical buzz and conceptual bang. They're photograms, but they also could be described as performative sculptures enacted in the gestational space of the darkroom.

For each piece, Carey wrinkles and creases a sheet of photo paper, selectively exposes it to light, then smooths it back and processes it. Pure hues of the spectrum splinter and pool across the page with lavish intensity. Shadows and color shifts correspond to the irregular surface — magenta down one side of a ridge and green down the other, for instance.

In the pieces titled "Caesura," the paper has been creased or accordion-folded vertically down the middle, and fine, vein-like fissures often run counter to the central axis. In the other works, the "Dings & Shadows," wrinkles occur at all angles. Every field is an interrupted field.

In a six-part polyptych ("Dings & Shadows RGBYMC," 2012), Carey assigns each panel one color but also introduces quietly thrilling deviations: a little wedge of red piercing the cyan like an arrow; a golden flame that flickers at the heart of the green. Throughout this body of work, the paper's surface does double duty as object and subject, material and image. The literal and the abstract merge.

Carey's work nevertheless reverberates with associations. The fluid soaks of color invoke the stain painting of Helen Frankenthaler and Morris Louis. The interplay of volume, light and shadow recalls passages in Frans Hals, John Singer Sargent and others, where draping fabric takes on a dynamic, painterly life of its own. And, of course, there's resonance with the history of the photogram itself, especially its efflorescence among early modernists.

For more than two decades, Connecticut-based Carey has been exploring photography through inventive, physically involving, process-oriented work. Her recent efforts here are as wondrous as they are devious, beginning as they do with an act of destruction — a violation of the pristine surface that normally would render a sheet of paper useless.

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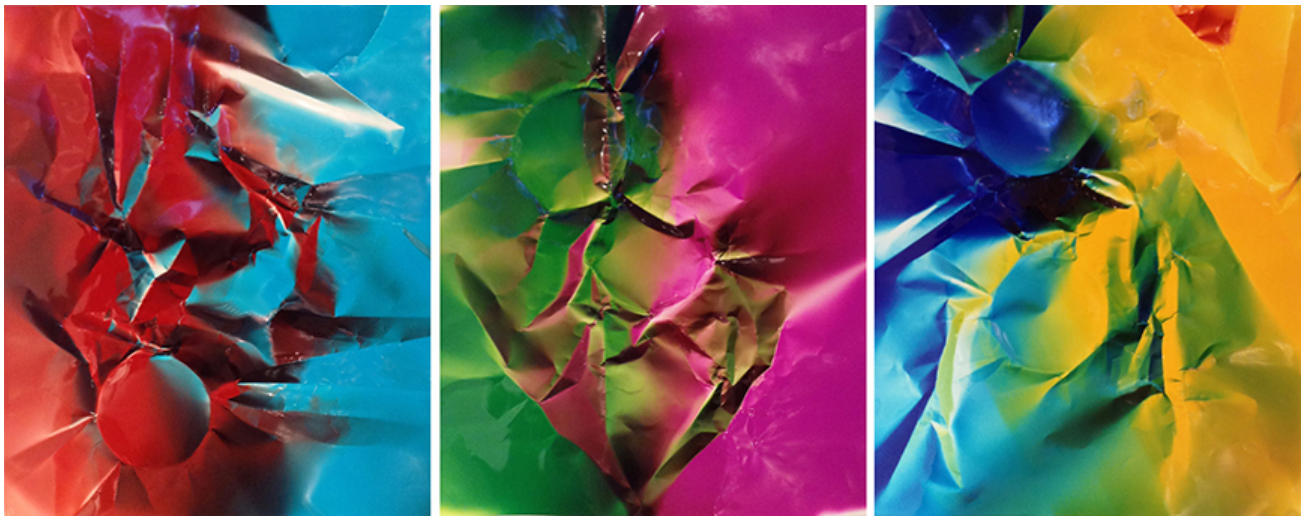
MUSÉE

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

Woman Crush Wednesday: Ellen Carey

By Hallie Neely
April 10, 2017



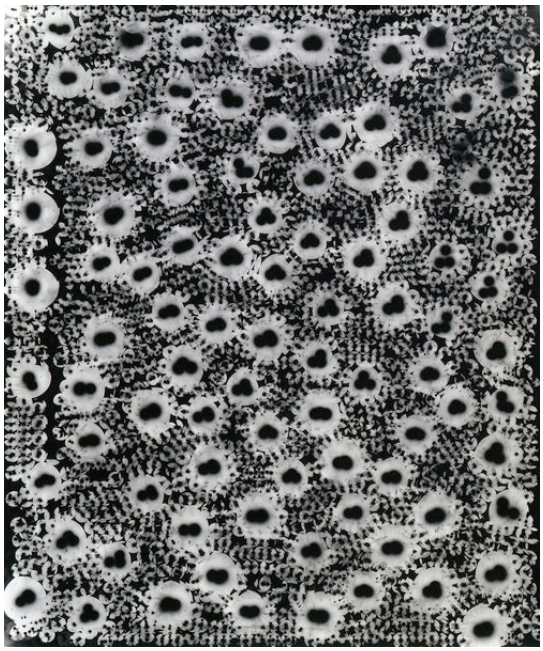
Dings & Shadows, 2014 © Ellen Carey

Ellen Carey is a New York-born, Connecticut-based artist who has been creating unique, experimental, and exceptional work for decades. She began her career with *Painted Self-Portraits* (1978) and for the last 20+ years has been working with photograms made in the darkroom. She teaches at the Hartford Art School, University of Hartford and is represented by M+B in Los Angeles, and Jayne H. Baum Gallery and Yossi Milo in New York. See more of her fabulous work here!

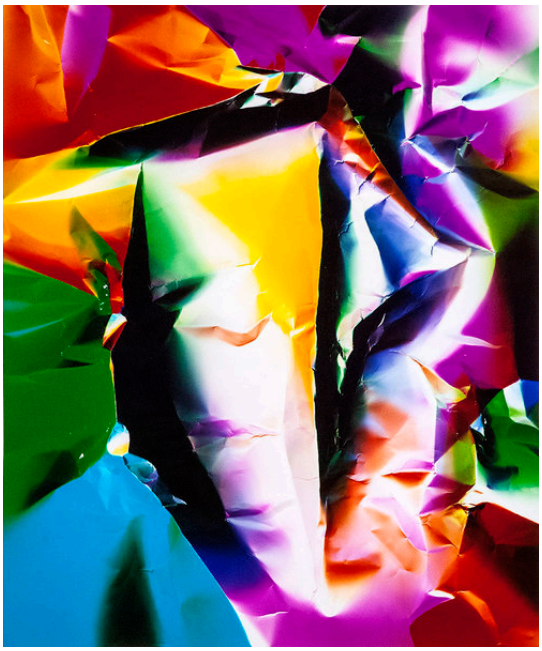
When did you initially become interested in color?
In my childhood, I was raised Catholic, so looking at color in the stain glass windows at church is an early memory. The name Ellen, in Gaelic, Irish, Celtic means “light” or “bringer of light” a prescient gift from my parents, introducing fate and destiny. At Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI), my undergraduate freshman foundations program introduced me to Josef Albers and his color theory. My final project was an installation that freshman year was a wall of color; I did color printing in lithography. At SUNY@Buffalo, my MFA graduate thesis at Hallwalls was my black and white “Self-Portrait” series that experimented with a monochrome palette in the over-painting, later adding color.

Years ago, you experimented with black and white abstractions, so *Struck by Light* is quite the jump.
Yes and no. As stated above, color was always in my life and work, however a more concentrated effort began with my large format Polaroid 20 X 24 “Self-Portrait” series (1983-1987); I tried the large format

Polaroid in black and white; it was not as visually exciting, although really early work was with the SX-70. Polaroid's instant technology and the soft brilliance of its dyes are exceptional, but when the Polaroid Artists Support Program ended in 1987, I went back to the darkroom, starting my research on photograms. My question: "What does an abstract photograph look like?" begins here. You are correct, in that it was years ago, and I did struggle. I began with black & white photograms, but when I turned to color, with the photogram, I realized light, photography's indexical, was radically different, the palette electrified the composition, whether it was expressed in muted tones or bolder hues. Color is an artist's universe and photographic color theory (RGBYMC) photography's planet. Characteristics imbedded in our medium revealed themselves anew --- light and shadow --- with themes of interest --- love and loss, beauty and joy --- full of artistic potential, working within the visual breakthroughs found in the tenets of Abstract Expressionism, Minimal and Conceptual Art. Less-is-more is one of my experimental guide posts, re-thinking photography vis-à-vis process, this eliminates the picture sign, re-arranges the hierarchy of an image that captures something "out there" to a photographic object that expresses itself "in there"; its visceral and visual, referencing the elemental wonder of photography, inside the black box of the color darkroom, which is light-tight. So I began a commitment to my discipline, a concentrated study of color in art and photography, its history and practitioners around 2000, leaving black and white behind.



Circles, 1991 © Ellen Carey



Dings & Shadows, 2016 © Ellen Carey

How did you react after finishing your first photogram?
In black and white, I knew I was on to something, but color was the key, the turning point, opening the door to my imagination. I reacted to its wonder, imaging this is how it must have been, this incredible experience, for the earliest practitioners.

Did you know right away you wanted to go forward with making more?
Absolutely!

Dings & Shadows, 2014 © Ellen Carey

I saw your work at AIPAD, and what struck me when I first saw them, after being struck by the color and vibrancy, was the way they were displayed. Do you often display *Struck by Light* in a grid form, or does it depend on the space in which they're being shown?

That large installation of "Dings & Shadows" was conceptually designed that way, 4 rows of 5, as RGBYMC, 20 unique color photograms total; I have done two more, one is the same size, the other slightly smaller. Size and scale are important in my work, as Robert Smithson said: "Size can be a crack in a wall or the Grand Canyon". The "dings" are my "shadow" catchers, a "ding" is taboo in our profession, I am breaking with that tradition. The grid references one of the universal codes in art, the square; the other is the circle. My grid-as-photogram installation has the colors as RGBYMC, a split filter

reference in the image as well as photographic color theory, a unique characteristic of our medium, like the shadow. In that particular artwork, the colors have to seamlessly flow and blend, into one-another or ricocheting off of each other, making new colors, hues or shadows. All four edges create mini-compositions, another grid, the over-all gestalt and the synoptic clarity is pristine, compelling in its color variations, with hues and high-tech vibrancy, containing high visual impact.

You've worked on this series for about 23 years, between 1992-2015
WOW. That is a long time! It actually extends to 2017; I have more ideas, more work to do!

How did you decide the project was finished?
By project, do you mean the whole "Struck by Light" project? Or one picture? A series, or an installation? I work until the whole image is perfect, my standards are very, very high, the ratio is 1 perfect photogram out of 5 try-outs, some days are better, and some days don't go well. The color darkroom is light tight; so I am working blind, pitch black, different than the amber light of black/white darkroom. I love making color photograms, will continue to print as long as the paper and processor lasts!

Do you still feel the project is finished?
It is very obvious to me, and anyone who has witnessed me working, that the "object speaks back" loudly and clearly! I have my own rules, what I call the 4 C's: Concept, Context, Content and Citation (or Site), so it works or it does not. My work is experimental, randomness and chance play key roles, followed by choice in palette and form, like automatic drawing in Dada and Surrealism; one doesn't know what eventually will be seen, these play key roles. As you pointed out, several decades of printing have helped; the physical aspects, gaining experience over time and time is important to an artist: time to think, read, make art, write, reflect, look at art, travel, nature is wonderful too. I don't see an end to the project; I just tried a few new ideas. "Struck by Light" is an expansive, umbrella concept, "Photography Degree Zero" is my Polaroid practice, while "Pictus & Writ" is my writing.

Dings & Shadows, 2014 © Ellen Carey

Dings & Shadows, 2012 © Ellen Carey

I appreciate the number of historical references made in regards to this project, dating back to 1834 with William Henry Fox Talbot and noting Anna Atkins as the first woman practitioner and the first in color. Did you want this project to be homage to Atkins, or did it transform into that after working on it for so long and learning more and more about photograms and color?
I am working on a curatorial project and as the curator; named "Anon." this underscores my concept of exclusion/absence in this new area of scholarship. "Women in Colour: Anna Atkins, Color Photography and Those Struck by Light" opens mid-August thru September at The Rubber Factory (Lower East Side), the owner, Mike Tan, is hosting this group exhibition.

Briefly stated, in my research on color photography, I noticed that a lot of women were using color, a completely different skill set from black and white photography (technical, expensive, color chemistry etc.), which prompted a question: "Where would women color practitioners be without the work of Anna Atkins?"; often my project start with a question.

Colour/color photography begins with Anna Atkins, photography's first female practitioner, first in color, with her blue cyanotypes. She also did the first photo-book, predating Talbot, and she is first to use writing in her pictures, a precursor to Word Art. Her compositions, in my opinion, point the way to minimalism and abstraction in photography, in their use of: off-frame space, a reductive palette, transformative power of color, size and scale plus many other tenets in her stellar compositions, no bigger than a page in a book. She made thousands of images, giving them away, so her gifts were literally gifts benefitting us today.

Caesura, 2016 © Ellen Carey

Colour, the British spelling, highlights that color photography has its origins in England; Atkins followed by Sarah Angelina Acland, the late Victorian, who specialized in the Sanger-Shepard process. My research found out that a DNA gene, tetrachromacy, is only carried by women; if they have this gene, women can discern color better than men, who have a higher percentage of color blindness.

So my project pays homage to Anna Atkins, whom we know very little about, while opening up a new field of scholarship on women and colour/color photography. I used my photogram practice "Struck by Light" to include many references: the twin aspects of photography and its indexical, light; as a phrase often used for inspiration, which includes the inspiration of photography, its earliest photogram as *drawing with light*; that history as the photogram continues today. It's a record of light seen found in the end result, the photographic object, and with that object, light-sensitive paper was struck by (another) light. As the project's author, my name Ellen means light and color is light, seen in nature's rainbow, which is full of color.

M+B

WCW QUESTIONNAIRE

How would you describe your creative process in one word?

Exhilarating

If you could teach a one, one-hour class on anything, what would it be?

How to Make Color Photograms that Teaches Photographic Color Theory with a Lecture on Anna Atkins and her Cyanotypes Plus Women+Color+Photography

What is the last film you saw or book you read that inspired you?

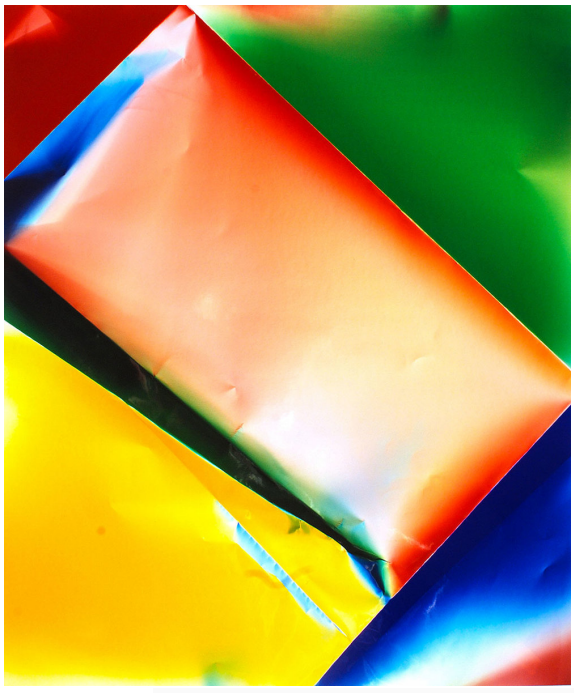
Documentary Film by Ron Howard: “Beatles: Eight Days a Week”
Book by Henry Adams: “Tom & Jack: The Intertwining Lives of Thomas Hart Benton & Jackson Pollock”

What is the most played song in your music library?

I listen to the radio a lot, when I work: so I love soul, ambient–techno, R&B, funk, jazz, rap, and all the classics too!

How do you take your coffee?

Dark Roast with Milk - Hot!



Zerogram, 2017 © Ellen Carey

Dings & Shadows, 2016 © Ellen Carey

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Los Angeles Times

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April 10, 2017

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ELLEN CAREY'S ZEROGRAMS – NO REFERENT REQUIRED

by Seth Katsuya Endo[1]

In 2005, author David Foster Wallace [2] delivered the commencement address at Kenyon College, opening with a small joke:

> There are these two young fish swimming along and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says "Morning, boys. How's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes "What the hell is water?"[3]

Wallace's point, of course, was that "the most obvious, ubiquitous, important realities are often the ones that are the hardest to see and talk about."[4] And, at its best, whether through images or words, art helps us see the water in which we daily swim. Ellen Carey's "Dings & Shadows" color photograms[5] do exactly that: like a prism, her work separates and gives order to light waves, revealing the hidden, omnipresent colors that abound.

Carey has been creating works in the "Dings & Shadows" series since 2010, making it difficult to describe a perfect exemplar. The color photograms are printed on both matte and glossy paper, often 20"x24" but sometimes larger. Some of the pieces are a riot of colors. Others are a mix of shadow, white background, a single accent color. In many of the works, one can see where Carey handled the photosensitive paper—marks of her literal handiwork that vary by individual work.

Some of Carey's pieces are part of a set such as the 8'x8' grid featured in the Aperture's 2016 "Photography Is Magic" exhibition curated by Charlotte Cotton. This particular piece also showcases the cerebral elements that consistently appear in Carey's work as its palette follows from photographic color theory's understanding of additive and subtractive colors.

---

[1] Seth is currently an Acting Assistant Professor of Lawyering at NYU School of Law after several clerkships and time in private practice. He received his JD, *magna cum laude*, from NYU School of Law and his BA, with honors, from the University of Chicago. He has written for Shout NY, Guernica, Timothy McSweeney's Internet Tendency, and various law reviews. His own art has been featured in group shows in Chicago, Minneapolis, and New York.

[2] David Foster Wallace was called "the most brilliant American writer of his generation" by The Guardian and was a MacArthur fellow. His most well known work was the novel INFINITE JEST.

[3] DAVID FOSTER WALLACE, THIS IS WATER: SOME THOUGHTS, DELIVERED ON A SIGNIFICANT OCCASION, ABOUT LIVING A COMPASSIONATE LIFE 3-4 (2009).

[4] *Id.*

[5] Although I use the term "color photograms" throughout the article, as discussed further in the main text, the "Dings & Shadows" pieces are created using a process that differs from traditional photograms and deserves its own term.

In all of the color photograms in the "Dings & Shadows" series, there are creases and folds that create a relief map of a mix of regular and irregular geometric shapes and ridges. In combination with the color palette, an almost dreamlike sensation is fostered, giving rise to a sense of pareidolia as one finds patterns and images (or, perhaps, *emotions*) in the abstract images.

And all of these components ultimately come together to form works of art that document a performance. As Carey has previously described, in her works, "the *process* becomes the subject."[6] Thus, one can only truly understand a Carey piece when one knows how the final product visually represents each of the steps that went into making the work.

Carey's process always begins with a question. And, in 1987, like the young fish in Wallace's story, she asked herself, "What the hell is an abstract photograph?" The "Dings & Shadows" pieces illustrate her answer, which Carey found when she deconstructed the photographic process. And, in undertaking that inquiry, Carey began at the beginning, going all the way back to Talbot and Atkins works in the 19th century.

This answer builds from the artist's prior oeuvre, which has moved from obscured self-portraits to photograms to Polaroid "Pulls & Rollbacks." Each generation marks an increasing focus on abstraction and color as the subject recedes. The "Dings & Shadows" pieces are color darkroom-produced works given the umbrella title "Struck by Light." [7] This name evokes Carey's practice of *drawing with light*, a process element that connects each of the series in the set.

To create the "Dings & Shadows" series, Carey goes into a completely dark and silent room where she creases, scrunches, and folds large photosensitive paper. The lack of light and noise heighten her tactile sensitivity, which guides her manipulation of the material. Once the paper has been shaped, she uses a color enlarger to expose and activate different parts of the six-layer paper (the drawing-with-light part of the process). Finally, she flattens out the paper and processes it.

Again, all of this takes place in what is, in effect, the lightless and noiseless interior of a camera box. It is as though Carey has gone into the camera itself and taken the place of its inner machinery. In this way, one might be reminded of Jackson Pollock's revolutionary approach to painting wherein he stood over the canvas and applied paint to canvas in manner that understood the tradition of brushstrokes from a distance but was not limited by it.

In Carey's color photograms, no longer is the end product a mechanical capture of a referent. Instead, the artist undertakes the primary means of impressing an image onto the

[6] Donna Fleischer, *Let There Be Light: The Black Swans of Ellen Carey* (quoting Ellen Carey).

[7] The other series in the set are described in Carey's artist statement, which can be found at: http://www.ellencareyphotography.com/s/Carey_ArtistStatement_StruckByLight_2015.doc.

substrate, an application of human artistry that relies on an intimate understanding of the technical processes. In other words, the end product goes from technographic to chirographic.[8]

When attempting to place Carey's process in the abstract-photography tradition of, amongst others, Stieglitz, Talbot, Atkins, Schad, Moholy-Nagy, and Man Ray, there are two elements that leap out as unique challenges to the traditional notion of a photograph as a mechanically-created pictorial sign (i.e., a technographic image) of an object: (1) Carey removes the referent from the photograph and (2) she deliberately creases the large sheets of photosensitive paper by hand.

By removing the referent, Carey pulls us into an inquiry about the relationship between form, representation, and meaning. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart drew the world's attention to the photograph as an object of art by itself, regardless of its subject.[9] But Edwards and Hart still treat photographs as a metonymic form where the photograph is the container of the image. Carey's "Dings & Shadows" series does away with this relationship, collapsing any distinction between the subject (i.e., the referent in a photograph) and the object of art (i.e., the photograph). Just as the etymological root of the term "photography" begins with light, in Carey's latest works there are only the colors created by the light striking the treated substrate. Imagine if, underneath the painting of the pipe, Magritte had written, "*Ceci est la peindre*." This might give you a better understanding of Carey's color photograms, which tell us, "*This is light. This is color.*" And, in taking this approach, her art removes the pictorial sign from photography.

Likewise, by folding the photographic paper, Carey further distances her work from the mimetic. An unmarred photographic sheet permits the substrate to fade into the background, highlighting the pictorial sign of the referent. And any dings are taboo. But, by challenging this convention, Carey again calls our attention to the color photogram as an object of art itself with the type of physicality about which Edwards and Hart were concerned.

Additionally, the creases flout traditional notions of technical craft, given the difficulties of developing large photographs and the care generally taken to avoid such marks. But the creases and folds are not without their own craft. Carey's deliberate folds, fluid transitions of color, and use of color theory result in works that intertwine the organic and the formal, conveying an intellectual rigor, prowess of craft, and abstracted aesthetic beauty that subverts notions of photography as objectively representational.

Further, in a world in which some have argued that "any video, audio, or photographic work of art can be endlessly reproduced without degradation, always the same, always perfect,"[10] Carey's folding of the delicate material is a mark of artistic authorship, ensuring the

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[8] *See* JAMES J. GIBSON, THE ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO VISUAL PERCEPTION 260-62 (2014) (differentiating photographic methods from hand-based methods that he calls "chirographic").

[9] *See* ELIZABETH EDWARDS & JANICE HART (EDS.), PHOTOGRAPHS, OBJECTS, HISTORIES: ON THE MATERIALITY OF IMAGES (2004).

[10] Douglas Davis, *The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction (An Evolving Thesis: 1991-1995)*, Leonardo, Vol. 28, No. 5, Third Annual New York Digital Salon 381-386 (1995).

uniqueness of each work and the importance of each as its own object that must be seen in person to be fully appreciated.

Throughout this article, I have used the term "color photogram" to describe Carey's "Dings & Shadows" pieces. But photograms are generally defined as images created by a cameraless photography process that places an object between photosensitive paper and a light source, creating a shadow exposure.[11] As described above, in answering her own question about the essential nature of an abstract photograph, Carey came up with a unique photographic process that fundamentally differs from those before in that *there is no referent* used to create an image. Instead, the work is the product of Carey's manipulation of the paper (i.e., the creasing and folding) and exposure to different colored light. And, in the end product, there is no real pictorial sign, unlike the abstracted shadow images of a traditional photogram that still indicate the referent.

By removing the referent, Carey created an entirely new type of photograph—one that deserves its own term. The artist has referred to these pieces as "zerograms." This term captures the notion of the absence of light and objects in the creation process of the "Dings & Shadows" works.[12] At the same time, it alludes to her other practice—"Photography Degree Zero"—that encompassed the "Pulls & Rollbacks" set of abstract Polaroids. In contrast to the zerograms, the "Pulls & Rollbacks" are created with a 20x24 Polaroid camera but no darkroom. But in both the "Dings & Shadows" and the "Pulls & Rollbacks" works, Carey experiments with technique while discarding the pictorial sign that is the hallmark of traditional photography.

Regardless of terminology, Carey's "Dings & Shadows" pieces are adding something new and wonderful to the world. And by breaking the traditional rules of photography to create these works, Carey is revealing the hidden elements of photography, both laying bare the inner mechanics of the camera and showing the essential nature of the photograph as a completely freestanding object of art on its own, no referent required.

[11] MICHAEL LANGFORD *ET AL.*, LANGFORD'S BASIC PHOTOGRAPHY: THE GUIDE FOR SERIOUS PHOTOGRAPHERS 324-25 (2010).

[12] Alternatively, I propose the term "photosciagram" to draw attention to the creation process that uses creases and folds (and the resulting shadows) rather than a separate referent object.

M+B

THE CUT

Pushing the Outer Limits of Photography

By Anna Furman
July 25, 2016

Curated by Charlotte Cotton, the New York exhibit “Summer Open: Photography Is Magic” features works by 50 artists who are reinventing the genre of photography and exploiting the medium to different creative ends. Consider the shattered, drifting pieces of rock in one photograph, or another eerie image by Ailbhe Greaney, of a woman in floral-printed clothing who seems to melt into the wallpaper behind her.

For another artist, Ellen Carey, the subject of a photograph isn’t a person or place but color itself: In one shot, she captures crinkly, candy-wrapper-like materials bending and refracting the light in psychedelic colors. (Fun fact: The layered photograph is actually a series of photograms, produced without a camera.)

The open-submission show is on view at Aperture Gallery until August 11. Click ahead to preview the exhibit, including punctured holes as glittery white sparks, an X-ray-like portrait of a woman wearing a colorful quilt, and a correctional-center room covered in cosmic illustrations.

Caesura

Artist Statement
2016

Caesura is Latin for cutting. In music, it represents a break and in poetry, a pause in verse. In this context, *caesura* is my visual metaphor for the current discourse between analog and digital, the break between these two. The vertical line separates the picture plane; it cuts the rectangle in two, made in the "light-tight" environment of the color darkroom. This line demands attention. It contains tiny splits, veins of hues and repetitive patterns cascading along its edges, declaring itself a 'wet process' and in *that* process, denying any and all future predictions of its end.

It references line-as-open form, seen in the 20th century art movements of Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism. My Man Ray discovery found in his "hidden signature" in his black and white photograph *Space Writings* (1935) is all white line; his name is reversed as *nam yar*; when the print is held to a mirror, *man ray*.

Many current "camera operators" carry on, making new images with sophisticated compositions, in brilliant, fearless combinations using "wet" process. In their wake, a re-birth is now taking place, pictures containing fresh ideas and new artistic innovations. There are those who cannot abandon it; they take pictures, print, and re-visit vintage techniques with a new intellectual and aesthetic vigor. On the other side of the line, there are those, often digitally native, who delight in the technology, mixing and matching the software on a computer to output the image as ink on paper. My question: *"Are we not all an extension of the original camera club?"*

Daumier's lithograph (1862) of Nadar holding his big box camera, floating over Paris, in a hot air balloon, is titled:

> *"NADAR élevant la Photographie à la hauteur de l'Art"*
> *(*NADAR elevating Photography to the height of Art)"

While across the pond in England we find "The Linked Ring" (1893-1910), a photographic society, in effect, the first camera club. The purpose was to promote, propose and defend that photography was as much as art as it was a science. Its international roster held lectures, meetings, exhibitions, whose salon also published. Their exhibitions celebrated this new object and documents the struggles to place photography-that-happens-to-be-art with its roots in science and chemistry, activated by the powerful indexical of light. As one traces photography and its popularity across time, through a variety of practitioners and processes, periodicals and publications, galleries and museums, the evolution of *drawing with light*, an early 19th century phrase to describe the medium, sees a *caesura* between analog materials and those of digital technologies across the global picture culture. My *Caesura* series of unique color photograms, my new name *zerograms*, notes these changes while embracing the last several centuries in both photography and art.

M+B

WIDEWALLS

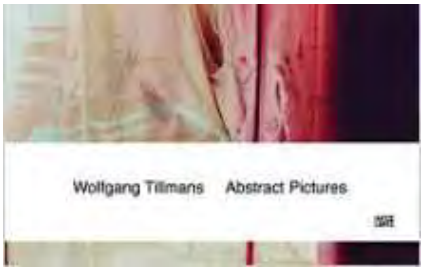
THESE ABSTRACT PHOTOGRAPHERS REDEFINE PERCEPTION OF THE REAL

Angie Kordic
June 14, 2016

What exactly is it that makes abstraction in photography so distinct and alluring? The truth is that abstract photographers can turn anything into a concept, an idea, a metaphysical interpretation of an element of reality. It is their choice of composition, point of view, focus and technical approach, among other things, that makes all the difference, as they transform the world as we know it into an abstract web of forms, lines and colors. Ever since the Surrealist masters, this form of image-making has been among the most popular – but also the most challenging ones, as its artists continued to prove the fact that photography isn't just a simple click of a shutter – au contraire! It takes a lot of creativity and imagination to see beyond the surface and capture the invisible – which is why these particular photo makers now stand out as those who have set the bar for generations to come.

Editors' Tip: Wolfgang Tillmans: Abstract Pictures

Wolfgang Tillmans is without a doubt one of the most prominent practitioners of abstract photography today. In the past decade he has pursued this tack, making wholly non-representational photographs that explore processes of exposure. From the delicate veils of color in the Blushes and Freischwimmer series, and the sculptural paper drops made of folded or rolled-up photographic paper, to the colorfully compelling photos of the Lighter series, the printed object itself, divorced from its reproductive function, is always the point. Designed by the photographer, and with 275 color reproductions of these images, Abstract Pictures – now in paperback – impressively demonstrates how fruitfully Tillmans has mined this terrain.



Ellen Carey - The Polaroid Artist
Self-described as a lens-based practitioner, Ellen Carey is known for her iconic Polaroid works, also called Pulls, which merge the concepts of major art movements such as Abstraction and Minimalism into single images. Her artworks bring a unique and compelling range of form and hue and high impact compositions in tandem with inventive methods of expression, resulting in bold, innovative, experimental visceral and physical artworks. Ellen Carey also uses her large Polaroid 20×24 camera to create site-specific installations, and is surely one of the most creative and forward-thinking abstract photographers out there.

Ellen Carey – Self Portrait, 1987. Courtesy of artist and M+B Gallery, Los Angeles

Wolfgang Tillmans - The Darkroom Experimenter
Working in a variety of genres, such as portraits, still lifes, sky photographs, astrophotography, aerial shots and landscapes, Wolfgang Tillmans managed to establish himself as one of the leading fine art photographers in Germany and worldwide. The first non-English artist to win the prestigious Turner Prize, he initially started taking snapshots of his friends, but perhaps he's most famous for his stunning abstract photography, either created as a result of technical and chemical experimentations in the darkroom, as collages, or the print of a monochrome laser copier. In fact, the imagery made in the darkroom are the most captivating ones, as they evoke the very essence of an abstraction by creating the idea from scratch, rather than modifying reality.

Wolfgang Tillmans
Image via imageobjecttext.wordpress.

Aaron Siskind - Inspired by Abstract Expressionism
Influenced by Abstract Expressionism and, in particular, the paintings of Franz Kline, Aaron Siskind dedicated himself to photographing details of nature and architecture, with a focus on the texture, lines and patterns. In fact, his photographs were exhibited next to expressionist paintings more than often. A photographer by accident – he received a camera as a gift – he started off with documentary shots, only to realise his interest hid in more conceptual ideas of the surrounding world. In the manner of a proper master of Geometric abstract art, Aaron Siskind worked carefully, making sure to frame his image the best way he could in order to obtain something not immediately identifiable.

Thomas Ruff - Master of Technology
Maybe you've come across the work of Thomas Ruff through his popular Nudes, which could also be considered examples of abstract photography in a way – based on internet pornography imagery, they are digitally processed and obscured without any camera or traditional photographic device. The technology plays a great role in the production of Thomas Ruff, as the photographer often uses it to achieve the impressive visual results – take his recent Photograms, created without a camera, which depict abstract shapes, lines and spirals in seemingly random formations with varying degrees of transparency and illumination. This way, the photographer makes new visual possibilities of the medium and questions its artistic qualities.

Penelope Umbrico - Suns from Flickr
In her practice, Penelope Umbrico uses search engines and picture sharing websites to create appropriated art. Exploring the consumerism, its marketing and the impact of social media, she isolates moments from consumer product mail-order catalogs too, and websites like Craigslist and eBay. Her most famous project to date is Suns from Flickr, for which she found a total of 541,795 pictures of sunsets, as they prove to be the most photographed subject ever. The more she would look it up, the more results she would obtain, which resulted in multiple editions of this project, all of which were exhibited in form of installations in 2006, 2008 and 2009.

Barbara Kasten - Two-Dimensional Three-Dimensionality
Barbara Kasten started off as a painter and textile artist, as these were the fields she studied. But shortly after graduating, she turned to photography and, under the influence of Bauhaus and the abstract photography of László Moholy-Nagy, the artist began recording three-dimensional spaces onto a two-dimensional plane of the photographic paper, often using props like mirrors and lights for the best visual results and pure abstraction. But Barbara Kasten did not abandon the above mentioned studies – using materials such as plexiglas and mesh, she contracts large-scale sets that rely on shadow, light and reflection and then photographs them from angles that reveal their geometric compositions the best way possible.

William Klein - Abstraction in Black and White
The truth is that William Klein is a photographer whose social documentary works and fashion images, all within wide-angle and telephoto shots, are among the most famous ones in the history of photography. However, he is also a sculpture, filmmaker and painter, and in the early 1950s, he began making experimental abstract photographs of his paintings while they were in motion. His black and white photographs are completely dedicated to contrast and intriguing forms and shapes, and most of the time the viewers can't tell what it is these images depict exactly. Sometimes the abstraction would overlap with his fashion or documentary shots, thus creating almost new genres that are even more captivating and alluring.

Kim Keever - Dreamlike Landscapes
Kim Keever is someone who creates his photographs from scratch. They're large-scale, impressive shots of color explosions, dreamy landscapes, mysterious twirls and smoke-like masses. They're actually meticulously hand-made structures consisting of 200-gallon tanks, miniature topographies and water, in which he then dissolves color pigments and applies coloured lights to, in order to create the ephemeral atmospheres we see in his photographs. He must be quick, as these structures will disappear very quickly. As such, Kim Keever's abstract photography references and is inspired by a broad history of landscape painting, especially that of Romanticism, the Hudson River School and Luminism.

Ori Gersht - Of Sublime Colors
Ori Gersht is an Israeli fine art photographer whose main topics include death, trauma, violence, loss and the concepts of beauty. One of his most famous works come from a series which features classic still life compositions of flowers and fruits which gloriously explore before the photographic lens to explore the relationship between photography and cutting-edge technology. Ori Gersht's more sublime works depict the skies of London, captured without the use of any filters or other manipulation. Reminiscing Mark Rothko, these photographs test the medium's ability to transmit the splendid colors of nature during the threshold between daylight and nighttime.

Be·hold

Be-hold, Yonkers, NY, presents *Self in Polaroid*, an exhibition of photographs by Ellen Carey and Judy Coleman opening June 4. These works explore the self-portrait in unusual ways, using Polaroid materials.

Ellen Carey exhibits for the first time, her series from 2001 titled, *Stopping Down,* with its referenced camera aperture as it relates to the spatiality and durative nature of light, to the punctual and directive passing of a life in time. This series, created with instant Polaroid technology, is a precursor of the global 'selfie' phenomenon.

Ellen Carey, *RGB:YMC,* 2001

Carey used the large-format 8 X 10 camera and Polaroid color film to position her head, neck and shoulders, front and center, in increasingly diminishing exposures, beginning at the largest aperture of f#/9 to the smallest on the lens in f/#128, a range of nine stops. Each attendant self-portrait in Polaroid shows less and less of the artist; her features are subtle and barely seen, camouflaging her gender. These hyper-real, pristine prints are

backlit, forming an afterglow of light, a shimmering soft halo that emphasizes both the dramatic silhouette and her fluid outline. The incremental progression, in each of the nine apertures, as they "stop down" suggests time passing, until it is, as we are, out of time. The face lacks any clues or expressive self-revelation, often the goal of self-portraiture. The head, neck and shoulders are silhouetted, stand-ins for anyone and everyone, as she/we/they fade into darkness, conceptually highlighting for Carey the existential dilemma of living and dying as found in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness.*

RGBYMC presents a suite of six Polaroid images that take photographic color theory as its conceptual and contextual point-of-departure, it also signals another kind of self-portrait, Carey's love of color. Her experiments in color can be seen in her Polaroid *Pulls* and *Rollbacks* and camera-less photograms, such as *Dings & Shadows*.

Ellen Carey, *Stopping Down*, 2001

Carey's adds photographic and symbolic significance to the Polaroid process, finding the negative as a "picture sign" for mourning and loss, the empty rectangle a void, reminiscent of an earthy open burial pit, black cool and opaque. One thinks of photographic history vis-a-vis the self-portrait, a large and long tradition, however in Hippolyte Bayard's "Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man" (1840), he imagines himself for the camera, drowned and dead. Ellen Carey puts her *Stopping Down* negatives underneath (the ground) of the positives, the universal flip of life and death.

Carey is the only Polaroid artist to keep the negatives, often exhibiting them with their respective positives, highlighting Talbot's negative-to-positive duality, it origins located in the "shadow" image, often seen as a ghostly silhouette or outline in his early photograms. This rich history of the shadow image in art and photography find Polaroid's haunting remains in the negatives, chemical residues that have oxidized over time, their patinas a rich velvety black, the opposite of their stark monochromes in Carey's self-portraits-as-positives. *Stopping Down* offers contemplation on many of life's big questions, while offering reflective silence for answers, it links photography and time to Polaroid and aging, adding to the discourse on what it means to have and be a "self."

Interviews from Yale University Radio WYBCX: Ellen Carey

April 18, 2016

Photo: Ulrich Birkmaier

Ellen Carey (b.1952 USA) is an educator, independent scholar, guest curator, photographer and lens-based artist, whose unique experimental work (1976-2015) spans several decades. Her early work Painted Self-Portraits (1978) were first exhibited at Hallwalls, an artists-run alternative space, home to the Buffalo avant-garde — Robert Longo and Cindy Sherman — and led to a group exhibit The Altered Image at PS 1, another avant-garde institution.

The visionary curator, Linda Cathcart, of The Albright-Knox Art Gallery (AKAG) selected Carey's work for this exhibition as well as The Heroic Figure which presented thirteen American artists for the São Paulo Biennale including Cindy Sherman, Nancy Dwyer, Julian Schnabel and David Salle, with portraits by Robert Mapplethorpe, for its South and North American tour (1984-1986).

In 1983, The Polaroid Artists Support Program invited Carey to work at the Polaroid 20 X 24 Studio. Her Neo-Geo, post-psychedelic Self-Portraits (1984-87) were created, quickly followed by her stacked photo-installations Abstractions (1988-95). Her pioneering breakthrough the Pull (1996) and Rollback(1997) name her practice Photography Degree Zero (1996-2011). Here, she investigates minimal and abstract images with Polaroid instant technology partnered with her innovovative concepts, often using only light, photography's indexical, or none, emphasizing zero. Her photogram work is cameraless; it parallels her Polaroid less-is-more aesthetic under her umbrella concept Struck by Light (1992-2015). Carey has worked in a variety of cameras and formats: Polaroid SX-70 and Polaroid PN film; black/white to color; 35mm, medium, and large format. Her experimental images, in a range of genres and themes, are one-of-a-kind.

Site-specific monumental installations in Polaroid includeMourning Wall of 100 grey negatives at Real Art Ways (2000) and Part-Picture exhibition (2015) at Museum of Canadian Contemporary Art (MoCCA); Self-Portrait @ 48 at Connecticut Commission for the Arts (2001) and the gigantic Pulls XL that used the Polaroid 40 X 80 camera (shortly thereafter dismantled, never reassembled) for her MATRIX #153 exhibit (2004-05) at The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art; the prestigious MATRIX program celebrates its 40th year. Dings & Shadows, a new color photogram installation, recently exhibited at the Benton Museum of Art and another at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). Her new series Caesura uses the photogram to introduce visual breaks in color; caesura is Greek or Latin for pause: in word (poetry) or sound (music).

Photography Degree Zero (1996-2011) names her Polaroid lens-based art while Struck by Light (1992-2015) names her parallel practice in the cameraless photogram. Her experimental investigations into abstraction and minimalism, partnered with her innovative concepts and iconoclastic artmaking, often use bold colors and new forms. Pictus & Writ (2008-2015) finds the artist tradition of writing on other artists. Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective at MASS MoCA, with Yale University Press, published the book Sol LeWitt:100 Views with 100 new essays; Color Me Real is Ellen Carey's contribution. Her Man Ray essay on her discovery of his "hidden" signature in his black and white photograph (1935) titled Space Writings (Self-Portrait) sees an edited version At Play with Man Ray published in Aperture. On her own work In Hamlet's Shadow, published inThe Polaroid Years: Instant Photography and Experimentationexhibit/book/tour (2012-13); Mary-Kay Lombino, Curator, Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College.

Ellen Carey's work has been the subject of 53 one-person exhibitions in museums, alternative spaces, university, college and commercial galleries (1978-2015): The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Real Art Ways, Lyman Allyn Art Museum, St. Joseph University, and ICP/NY. Her work seen in hundreds of group exhibitions (1974-2015): museums (Smithsonian), alternative spaces (Hallwalls), galleries (Perrotin) and non-profits (Aperture). Her work is in the permanent collections of over twenty photography and art museums: Albright-Knox Art Gallery (AKAG), George Eastman House (GEH), Museum at the Chicago Art Institute, Fogg Museum at Harvard University, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Metropolitan Museum of Art, New Britain Museum of American Art (NBMAA), Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM), Whitney Museum ofAmerican Art, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery; corporate: Banana Republic; private: Linda and Walter Wick, and the LeWitt Foundation.

Listen to the audio clip here: vhttp://museumofnonvisibleart.com/interviews/

13 ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHERS ON THE SELF PORTRAIT

FRANCESCA WOODMAN
ARNO RAFAEL MINKKINEN
ELLEN CAREY
ALYSON BEECHER
HELMUT NEWTON
SHEN WEI
ANDREAS RENTSCH
FRED CRAY
ANNU PALAKUNNATHU MATTHEW
ANTHONY GOICOLEA
MICHAL MACKO
MIRU KIM
VERONICA CERNA

Right from the time of Robert Cornelius and Hippolyte Bayard to the likes of Lee Friedlander, Cindy Sherman and Vivian Maier carrying the mantle, self portraiture has come a long way. How do different practitioners examine their thoughts and experiences? What makes their articulation of these feelings, approach and practice unique to themselves?

Sakshi Parikh shares stories of imagemakers who have looked inwards, examined their lives and made themselves the protagonists of their own story.

Helmut Newton "...what I try to do is a good bad picture."

Photograph by Helmut Newton, Image Courtesy: Helmut Newton Estate

One of the most influential voices of the last century (1920–2004), Helmut Newton's iconic work is enveloped with sex, sensuality and surrealism. His use of fetish imagery has both, been criticised and celebrated by feminists and commentators, and has inspired a generation of fashion photographers. An ongoing exhibition of his work, titled *Pages from the Glossies* and Greg Gorman's *Colour Works*, offers us a new perspective on many of his images. The show is on view till 22 May 2016 at the Museum of Photography, Helmut Newton Foundation, Jebensstr, 210623 Berlin.

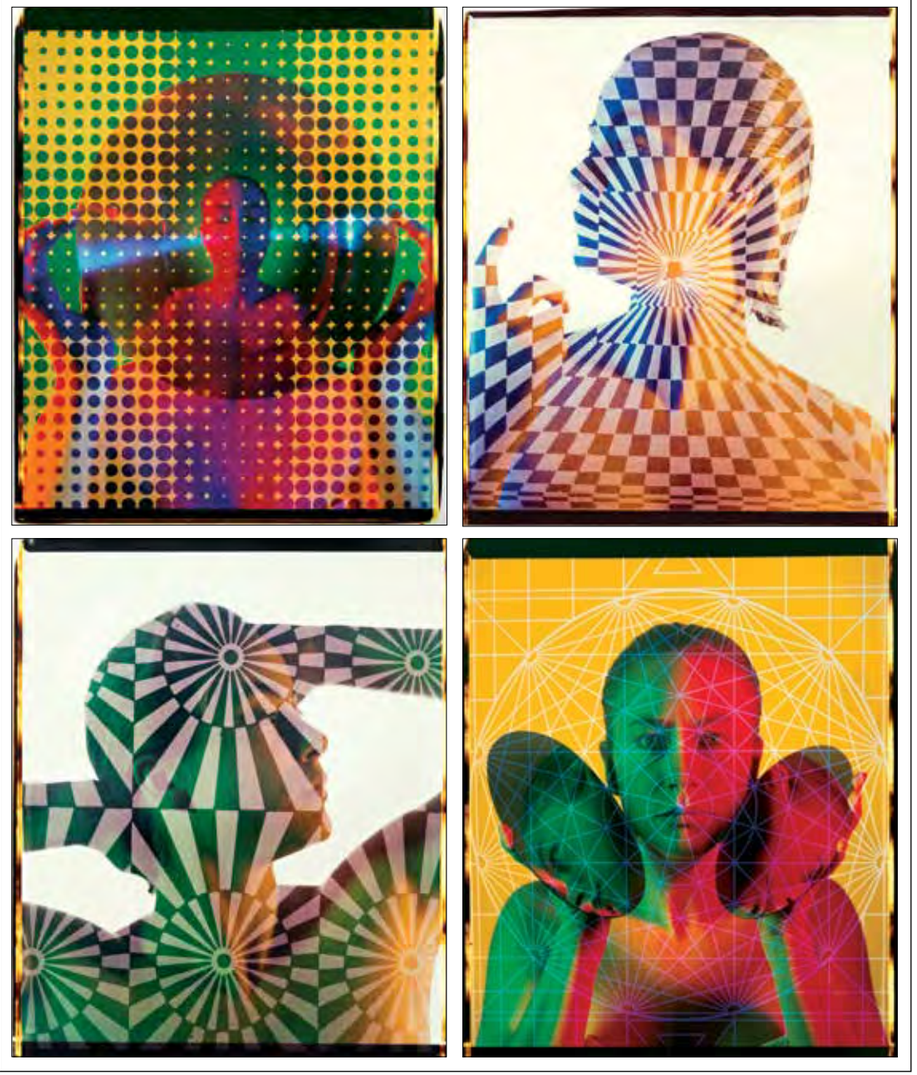
Helmut Newton, Self portrait with model, Elle, Paris 1969

If the theme has something to do with my life, past or present, it seems a nice idea to put myself in it.

There are moments when I am photographing, when the picture goes beyond the photographed, and starts becoming about me. It's at times like these when including myself within the frame, in a mirror, or through a timed remote release, becomes an interesting exercise. These personal photographs speak about how my life has evolved over the years. Elements come in that allude to the little signals of my life—my models, my cameras, my wife, the studio. That is what I call an autobiographical picture.

Ellen Carey

Ellen Carey's work highlights the use of experimentation and colour. She believes that her Catholic upbringing has subconsciously contributed to the stained glass look in the photos, which she made with a large format Polaroid 20 x 24, one of five in the world.

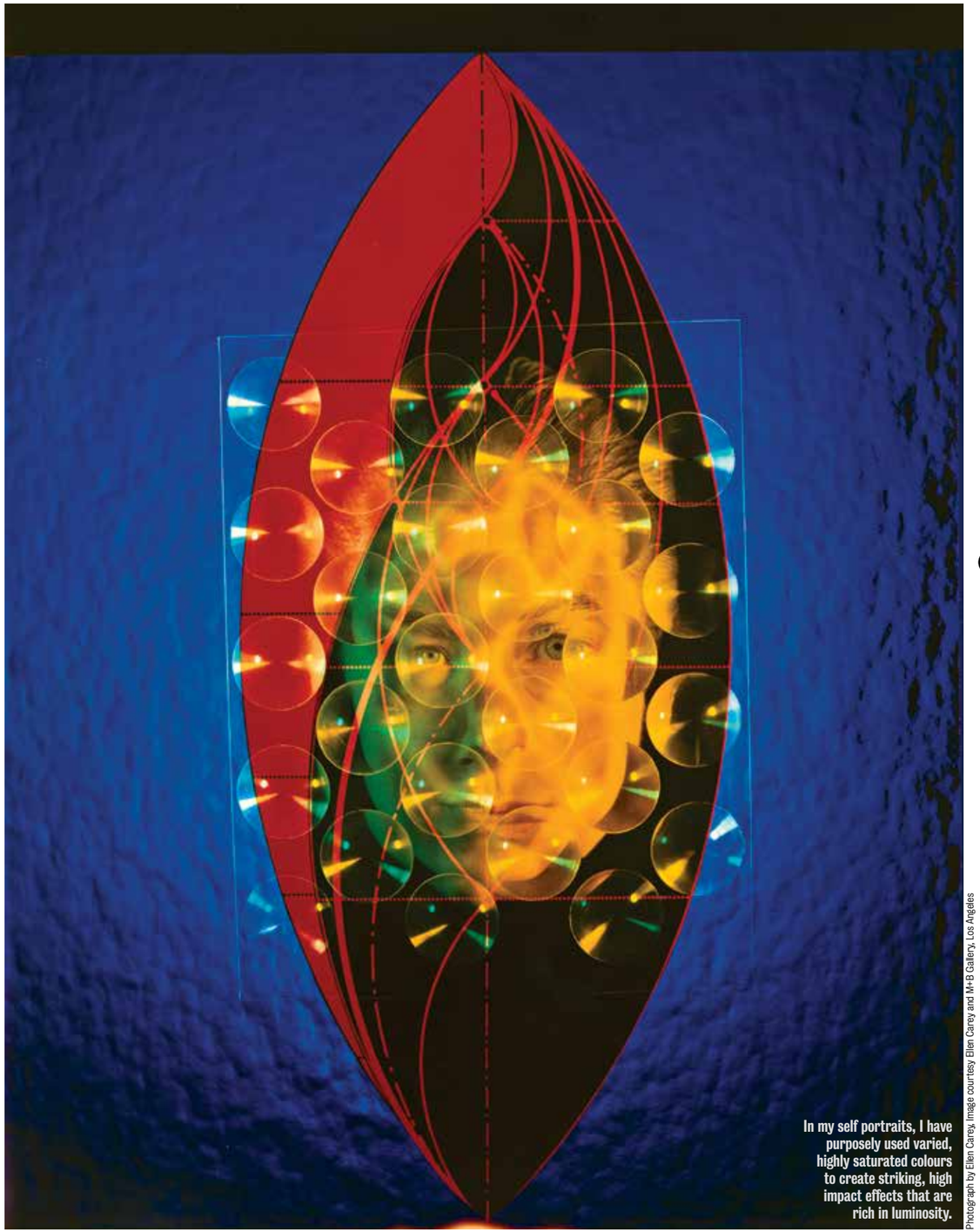


Reflections on being and having a 'self' are paired with the Polaroid process. Polaroid's tagline *See What Develops* has multifaceted meanings, and is a fitting metaphor for my practice.

My self portraits, simultaneously me and not me, are purposely posed as head and shoulders, to camouflage and/or 'expose' my gender, to borrow a photographic term.

In the late seventies and early eighties, questions of identity, of "Who am I?" and "What is the Self?" seemed natural for a young artist, a search that was one aspect of the 'artist's struggle'. While acknowledging the 'self' as a small part in relation to a much larger, unknowable whole, I moved away from standard notions of selfhood, which involved roleplay, gender identity, dress up, and disguise. Instead, I focused on utopian ideologies of transformation and transcendence embedded in the philosophy of being and nothingness, as theorised by the founder of existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre.

"These colour photographs are the artifacts of my imaginary wanderings."



In my self portraits, I have purposely used varied, highly saturated colours to create striking, high impact effects that are rich in luminosity.

Photograph by Ellen Carey. Image courtesy Ellen Carey and M+B Gallery, Los Angeles

Centre Pompidou

PRESS RELEASE
THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS
THE 1980S
PHOTOGRAPHY, FILM
24 FEBRUARY – 23 MAY 2016
PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY, FORUM-1

19 january 2016

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Agnès Bonnot
(Sans titre), 1982
40,2 x 26,4 cm
Epreuve cibachrome
Collection Centre Pompidou, Paris
Centre Pompidou / P.Migeat / Dist. RMN-GP

In partnership with

Heterogeneous, elusive, painful, fantastical, still too close, as light-hearted as they were serious, the Eighties were full of contrasts and paradoxes. With films and photographs from its collections, the Centre Pompidou cast a fresh eye on this decade in an exhibition featuring over 20 artists and some 60 works in a completely new circuit.

From Florence Paradeis to Jean-Paul Goude, and from Karen Knorr to Présence Panchounette by way of Martin Parr and Pierre and Gilles, the works selected mostly express criticism of culture and society through various strategies, such as irony, realistic or imaginative staging, pastiche, subverted sets and odes to artifice. The history of Eighties photography somewhat eludes comprehension even today.
While neo-documentary forms (such as "The Düsseldorf School", the photographic project of DATAR, the Interdepartmental Delegation for Territorial Development and Regional Attractiveness) were positively received by critics overall, the same was not true of "manufactured", staged or possibly "Baroque" photography, which represented much of the work produced in the Eighties. Beyond the sometimes too all-inclusive concept of post-modernism, the Eighties saw the emergence of new issues that were both poetic and political. Hybridisation, humour, irony, eroticism and nostalgia are all possible keys to interpreting the art of this period, particularly its photography.
Mainly dedicated to the Western and American scene of the 1980s, well-represented in the Centre Pompidou's collection, this exhibition reflects the geopolitical and economic order of a time when the ideological divisions between North and South, East and West, capitalist democracies and centralised totalitarian regimes were being swept aside by the new global economy.
With a mix of famous works and others awaiting rediscovery, the exhibition draws us into the aesthetics and sometimes popular iconography typical of this period and geography.
In France, the Eighties were crucial for photography in terms of art and heritage. Several major

photography museums and collections sprang up or developed under a new impulse. At the same time, a new generation of "painter-photographers" appeared, who were keen to do away with the barrier between photography and painting and rebelled against the language of the previous generation. This new photography, often highly "pictorialist" in Western countries, developed forms that were closely connected with technical advances in this area: the availability of good-quality colour photography, the possibilities provided by large formats and the instantaneousness of Polaroid. The meeting between these new production methods and the search for different forms and themes in classic photography created another paradox: works that were openly anti-documentary proved to be such an accurate reflection of the reality they came from that in the end they were its best representation.

The exhibition of the Centre Pompidou brings together for the first time the works of BazileBustamante, Agnès Bonnot, David Buckland, Ellen Carey, Clegg & Guttmann, Tom Drahos, Jean-Paul Goude, Hergo, Karen Knorr, Elizabeth Lennard, Joachim Mogarra, Patrick Nagatani, Paul de Nooijer, Alice Odilon, Florence Paradeis, Martin Parr, Pierre et Gilles, Présence Panchounette, Alix Cléo Roubaud, Sandy Skoglund, Unglee, Boyd Webb, Mark Wilcox.

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Hôtel de Ville, Rambuteau

Opening hours
Exhibition open every day
from 11 am to 9 pm except on
Tuesday
Closed on May 1st

Price
Free admission

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In collaboration with Marie Auger, Emmanuelle Etchecopar-Etchart, Jonathan Pouthier

M+B

artpress

The Unbearable Lightness. The 1980s

By Etienne Hatt
November 2, 2016

PARIS

L'insoutenable légèreté. Les années 1980

Centre Pompidou / 24 février - 23 mai 2016

Sans doute était-il temps de rendre justice aux années 1980, décennie mal aimée de l'argent facile, de la faillite sociale du libéralisme et de l'apparition du sida qu'Anne Bony, directrice d'une collection d'ouvrages sur toutes les décennies du 20e siècle, avait naguère qualifiée de « protéiforme, onaniste et funeste ». La Galerie de photographies du Centre Pompidou s'y emploie. Elle ne livre pas l'histoire détaillée et connue de la photographie de cette période ; on n'y verra pas, de Jeff Wall à Nan Goldin et de la Pictures Generation à l'École de Dusseldörf, les grandes figures et les grands courants qui se sont alors affirmés, ni le genre du paysage, qui connaît alors un nouvel essor. À la fois plus modeste et ambitieuse, elle tente, en associant avec parcimonie mais justesse le cinéma à la photographie, de saisir un esprit du temps, dont son titre emprunté à Milan Kundera dit toute l'ambivalence. Son propos aurait sans doute pu être plus précis et articulé mais, au long des quatre chapitres, s'impose l'idée d'une décennie placée sous le signe de l'artifice. Il est tantôt exalté, tantôt critique, comme en témoignent deux des meilleurs passages de l'exposition. Exalté, comme dans ce beau dialogue, où publicité et expérimentation se mêlent, entre un mur entier, osé en ces lieux et très réussi consacré à Jean-Paul Goude et à son égérie Grace Jones et le film *Radio-serpent* (1980) d'Unglee qui, dans un rythme saccadé, met en scène un environnement high-tech de néons où évoluent Pascale Ogier et Benjamin Baltimore. Critique, quand Florence Paradeis et Karen Knorr théâtralisent dans des saynètes faussement banales les modes de vie et les usages des classes sociales. Il faut voir ces *Gentlemen* de Knorr rejouer dans le même lieu le portrait de groupe qui figure à l'arrière-plan, au-dessus de la cheminée d'un de ces clubs anglais. Il y a ainsi beaucoup d'ironie dans ces photographies des années 1980. Bien sûr dans les mises en scène dérisoires de Joachim Mogarra qui transforme un carton de Pastis en *Barrage d'Assouan* (1984), mais aussi dans la plupart de ces travaux qui, dans des grands formats couleur qui se multiplient, semblaient devoir céder au plaisir du spectacle. La photographie de mobilier du 18e siècle par BAZILEBUSTAMANTE est ainsi bien trop rutilante pour ne pas être une critique du prétendu bon goût. Ce véritable tableau photographique souligne aussi que l'artifice est indissociable de la porosité alors très grande entre la photographie, la peinture et la sculpture : Pierre et Gilles rehaussent leur portrait d'Étienne Daho qui fera la pochette de *la Notte, la Notte* (1984) et rappellent l'importance de la musique dans l'esthétique de la décennie, tandis que Sandy Skoglund construit un inquiétant intérieur envahi par des chats fluorescents. Reste une question : les années 1980 sont-elles vraiment finies ? Goude et Pierre et Gilles les ont très certainement prolongées – souvent pour le pire. Mais les expérimentations de la méconnue et remarquable Ellen Carey, dont le visage disparaissait alors sous des trames mathématiques ou psychédéliques, explorent aujourd'hui l'essence – la vérité ? – du médium.

Étienne Hatt

Perhaps the time has come to do justice to the 1980s, that little-loved decade of easy money, the social failure of liberalism and AIDS, the period that Anne Bony, editor of a collection of volumes on the decades of the 20th century, described as "protean, onanistic and dire." The Pompidou's photography gallery has set out to do just that, but this is not a detailed and familiar history of the medium during those years: don't come looking for Jeff Wall, Nan Goldin, the Pictures Generation, the Dusseldörf School, or any other of the big names and trends that are now in the history books, nor even the landscape genre, which enjoyed something of a renaissance back then. This is both more modest and more ambitious than that. Cleverly combining cinema and photography, the show sets out to grasp the spirit of the time, the ambiguity of which is well summed up in its title, taken from Milan Kundera's famous (or famously filmed) novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. No doubt, the approach could have been more precise and articulate but what these four sections convey is the idea of a decade when artifice ruled. As two of the best sections here show, this could be either exalted or critical. It is the former in the fine dialogue, combining advertising and experiment, between the whole wall dedicated to Jean-Paul Goude and his muse Grace Jones (a daring inclusion in such a venue) and Unglee's *Radio-serpent* (1980), a stuttering film showing a hi-tech environment inhabited by Pascale Ogier and Benjamin Baltimore. It is critical when Florence Paradeis and Karen Knorr theatricalize their falsely banal sketches of ways of life and the habits of different classes. It is great fun to see Knorr's "Gentlemen" restage the group portrait seen behind them, over the mantelpiece of an English club—and do so in the club itself. There is a good dose of irony in these photos from the 1980s. It is there too, of course, in the pathetic stagings by Joachim Mogarra which transform a pastis box into the "Aswan Dam" (1984), but also in most of the works whose use of large formats and color might be expected to indulge in the pleasures of the spectacle. The photograph of 18th-century furniture by BAZILEBUSTAMANTE is much too glossy not to be critical of this purported "good taste." This photographic tableau shows that artifice is inseparable from what was then the considerable interchange between photography, painting and sculpture. Pierre & Gilles heightened their portrait of singer Étienne Daho, used for the cover of the album *La Notte, la Notte* (1984), reminding us of the importance of music in the aesthetic of the day, while Sandy Skoglund constructed a disturbing interior invaded by fluorescent cats. One question remains unanswered: are the 1980s really over? Goude and Pierre & Gilles have certainly prolonged them, and not always in a good way. But the experiments of the little-known and remarkable Ellen Carey, whose face disappeared back in the day behind mathematical or psychedelic grids, are now exploring the essence—the truth?—of the medium.

Translation, C. Penwarden

Ellen Carey. « Self-Portrait ». 1987. Épreuve couleur Polaroid 20 x 24. 60 x 50 cm. (Court. JHB Gallery, NY, et M+B, Los Angeles © E. Carey)

M+B

Aesthetica

Interview with Ellen Carey, Poet With A Lens, Les années 1980, Centre Pompidou, Paris

March 30, 2016
By Tim Barry

Ellen Carey came of age artistically in the 1980s, which was a decade in photography that saw radical innovation, and a real move away from merely representational and reportorial image-making. Carey's investigations in the ensuing years have charted a course increasingly abstract, boldly experimental, arriving a place where, as she puts it, "subject matter is not there." Her trajectory in the art world began at the University of Buffalo, in the late 1970s, and continued to develop when she moved to New York City in 1979. Carey often makes images without a camera, in a process she calls 'painting with emulsion.' When she trains her camera's eye onto an object, the resulting image may bear no relation to the subject. She uses light the way that abstract painters use paint. We speak to Carey about her inclusion in group exhibition Les années 1980, l'insoutenable légèreté at Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Ellen Carey, Self Portrait, 1987
Courtesy Centre Pompidou

A: In a world where everyone walks around with a camera in their pocket, has the rise of the smartphone had an impact on Fine Art photography?
EC: Yes, I think it's great for photography, as we're now seeing a global visual culture. People think visually now; images transcend language barriers, age, race, economics. People are more open to images. With three-year-olds having smartphones, who knows what images we're going to be seeing?

A: The exhibition at the Pompidou focuses on the 1980s. What is iconic about this decade, and what makes it culturally important today?
EC: We are now 25 years out from the 1980s, and the decade is being looked at with new eyes. 60s Pop and 70s Minimalism and Conceptualism have been reappraised, now it's the turn of the 80s. There were barriers broken down then, innovation was not only allowed, it was expected. There was an 'anything goes' sort of chaos, graffiti art, neo-expressionism.

A: In your opinion, was it easier for artists to develop and establish themselves back then?
EC: I feel it was just different. There's more to learn today. There's social media. There was no gatekeeping. Today there's the emerging artist, there's the mid-career artist, you need to go up the ladder. In the 1980s, it was open territory – you could break rules. It was a meritology. Remember, early on there were almost no galleries for us. P.S. 1 (the Museum of Modern Art's contemporary venue) had just opened up, and you had to go to museums and look in books to see art. New York was gritty, it was scary, a new territory for young artists – it was kind of like Blade Runner.

A: You call yourself a 'lens-based artist' rather than strictly a photographer. Can you describe the term abstract photography?
EC: All photographs are inventions and processes. Photography was always based on picture-signs: you had the portrait, the landscape, the still-life. With abstract photography, you don't know what the picture is, or how it was made. I took out the picture signs. I got restless with straight photography, with the surface. You turn the camera on yourself. I started doing painted self-portraits.

A: It seems your investigations are akin to that of James Welling and Cindy Sherman, though of course her's are not abstract.
EC: There are affinities and overlaps with what I do and what they do, as well as differences. My influences stem from the world of Dada, surrealism, and especially Man Ray. Russian Constructivism has also had a great influence on my development. With Jackson Pollock, for example, you had the gestalt of the brush, the thing itself. He took the canvas off of the stretcher, and put it on the floor. So, change of process. I stepped into the black box of the darkroom. Also tools are important; the Polaroid 20×24 was an innovation every bit as groundbreaking as anything Steve Jobs created.

Ellen Carey's work features in Les années 1980, l'insoutenable légèreté, until 23 May, Centre Pompidou, Paris. For more, visit www.centrepompidou.fr.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ELLEN CAREY
Polaroid 20 x 24 Self-Portraits

November 6, 2015 – January 16, 2016

Opening Reception

Friday, November 6, 2015 from 6 to 8 pm

M+B is pleased to present *Ellen Carey: Polaroid 20 x 24 Self-Portraits*. This will be the artist's first exhibition with the gallery and her solo debut in Los Angeles. The exhibition runs from November 6, 2015 through January 16, 2016, with an opening reception on Friday, November 6 from 6 to 8pm.

Ellen Carey (b. 1952) is one of the country's foremost experimental photographers. Her pioneering work with the large-format Polaroid 20 x 24 camera spans several decades and anticipated major themes in contemporary photography. Carey began working with the camera in New York in 1983, starting with her S*elf-Portrait* series. Her experimentation with abstraction in these images was a precursor to her later, purely abstract *Pulls*. Though still representational, these self-portraits were anomalous to the themes of image appropriation and cultural politics that occupied her peers in the Pictures Generation. In contrast, Carey used the self as subject to explore the unseen. The photographs feature the artist's likeness overlaid with wild psychedelic patterns, and figures from mathematics—fractals, Pythagorean golden means, sacred geometry— that describe a hidden order within nature, or point to transcendent realms. Known for her technical virtuosity, these complex and layered compositions were made without a darkroom and pre-date digital imaging technologies with an uncanny prescient sense of the future.

Ellen Carey received her BFA from Kansas City Art Institute, Kansas City, MO and MFA from The State University of New York at Buffalo. Her work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions at such institutions as the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT and International Center of Photography, New York, among others. In spring 2016, a selection of Carey's *Self-Portraits* will be presented in the thematic exhibition, *The Society of the Spectacle* at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. The forthcoming *Polaroid Project* show at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology will also include her work. Recent group shows include *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography* at the Aperture Foundation, New York; *Part Picture* at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, Toronto; *Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avant-Garde in the 1970s* at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; and *The Persistence of Geometry* at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Carey's work can be found in the permanent collections of The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; George Eastman Museum, Rochester; Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, MO; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.; Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford; Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth; Brooklyn Museum of Art; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, among others. Ellen Carey teaches at the Hartford Art School, University of Hartford in Connecticut.

Location:	**M+B**, 612 North Almont Drive, Los Angeles, California 90069
Show Title:	Ellen Carey: Polaroid 20 x 24 Self-Portraits
Exhibition Dates:	November 6, 2015 – January 16, 2016
Opening Reception:	Friday, November 6, 6 – 8pm
Gallery Hours:	Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, and by appointment

For press inquiries, please contact Jeanie Choi at (310) 550-0050 or jeanie@mbart.com.

For all other inquiries, contact Shannon Richardson at shannon@mbart.com or Jonlin Wung at jonlin@mbart.com.

# # #

Beyond the Self: The Early Polaroids of Ellen Carey

by Chris Wiley
2015

Sometimes, things do not so much fall into place effortlessly, like the languid hand of a dreamer might come to rest on a waiting pillow, but rather rise up and insist on their place within a moment in time. Ellen Carey's work came to my attention like that—insistently—as if it could not abide being missed.

A year ago, I took part in an exhibition at Real Art Ways in Hartford, Connecticut. I attended the opening, and briefly talked with Ellen, whose studio is in the same building as the exhibition space. But as is commonplace with opening chit-chat, my encounter was quickly churned under by the fast flow of the evening. The next morning, however, I awoke in a friend's cabin in Vermont, and snatched up an old copy of *ARTFORUM* to sit down with over my coffee. Miraculously, on the first page I turned to was a review of Carey's marvelous Polaroid *Pulls*, complete with a small illustration. As you might imagine, her work now had my full attention.

Of course, even this little instance of synchronicity might have passed without much notice, had it not been immediately clear that Carey's abstract Polaroids were unacknowledged precursors to the work of a young generation of photographers that I count myself among. Our project, if it can be so programmatically described, is one that aims to expand photography's territory by commingling it with aspects of other media, principally painting and sculpture. In my estimation, this shift in photographic practice took place principally in reaction to both the dematerialization of the photograph as a result of the rise of digital media, and to the image environment that said media have created, in which it seems as if every possible photograph has already been made, and archived online. Carey's *Pulls*, which engage with the materials of photography in a supremely painterly manner, fit our loosely defined program perfectly, and resonate directly with the work of younger artists like Mariah Robertson, whose abstract works made with washes of chemistry applied directly to photographic paper are perhaps the closest relatives of Carey's work with Polaroid film. That Carey's work arose as an anomaly among her peers who formed the backbone of what has become known as the Pictures Generation, whose work reacted in a wholly different manner to the echo chamber of images that defined the 1980s and presaged our own world of digital image overload, made her work seem all the more prescient.

As I got to know Carey and her work more, the instance of a causal connection that brought her work to my attention began to seem increasingly fitting. After all, since her earliest self-portrait work that she made while studying at the State University of New York at Buffalo alongside Pictures Generation luminaries like Cindy Sherman (with whom Carey staged one of her first exhibitions), Carey has been concerned with the hidden structures that lie just below the surface of reality, and help to give it shape. This interest in the metaphysical, the unseen, and the just-out-of-reach, was the point of intellectual departure that drove her away from the concerns of her peers, and ultimately towards photographic abstraction.

Her intersection with Sherman early on in her career is particularly telling in this regard. Sherman, in her *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-80), famously created self-portraits in which she adopted various female

personae promulgated by Hollywood films, as both a critique of these cookie-cutter constructs, and a simultaneous acknowledgment that the imaginary worlds passed down to us by image makers have a way of reshaping reality itself. By contrast, Carey's nearly contemporaneous self-portraits made with the Polaroid 20 x 24 camera from 1984 to 1987 feature Carey's likeness overlaid with wild psychedelic patterns, and figures from mathematics—fractals, Pythagorean golden means, sacred geometry— that describe a hidden order within nature, or point to transcendent realms. Though these two bodies of work both take the self as a starting point for image making, they radically diverge in their conception of both the world of images, and the nature of the self.

In his book *The Philosophies of Asia* (1973), Alan Watts describes the Hindu model of the universe as one in which God is "the actor of the world as an actor of a stage play—the actor who is playing all the parts at once." The self in Hindu philosophy, in other words, is conceived of as mask that hides God behind it. This is a concept that resonates across cultures and religions, and has even come to infiltrate our own language. Watts notes in the context of this explanation of Hindu theology that the English word "person" is derived from the Latin "persona," or "that through which comes sound," a word that was originally used to describe the masks worn by Greco-Roman actors performing in the theater. In the middle of the twentieth century, this concept of the self as a kind of mask that hides something essential underneath was briefly decoupled from theology and metaphysics, and was integrated into the fields of psychology and sociology, principally through the work of Carl Gustav Jung and Erving Goffman, respectively. It was through these channels that the idea of the "persona" entered popular consciousness, where it persists even now as shorthand for the public-facing identity that exists in opposition to our private, "true" selves. In the 1960s and 70s, however, the idea that this public-facing scrim of the self obscured profound and possibly scared depths behind it was briefly reinvigorated by psychedelic chemical catalysts like LSD and psilocybin, which intimated a possible merger between science and spirituality.

Carey's early self-portraits spring directly from this psychedelic mindset, and the science and mathematics of quantum physics, chaos theory, and fractal geometry, with which it has significant overlap. It is a mindset whose model of the self posits that behind our everyday masks lies something far greater than ourselves, which, if it cannot be called "God" in a sense that would be popularly understood, is at the very least an unimaginably rich set of ordering principals whose origin and purpose may remain forever mysterious. Within this mindset, images act as portals to realities beyond our everyday perception, whose power is activated by the force of our imagination. This image model is one that is as old as art itself, but it is one that is particularly well suited for photography—and manipulated photography in particular—as the medium has the unique ability to faithfully represent reality and render it strange simultaneously.

Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*, by contrast, are associated with a mindset that arose almost simultaneously alongside the work itself, a brand of postmodernism with a Baudrillardian bent that posited the self to be something depthless, a link in a concatenating series of images. The self here is all mask, concealing nothing, a simulacrum. Similarly, images were conceived of as portals to nothing but other images, stretching to infinity.

These two divergent responses to the image worlds conjured into being by the mass media in the 1970s and 80s, have determined the courses of both Sherman and Carey's subsequent careers. Sherman, for her part, has pushed the implications of the depthless conception of the self and the pernicious

superficiality of images to ever-darker depths. In her *Society Portraits* (2008), for example, the wealthy *grande dames* that Sherman masquerades as appear to be trapped behind the tony facades that they have constructed, victims of the mores of a social strata that is deeply devoted to the ritual of seeing and being seen. Carey, for her part, moved ever deeper into the realms of the immaterial, creating photograms that recall magnified views of pullulating microscopic life or the whiz-bang world of subatomic particles, and her majestic Polaroid works in which otherworldly abstractions are produced through the alchemy of light and chemistry.

Sherman and her Pictures Generation cohort's response to the explosive growth of the mass media in their time was directly in line with the intellectual fashion of their day, but Carey has had to wait for a time when the world would come around to her. The parallels between Carey's experiments with abstraction and the work currently gaining prominence in photography would certainly suggest that this time is now. But though the formal overlaps between Carey's current practice and that of artists many years her junior are undeniable, much of these young artists' works have been interpreted as a refashioning of the formals concerns of Greenbergian Modernism through photographic means due to their self-reflexive engagement with the raw materials of photography itself. In light of her early self-portraits, however, it would seem that this kind of formal exercise is not at the root of Carey's concerns. This poses a provocative question: though Carey's work may be timely in form, might its timeliness intimate a renewed pull of the mysterious and metaphysical realms that have never fallen out of fashion with artists, but have been relegated to theory's dustbin? I can only hope so.

Chris Wiley *is an artist and writer. His writing has appeared in numerous exhibition catalogs and magazines including Kaleidoscope, Mousse, and Frieze, where he is a contributing editor. He has previously worked in a curatorial capacity on a variety of exhibitions at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, and was an assistant curator on the 8th Gwangju Biennial in 2010, as well as a curatorial advisor and chief catalog writer for the 55th Venice Biennale. Most recently, he curated the show "Part Picture" at MoCCA Toronto, as a part of the CONTACT Photography Festival. His work has recently appeared in exhibitions at MoMA PS1, Hauser and Wirth, Marianne Boesky, and The Central Utah Art Center.*

M+B

L'Oeil de la PHOTOGRAPHIE
THE EYE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Los Angeles: Ellen Carey, Self-Portraits Polaroid

January 6, 2016

Portrait, 1985. Unique 20 x 24 Polaroid © Ellen Carey

Self-Portrait, 1987. Unique 20 x 24 Polaroid © Ellen Carey

Self-Portrait, 1984. Unique 20 x 24 Polaroid © Ellen Carey

Portrait, 1986. Unique 20 x 24 Polaroid © Ellen Carey

The Los Angeles based gallery M+B presents Ellen Carey: Polaroid 20 x 24 Self-Portraits. This show is the artist's first exhibition with the gallery and her solo debut in Los Angeles. Ellen Carey (b. 1952) is one of the country's foremost experimental photographers. Her pioneering work with the large-format Polaroid 20 x 24 camera spans several decades and anticipated major themes in contemporary photography. Carey began working with the camera in New York in 1983, starting with her Self-Portrait series.

Her experimentation with abstraction in these images was a precursor to her later, purely abstract Pulls. Though still representational, these self-portraits were anomalous to the themes of image appropriation and cultural politics that occupied her peers in the Pictures Generation. In contrast, Carey used the self as subject to explore the unseen. The photographs feature the artist's likeness overlaid with wild psychedelic patterns, and figures from mathematics—fractals, Pythagorean golden means, sacred geometry— that describe a hidden order within nature, or point to transcendent realms. Known for her technical virtuosity, these complex and layered compositions were made without a darkroom and pre-date digital imaging technologies with an uncanny prescient sense of the future.

EXHIBITION
Ellen Carey, Self-Portraits Polaroid 20 x 24
From November 6, 2015 to January 16, 2016
M+B
612 North Almont Drive
Los Angeles, California 90069

M+B

frieze

Ellen Carey

November 26, 2015
By Jonathan Griffin

Ellen Carey studied at The State University of New York at Buffalo in the late 1970s alongside Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo and other pictures generation luminaries. Not that you would guess that by looking at her work. The series of Polaroid self-portraits in this exhibition, each simply titled Self-Portrait and made between 1984 and 1988, have none of the pictures generation's caustic punk attitude or processual directness. They are gloriously hued, effulgent photographic apparitions in which the artist's head and shoulders are melded with psychedelic patterns, waveforms, spirals, checkerboards, diagrams of sacred geometries and fractals. They entrance the eye long before they announce their critical or ideological agenda – if they ever announce it at all.

In 1983, the legendary Polaroid Artist Support Program invited Carey to experiment with their 20 x 24 inch format camera; since only five of the hulking contraptions were ever built, she had to travel to the camera in order to operate it. The first series of pictures she made, shown here, are unique multiple-exposures free of darkroom trickery. Beyond some obvious visual clues – the artist lit herself with contrasting coloured lights, and sometimes posed behind lenses – it is very hard to fathom how such heavily manipulated images were produced pre-Photoshop.

Self-Portrait, 1984, Polaroid, 84 × 66 cm. All images courtesy M+B Gallery, Los Angeles

This aura of mystery is essential to their visual and conceptual power. On the one hand, the Polaroid prints reveal themselves as photographs: their raw, uncropped edges show how their images are fixed in layers of once-wet emulsion. On the other hand, their bold fields of textureless colour and graphic punch render them more akin to collages or screen prints.

Mystery could be seen to constitute the theme of the series; the self, ostensibly captured by high definition photographs, is suggested to be as infinitely complex as such mathematical wonders as fractals or the Golden Section. In a text accompanying the exhibition, frieze contributing editor Chris Wiley places great emphasis on this purported implication of psychological depth. According to a view that gathered popularity through the mid-century writings of Carl Jung and, later, through the popularization of psychedelic drugs, Wiley writes, 'behind our everyday masks lies something far greater than ourselves, which, if it cannot be called "God" in a sense that would be popularly understood, is at the very least an unimaginably rich set of ordering principles whose origin and purpose may remain forever mysterious.'

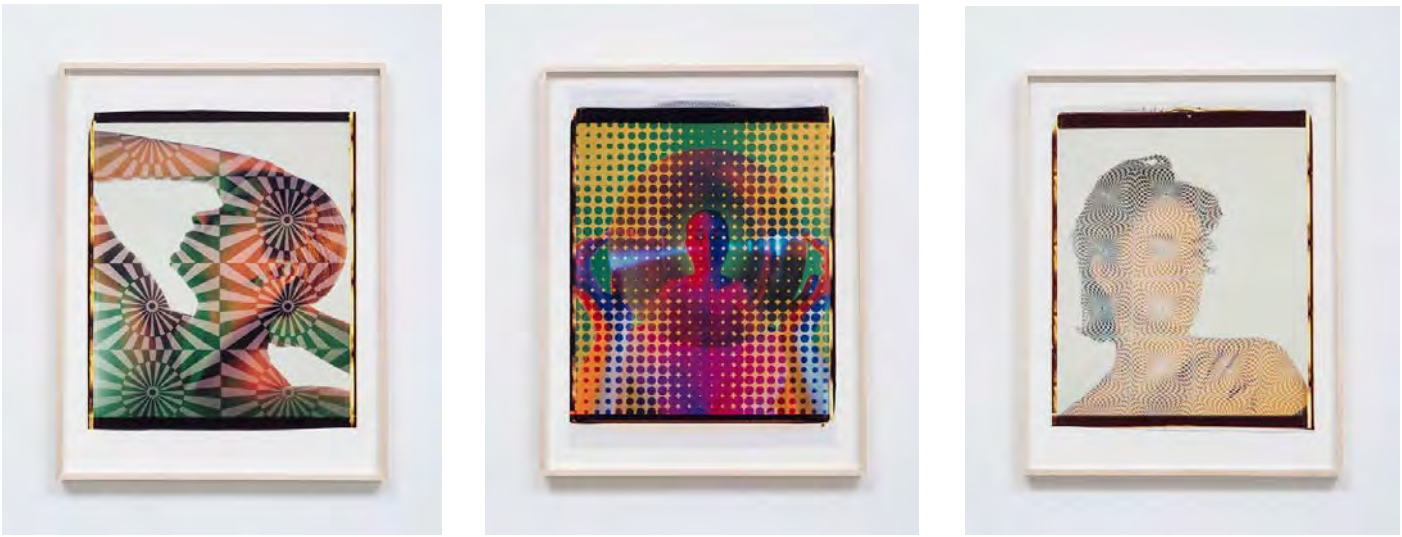
The idea of metaphysical unknowability, however, is not actually what Carey ends up with. The kinds of off-the-shelf diagrams and designs that she appropriates are mostly demonstrations of mathematical order rather than chaos. (One marbleized pattern, a yellow self-portrait from 1985, is an exception.) While they might look trippy to the stoned eye, most are in fact just the graphic solutions of equations. Despite their countercultural associations, they are more concerned with the sober mapping of information than with wonderment.

M+B

PDN PHOTO OF THE DAY

Mining ‘Color’s Mother Lode’

December 2, 2015



"Self-Portrait," 1984-1987. © Ellen Carey / Courtesy M+B Gallery, Los Angeles

Ellen Carey has been working with a large-format Polaroid 20 X 24 camera since 1983, using it to continue her explorations of abstraction and self representation. A collection of images she made with the camera, mostly in the late 1980s, is on view at M+B in Los Angeles until January 16. Unlike images from her later “Pull” series, which spread photographic emulsion into a parabolic shape, or the tangled lines she made with penlights, these images are representational, the last of several sets of series of experimental self-portraits dating back to the late 1970s.

Here, images of her own head and body, lit with saturated, contrasting colors, are overlayed with arrays of mathy, op-art patterns, transforming Carey into a sort of bright, lush, psychedelic icon. “I am digging deeper into color’s mother lode,” writes Carey in a statement about her work. Made in the era before Photoshop, the images foreshadow the concern with optics of younger artists like Jessica Eaton and Mariah Robertson, who also show at M+B and push the limits of analog material.

Carey, who is also a writer and curator, cites an earlier explorer of abstraction and material, Man Ray, as an influence. In a 2011 article she wrote in Aperture, Carey describes discovering the surrealist’s signature in a 1935 light drawing titled “Space Writing.” “The artist cultivated an aura of mystery about his personal history and identity—an avant-garde form of the game Hide-and-Seek,” she writes. As she told an interviewer, “In a way, Man Ray was my spiritual mentor, looking down at me from art heaven. His work gave me permission to explore these synchronicities and trust my prescient, visual awakenings, to use my intuitive powers in combination with my own innovations, inventing new nomenclature along the way.”

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Self-Portrait, 1987, Polaroid, 84 × 66 cm

Self-Portrait, 1987, Polaroid, 84 × 66 cm

Instead of a sense of depth or density, the photographs have a plastic flatness that is redolent of the technology that produced them, and which anticipates the backlit quality of digital, screen-based imagery. These works, which now seem so in tune with the practices of younger photo-conceptualist artists working today, might have seemed rather dated to Carey's peers. By the mid-1980s, the mind-expansionism popular in the 1960s and early '70s was receding fast in Western society's rear-view mirror. New Age culture survived only in desiccated tropes, either in concentrated pockets of pedantic obscurantism or diluted into the mainstream. Carey, who turned 18 in 1970, was in her mid-30s when she made this series of self-portraits. Old enough, that is, to maintain a degree of objective distance from the experiences of her formative years, but perhaps not quite old enough to be free from their influence.

The photographs show a fractured self: in one work from 1987 her face is reflected in two circular mirrors held to her cheeks, and in others it is shrunk and scattered across a grid of small lenses. Carey seems to share with Sherman an awareness of the cultural construct of selfhood, and a critical understanding of the way we forge unique identities from a miasma of readymade forms. That conception is not necessarily any less mysterious than the notion of an inherently fathomless soul. In Carey's photographs, however, the mystery is arrayed across the surface rather than buried beneath it.

M+B

Ellen Carey

Hartford, Connecticut / May 19, 2014

To start with, can you give me some background information?

I was born in New York City, the second eldest in a family of five children, three boys and two girls. We lived primarily on the East Coast and in the Midwest, around big cities. I attended all-girl Catholic schools up until the second year in high school; none had art programs. I spent a lot of time drawing from Jon Gnagy's *Learn to Draw*. In 1971, when my parents moved to Buffalo, I left for college, to the Kansas City Art Institute.

You moved around quite a bit. What effect do you think that had on you?

I think that moving around afforded me different environments to respond to—the Northeast Corridor, the South, which at that time was still very segregated. My childhood gave me a foundation for learning to be flexible, to take risks, which helped with my work later on.

How did you become involved with photography?

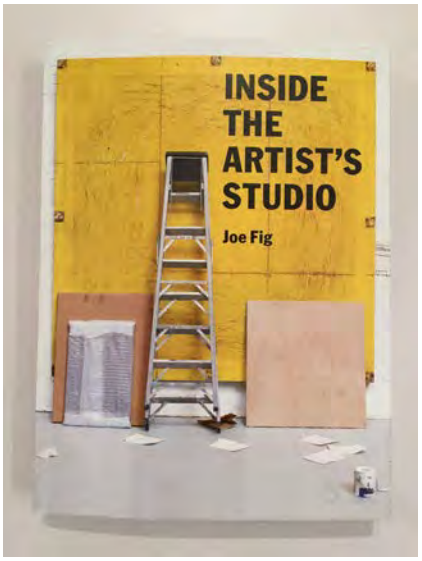
In high school my parents gave me a Polaroid Super Shooter. Then, during our freshman foundation classes at the Kansas City Art Institute [KCAI], we had introductions to various artistic areas. I had no response to the blank canvas in paint, couldn't throw anything in clay, nor sculpt, blow glass, or do graphic design—not even weaving in fiber arts! It was quite hopeless. Then I discovered printmaking, through having a superlative undergraduate experience with two great teachers: William McKim, who was taught by Thomas Hart Benton, for lithography, and Marvin Jones for etching. I had a very generous peer group as well, who were very supportive.

During freshman year a fellow art student showed me the KCAI darkroom and how to print. The darkroom is where I fell in love with the whole process of photography. I would be there ten, twelve hours a day with my peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. The magic of developing and seeing the first image coming up in the amber light was so exciting. It was immediate. The ability to get my creative ideas out there quickly just wasn't happening with any other medium. It was a huge existential relief.

Did you go to graduate school?

Yes, after KCAI, I went to SUNY Buffalo on a scholarship and got involved with the art scene there. I met a whole bunch of photographers like Les Krims,[1] who was a boyfriend for a while, John Pfahl, Bonnie Gordon, Nathan Lyons[2] from Visual Studies Workshop, and filmmaker Hollis Frampton. Robert Longo[3] and Cindy Sherman[4] were among the group; we all hung out at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery.

1. Les Krims (b. 1942), American. Conceptual photographer known for carefully arranged fabricated photographs.
2. Nathan Lyons (b. 1930), American. Artist, curator, and educator who advanced the study of the history and practice of photography.
3. Robert Longo (b. 1953), American. Artist known for his large-scale, detailed drawings.
4. Cindy Sherman (b. 1954), American. Photographer known for dressing in costume and using herself as the model to create images that explore identity and representation.



2015

M+B

ELLEN CAREY 37

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When did you move to New York, and what brought that about?

Moving around [in my childhood] helped me realize that moving was not a scary thing or overwhelming. After I finished graduate school I spent a year working with Linda Cathcart as a curatorial assistant at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery on her *American Painting of the 1970s* exhibition. I applied and received a CAPS [Creative Artists Public Service Program] grant for $5,000 and she encouraged me to move to New York.

Those were very much struggling artist years. I got a great waitressing job at Spring Street Bar and teaching jobs at Queens College and ICP [International Center of Photography]. The curator Allan Schwartzman gave me a job photographing installations at the New Museum. So I managed to get through. It was very tough, and tougher because my dad had died suddenly right before I moved. But I loved New York, and I was there in that golden period when the SoHo art and gallery scene was developing.

Where exactly were you living at the time?

In Little Italy, at 17 Cleveland Place, in a tiny tenement. Eventually, I established a studio at Spring and Mercer, right across from Donald Judd's[5] building. It was a very invigorating and lively time, while being tough, too.

What would you consider your first real gallery show?

Back then I was part of the avant-garde of the 1970s in Buffalo. Alternative places like CEPA Gallery [Center for Exploratory and Perceptual Arts] and Hallwalls [Contemporary Arts Center] were just beginning. The Albright-Knox Art Gallery hired Linda Cathcart, Marcia Tucker's protégé from the Whitney Museum, to be contemporary art curator, and she began the biannual exhibition *In Western New York*. She championed us all. Later she was one of the curators of a 1979 group exhibition at PS1 in New York titled *The Altered Photograph*. I had about ten or twelve photographs from my *Painted Self-Portraits* series in it. [My first one-person show in New York was in] the early 1980s at Concord Gallery.

I had faith, little money, my small portfolio case, and a trunk of clothes—that was it. Cindy Sherman's photograph of herself on the road with a suitcase, a metaphor of the future and the unknown—alone—was often how I felt.

What brought you to Hartford?

I was hired by the Hartford Art School in the spring of 1983 as a visiting artist to replace Robert Cumming while he was on leave; he never came back. A few years later, in the summer of 1987, I lost my SoHo studio. I looked around in New York but chose instead a two-thousand-square-foot loft up here in the Colt Building, while keeping my apartment in New York. The timing could not have been better, as the stock market crashed that fall. Black Monday and the art world pretty much closed up. In 1991 I received tenure with promotion.

Did you have a darkroom in the loft?

I didn't, because I used the one at school, but I had a big shooting studio. At that time I was using black-and-white film with a medium-format camera. I began to reevaluate my work. My projects often begin with questions: What does an abstract/minimal photograph look like? I began to look at the dawn of photography, the origins found in the photogram cameraless work of William Henry Fox Talbot[6] and Anna Atkins,[7] really looking at the shadow as negative image.

You have done a lot of work using the large-format Polaroid camera. Can you tell me what a Polaroid studio would look like and explain the process?

It is fully equipped with lots of lighting equipment, tripods, and so forth. Yet unlike the conventional studio, it has this enormous custom-built camera, circa 1980. It is very special, this Polaroid 20 x 24! There's a big, unique photograph, a positive with its

5. Donald Judd (1928–94), American. Artist known for his minimalist and fabricated sculptures.
6. William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–77), British. Inventor and photography pioneer who made major contributions to the development of photography as an artistic medium.
7. Anna Atkins (1799–1871), British. Botanist and photographer considered to be the first woman to create a photograph and publish a book illustrated with photographic images.

negative. I keep and show the individual negatives too. Some of the colors and patinas are informed by the Polaroid film—say, if it's color or black-and-white. My experiments with the film create new forms and vibrant colors. Most of the negatives, which I keep, oxidize and change over time.

Can you describe a typical day, being as specific as possible?

When I work on the 20 x 24 Polaroid camera, I have to book time at the Polaroid studio in New York in advance. I have to do preproduction, meaning get everything packed ahead of time: my tubes, the foam cylinders, Bubble Wrap, and so forth. My black portfolio case contains my color gels, drawings for my ideas, color magic markers, my notebooks, white foam board, and a few other things.

Usually, I'll shoot on a Thursday because the negatives have to dry overnight. I can get a lot done in a day. We start getting ready at nine o'clock, and I'll be shooting by ten o'clock. We'll have a working lunch and usually end by seven o'clock at the latest. My dealer may stop by to look, maybe a friend or two, perhaps a collector or a curator. Next morning, off to the studio by six or seven o'clock, pack everything up, and drive home.

How many images can you get in a day?

If I get one outstanding artwork, I'm happy. My aim is pure abstraction, minimalism, vibrant colors, and new forms with high visual impact, all about light or no light, exposure or none. I work until I get a great picture, and then I try for another. I want to end the day on an up note.

With the Polaroid, you're working without a typical negative—they're all individual prints?

I do have negatives, but you're right—they're not traditional negatives in that they can't be used to print additional pictures. All my works are one-of-a-kind prints. Some people would say I'm not a photographer; I'm a lens-based artist.

I would locate my work within the context of the twentieth-century avant-garde, with Man Ray,[8] the Russian constructivists, the Bauhaus,[9] with the lineage of cameraless images in the nineteenth century, as well as the very experimental contemporary artists who happen to have links to photography, such as Adam Fuss,[10] James Welling,[11] Christian Marclay,[12] or Susan Derges.[13]

I have some painterly ideas. I think I'm considered a maverick and a pioneer in photographic minimalism and abstraction. I have been very fortunate to bear witness to the great art movements in America after World War II: abstract expressionism, minimalism, conceptual art, and the social changes brought about by feminism.

With painters, they're having conversations in their heads with the history of painting. Is the conversation in your head more with the history of photography?

I always say that if I were in art heaven, I'd love to talk with Talbot, Anna Atkins, and Man Ray, as well as Jackson Pollock,[14] even Eva Hesse.[15] Their relationship and sensitivity to materials and process is embedded in their art. I would like people to think about photography less as a picture sign and more as looking at the possibilities of a picture process.

My role models would be people who break ground. I love experimenting. I was very fortunate to meet other artists when I was in New York;

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8. Man Ray (1890–1976), American. Visual artist renowned for his photographs and photograms. He was a contributor to the dada and surrealist movements.

9. Art school that existed in Germany between 1919 and 1933, known for its avant-garde approach to design.

10. Adam Fuss (b. 1961), British. Photographer known for his cameraless technique, using the basics of photography: objects, light, and light-sensitive material.

11. James Welling (b. 1951), American. Artist and painter who uses a range of photographic tools and mixed media.

12. Christian Marclay (b. 1955), Swiss/American. Visual artist and composer whose work explores the connections among sound, noise, photography, video, and film.

13. Susan Derges (b. 1955), British. Visual artist specializing in cameraless photography, most often working with natural landscapes.

14. Jackson Pollock (1912–56), American. Influential painter and a major force in the abstract expressionist movement.

15. Eva Hesse (1936–70), American. Sculptor known for works using latex, fiberglass, and plastics.

Linda Cathcart introduced me to Nancy Graves,[16] who was fantastic. You meet artists throughout life; you learn a lot from each one. Later examples would be my long friendships with John Coplans[17] and Sol LeWitt.[18]

Do you listen to music when you're working? Do you feel it affects your work in any way?

I do. I feel that music has a kinship to the feelings and the spirit in my work. Though I have to be able to listen and concentrate when I'm doing my art. It's an emotional, psychological, uplifting experience, and it's very technical and visual—a kaleidoscope of various forces. Silence also works, especially when I work alone in the total darkness of the color darkroom. To focus like that for hours on end takes lots and lots of experience.

Since my works are unique prints, I only get one chance. Once, after printing for many days, I was down to my last piece of paper. This was the last piece of Kodak precut 30-x-40-inch color paper on the planet! I went into the darkroom and I said a little prayer: "OK, Talbot, Anna Atkins, Man Ray, I really need your help. I only have one piece of paper left." And I got it—I nailed the print! It's about setting a really high performance goal for yourself. It's like you're an athlete, it's the Olympics, and this is what you've been training for.

Do you have a favorite color?

I love all colors, especially rainbows. I think my love of color comes from being Catholic, staring at stained glass windows for a long time. But if there is one, it would be blue, what they call in Irish "the violet hour"—the end-of-the-day blue, where the silhouette of the trees is hard to differentiate as the sun goes down. That's my favorite moment of color.

Are there any specific items that you keep around your studio that have significant meaning to you?

I like to keep objects that have color in them. I also collect dragonfly imagery. In 1995 my mother was diagnosed with cancer, having about a year left to live. During this time my middle brother, John, had an accident and died instantly. My mother's death followed. I did everything possible in this state of mourning, grieving, but nothing seemed to work. My brother had collected dragonfly imagery. Right after John and Mother died, I would see—either physically, metaphorically, or as a picture sign—rainbows and dragonflies, and that's when I had a breakthrough in my work and my life.

Color is the joy of celebrating, and there's its counterpart in sadness—gray and black. It's a metaphor for the shadow image or, in psychoanalysis, the hidden self or interior life. I had an incredible experience with what Freud calls the uncanny. In the summer of 1996 my mother and brother had just died. I decided to go to the studio and do a picture, a family portrait, never intending to exhibit it. There

16. Nancy Graves (1939–95), American. Visual artist known for her focus on natural imagery.
17. John Coplans (1920–2003), British. Photographer who made black-and-white self-portraits that are frank studies of the naked body and the aging process.
18. Sol LeWitt (1928–2007), American. Conceptual artist known for his wall drawings and structured minimalistic sculptures.

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were three Polaroid positives that were black rectangles, one each for my father, my mother, and my brother John. My older brother, myself, and my two other siblings were white. The interesting thing was that whether the negatives were exposed or not exposed, they were all a matte, tar-like black.

The first *Pull* came after this group. When it was time to reload the film into the camera we did a test, but the white positive area—which has the Polaroid tulips on the top and a black band on the bottom denoting the picture's end—went a little farther down past the regular cutoff point. I thought that was interesting and did it again, only this time it was made bigger. I knew right away it was major, even though I might not have understood it completely at that time. Then one was made all black, no exposure. I called them *Pulls*.

That was quite a day! I felt completely different in every way. It was visceral, spiritual, physical—everything and nothing. That day was the day I left my old life behind: my old self, all my photographs, all my cameras. I wouldn't use them anymore. I will never forget it. All this love now gone. All these pictures now meaningless. I was thunderstruck but inspired. It was the beginning for what would become *Mourning Wall* several years later. All these were new photographic documents of a different order, with different meanings—all very minimal and abstract.

How did the recent *Dings and Shadows* series come about?

I had been working on large, abstract color photograms for three years in a series titled *Penlights*. I was completely uninspired, so I tried something new in the darkroom. A little ding [crinkle] appeared on the color paper, which caused a crescent-like sliver of a shadow. I thought, Oh my God—that's it! I had missed the content of my work and forgotten that materials have meaning. The ding, traditionally taboo, became my shadow catcher. Bold forms, abstract and colorful, all done in the dark! My photogram practice is called *Struck by Light*. Literally and figuratively, the only thing that hits the paper is light.

Have there been recent technologies in the last five years or so that have affected your work?

I love digital in terms of its properties for speed, size, and scale. The iPhone is interesting as an apparatus for expression. It's really universalized the global picture culture. In a certain way, that's going to make it more challenging to make interesting photographs. At the same time, it's incredibly accessible, so everyone can join in. People are taking pictures all the time—they love pictures. I don't care if they are good or bad or indifferent; I just think it's great that people are visually engaged.

Do you have a motto or creed that as an artist you live by?

I love Polaroid's phrase "See what develops," which reflects my journey as an artist. Approach your work like an Olympic athlete and always go for the gold. For the truth and beauty that Keats[19] wrote about in the poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

What advice would you give to a young artist that is just starting out?

I would not be the artist I am today without my mentors—that's really key. Look at a lot of art. Read about it and about artists' lives. Read books, study philosophy, see films. Engage in the world, travel. Have a sense of humor—have fun, and don't do anything you can't reverse. The grim reaper is going to come along anyway, so I wouldn't accelerate that process. Have a connection to nature and protect your gifts.

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19. John Keats (1795–1821), British. English romantic poet known for works characterized by sensual imagery.

M+B

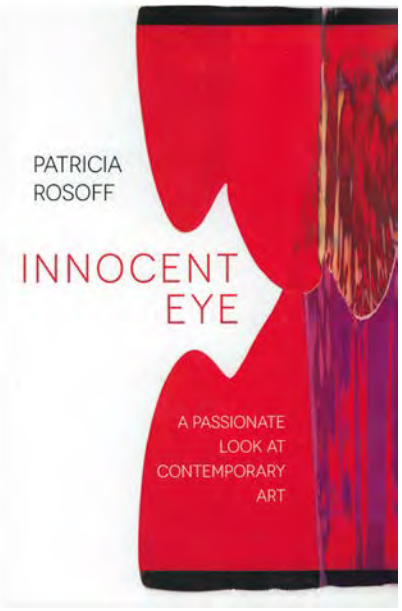
Ellen Carey

No matter what their grievances with modern art may be, almost everyone is comfortable with photography, which constitutes the last bastion of popular assumptions about what is commonly termed realism. Here is a medium that is necessarily "real": technologically reproduced from reality itself, without any of the offending manipulation and abstraction that modern drawing and painting so often attach. That photography is the epitome of realism is implicit in my students' compliments about artists they admire: "Van Eyck's painting is so amazingly realistic—like a photograph!"

What most people don't realize is that photography, too, is open to abstraction, and even its earliest practitioners created forms on photosensitive paper that were adventurous experiments with light and shadow, not merely recordings of visual data.

What is remarkable about Ellen Carey is, first of all, that her work is entirely abstract, and secondly that her abstraction is for the most part joyously accessible—large-scale, glossy, and gorgeously colored. Simply put, it is a pleasure to stand in front of this work and just look. If you stop there, however, you've missed essential parts of the potential experience—the complexity of the artist's conceptual foundation, the surprisingly personal genesis of her imagery—which is the wacky, irreverent, and well-informed character of her experimentation. For all the polish of Carey's finished works, they are the result of an ecstatic, fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants, crazy-assed instinct.

In Gaelic, the name Ellen means "light," and light is the very engine of her chosen medium as an artist. Where most photographers use a



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camera as a kind of recording device. Carey takes the mechanism apart, conceptually, letting its processes alone become her subject. They are real objects, all right, but their subject matter is metaphorical, not directly illustrative. Unique among her peers in the world of large-format Polaroid 20 x 24 photography—notably including Chuck Close and William Wegman—Ellen Carey does not "take" pictures; she makes them.

Ellen Carey's artistic intent might seem to be an oxymoron: she makes abstract photography. Hers is not the product of filmed imagery manipulated in a darkroom through an enlarger. Carey's works are the result of a process far more direct: the transcription of the *event* of light—its recorded absence or presence, its movements, and what happens when light is filtered with colored gels, double exposed, refracted through transparent matter, or masked by opaque presences laid directly onto the surface of the print. Like an alchemist, Carey traps light's fingerprint without the intervention of outside references. For her, and for us, that fingerprint is the material manifestation of metaphor.

In Greek myth (as related by Pliny the Elder), the origins of art were simple: a woman traces her lover's shadow as he prepares to go to war. Implicit in the act is the impulse that spawned it—the desire to fix a shadow as a spiritual hedge against loss. If we fast-forward to the early nineteenth century, the English inventor William Henry Fox Talbot pioneered the "art" of photography by laying a fern leaf upon a paper made chemically sensitive to light. To fix a shadow was the point, enabled by a newfangled chemistry of silver and salt.

This poetic truth—a dance with legend and history, light and shadow—lies at the heart of Carey's approach; for as radical as her work might seem, it cannot be separated from history: not from the history of photography, nor from her personal history, nor from the history of art. Carey's exploration of photography follows a thematic trajectory that early on embraced the figure, then incorporated abstraction, and in more recent years has embraced minimalism and conceptualism.

An exhibit at Real Art Ways in Hartford in 2000 showcased three major series of Carey's work, which would tour the country before and following the 9/11 tragedy. Titled *No Voice Is Wholly Lost* (a phrase derived from a book on grieving by Dr. Louise Kaplan), this fugue of works included *Family Portrait* (1996 and 1999), *Birthday Portrait* (1997), and *Mourning Wall* (2000). These works are the artist's responses not only to the dying of the millennium but also to the deaths of three immediate family members. In what she calls "grief

Ellen Carey, "Mourning Wall," 2000–2002. B/W Polaroid 20 X 24 ER Negative Prints. Individual images: 34 x 22 inches; composite: 10 by 36 feet. Installation view (left) and detail (lower left). *(Courtesy of the artist.)*

work," Carey transmutes the pain of loss into a conceptual dialogue with light, manipulating the process of Polaroid photography into an elegiac form.

Carey's father and mother and her brother John each died within days of their birthdays, lending a double edge to the remembrance. The artist's abstract memorials are at once celebratory and pensive, monumental-scale "photographs" that are whimsical and transcendent, resembling melted Crayola crayons, or puddling birthday candles (rose-pink and blue), and also Japanese scrolls. They are produced by the signature processes that Carey has pioneered in her more than two decades of large-format Polaroid work. That she calls them "pulls" is a descriptive reference to their process, which should be familiar to anyone who has used a hand-held Polaroid camera. Each of these monumental-scaled pictures is the product of successive exposures of Polaroid film to colored light—colors derived from her parents' and her brother's birthstones, as well as tones of pink and blue, the conventional assignations of gender.

As mutely abstract as Carey's Polaroid images may be, their double meaning (birth/death) is made evident in the fact that she displays them side by side with their "negatives," the chemically coated facing paper that has been peeled away from the mirroring positive. In the *Birthday Portrait* pulls, further, in a kind of conceptual denial of death, instead of cutting the Polaroid prints off

at the conventional twenty-four inches as they scroll out of the camera, Carey continues to pull them out into six-, eight-, ten-foot runs—whatever length is required for the developing inks in the camera to expend themselves. After each exposure to colored light, the film's pods of colored dye are squeezed empty between the camera's internal rollers, laying down glassy pools of ink in great, looping ellipses. After a first exposure, the Polaroid's "sandwich" is pulled apart (the negative's facing is peeled away from the print), the ink allowed to dry, and then the glossy, jewel-like positive is spooled back into the camera, where it receives a new "negative" for each of its second, third, and even fourth exposures. Like raku pottery, the combinations are unpredictable productions, intuitively managed relations of chemistry and timing.

The *Family Portrait* suite (1996) is another "memento mori" to Carey's family, its form even more austere. Entering the room, the viewer encounters on the center wall seven color Polaroid positives tacked to the white drywall. They are arranged in a disrupted rhythm of pairs, left to right: two glossy black rectangles, then two ivory white, a single black pane, then two more in white. These are exquisitely clean objects, like polished onyx, "framed" top and bottom with smeary dark edges of golden brown. These are the positives that represent Carey's immediate family, living and dead, her father and mother, her four siblings, and herself.

The black images are created by the lack of exposure: no light reached the film. The white images are their converse, produced by exposing the film to a brightly lit white rectangle.

Thus we are presented with death, death, life, life, death, life, life—like musical scales, like keys on a piano, mirroring the spectator in the glossy sheen of their surface, blocking entry into the picture plane, which is not a picture at all but merely the registered evidence of the presence or absence of light. Each flanking wall presents an echoing series of images, told "in the negative." Those on the left are velvety black upon a brown paper. These are the color negatives, peeled away from the exposed Polaroid film displayed on the center wall. All are identically black—whether exposed to light or not, the negatives present the same. These record a physical history instead of a picture: Silvery streaks at the edges record the squeegee swipes that removed the dripping emulsion from each image's margins. In the silence of these images, this subtle visual indication of the artist's hands has an effect equivalent to sound—something homey and routine, as if someone, invisibly, was washing down the kitchen counter after the noisy turmoil of a funeral wake.

Mourning Wall (2000) is the newest of these series and Carey's most monumental work, her millennial crossover. A composite image 13 feet high and 38 feet wide, this is certainly one of the largest photographic works in contemporary art. Here she offers an austere, spiritualized lament. It is a composition whose immediate impression is physical—a wall of slate-like rectangles face-on to the viewer, with a grid of one hundred unique photographic "windows," one for each year of the century, rendering meaning like a silvered mirror-back, opaquely. Each image is executed in black-and-white Polaroid film, confronting us with the contrasting effect of a *non-color* "black": not black at all, but whitish-gray and leaching silvered salts.

Each image is a large-format (20-by-24-inch) Polaroid negative, created by exposing the black-and-white film to a white surface illuminated by white light. Peeled away from the positive—which looks white—these negatives assert themselves as black, which is to say, the physical and conceptual opposite of light. The stark beauty of the piece is metaphoric, not narrative; as in all minimalist work, the aim is presentation, not *re*-presentation. Graveyards present grids like this one, as do barrier walls. The Wailing Wall's weathered stone face, constructed like ashlar building stones, comes to the mind's eye, an allusion underscored by the delicate fringe—like a prayer shawl's—that is created in the dripping margins of each print where the chemical emulsion "weeps" with gravity.

These surfaces reveal the stew of chemical salts that are the material truth of her photographic method. This is no pretty Kodachrome moment, but a profoundly quiet one, as we are brought close to living surfaces that respond to temperature and moisture as they cure, a crystallization that continues as they hang. Speckled, salty, lichen-like, Carey's "pictures" are immensely rich and utterly mundane—more connected to frayed duct tape or crumbling mortar than with picturesque vistas. But they also stand as emotional equivalents, in a sense-specific way, to the numbing effects of a chemical burn or the visual "sound" of a hundred television screens gone suddenly blank—switched on, but vacant. Carey's imagery has none of the stupefying vacancy of television, and everything of direct visceral experience. Unalleviated by any hint of documentation, of "friendly" figural and spatial references, this testament to mourning demands a viewer's embracing empathy.

Ellen Carey. *Family Portrait, Birthday Portrait,* and *Mourning Wall,* at Real Art Ways, Hartford, Connecticut. 2000.

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DISPLAY UNTIL JULY 31, 2015

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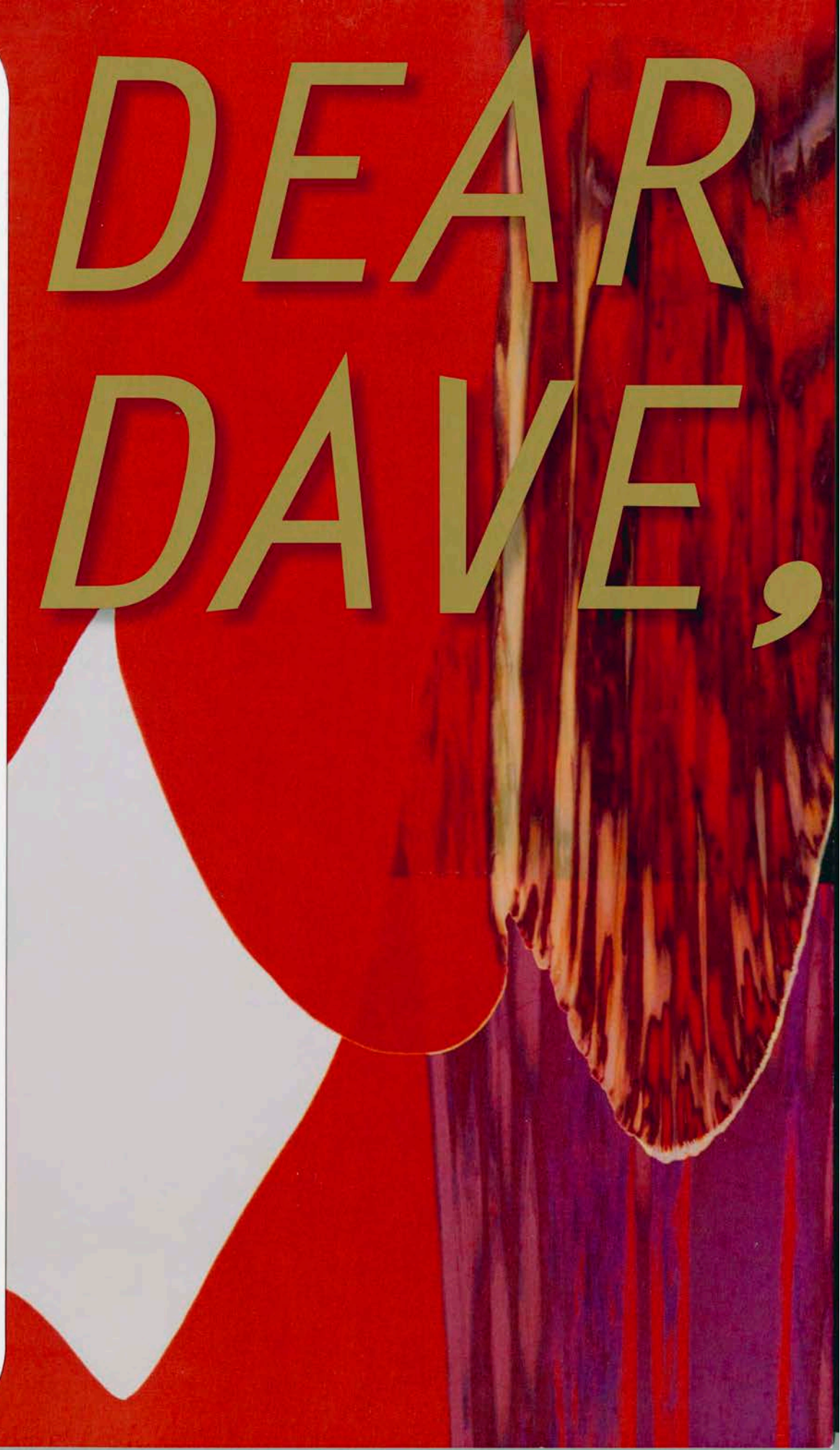
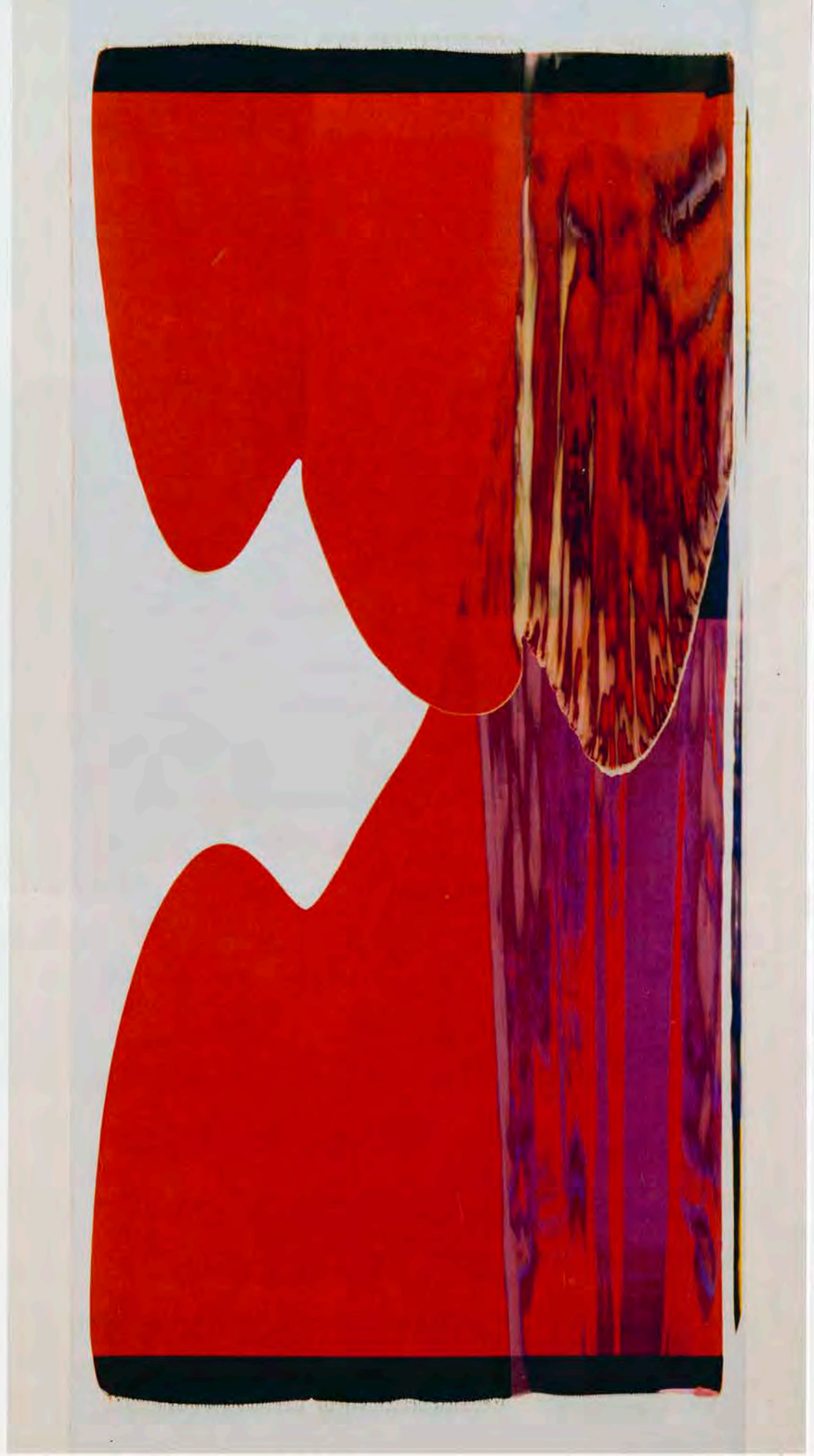
DEAR DAVE,





Ellen Carey

Bill Armstrong: Many abstract artists started with a representational style and then evolved into abstraction. How did you come to abstraction?

Ellen Carey: The Polaroid *Pull* from 1996 is a defining moment and introduced *Photography Degree Zero,* as the name of my practice; the phrase refers to *Writing Degree Zero* by Roland Barthes, which offers a critical discourse on the departure from descriptive narrative in French avant-garde literature. In related fashion, my work represents the absence of a picture "sign" found in most photography and instead, consists of an image made without a subject, without any reference to a place, person or object. This was not so much an evolution towards abstraction and minimalism but an emptying of the "frame"—away from picture signs—to pictures of nothing introducing an aporia in the work.

From this experience, light is emphasized, and used in unusual combinations. Characteristics of light—silhouette and outline, shadow and negative image—the idea of absence, emerged. Color grew bolder. Photographic color theory serves as a palette and formal choice, and a visual form called the parabola is introduced as a conical loop, or a hyperbola.

Struck by Light references my photograms made without a camera. In color printing, the paper is so sensitive, no light is allowed except upon exposure; I work in total darkness. My new work titled *Dings & Shadows* contains visceral and multiple "dings"—errors in traditional printing—acting as the catcher of my "shadows" extending abstract forms and minimal spaces within a spectral range in a kaleidoscope of hues. Light finds color

through the rainbow, a distinct phenomenon equal to the one found in photography.

My work intentionally upends traditional methods of rendering a photographic image, forcing a break from the past, freeing a picture from a hierarchy of things to be captured to a picture that is made. The 'what' that is in front of the lens is reversed. "How is this picture made?" followed by "What is this a picture of?" are questions asked about my work. The first addresses *process*, and it is this very process, which *becomes* the subject; the second finds an image *without* a subject. Or is it—or is it not—altogether some*thing* else?

BA: Wow, you've answered a lot of questions here, but not necessarily the one I thought I'd asked. You say the discovery of the *Pull* in 1996 was the defining moment, could you elaborate on that?

EC: There were a number of personal losses in my life at this time. They brought about shifts and with it all the paradigms and promises of photography collapsed. How to describe my new experiences? What was *the* record? The *document*? While in a state of mourning, I decided to create my own version of *Family Portrait*. I was surprised and confounded, yet free and challenged—to *see*—what was possible.

This symbolic portrait of my family also represented our collective living and dying selves, as human beings, a process that is continuous; as we live, we also die. These twin realities I knew as a universal fact, intellectually, but they were abstract, visually far away, until this moment. With these unexpected insights, my photographic images described this internal state in these externally. They were radically different and visceral. When *Family Portrait* was hung in the studio, I felt in a flash, what Freud calls the 'uncanny,' a profound sensation. This powerful feeling went into my first *Pull* and yes, it defined a moment.

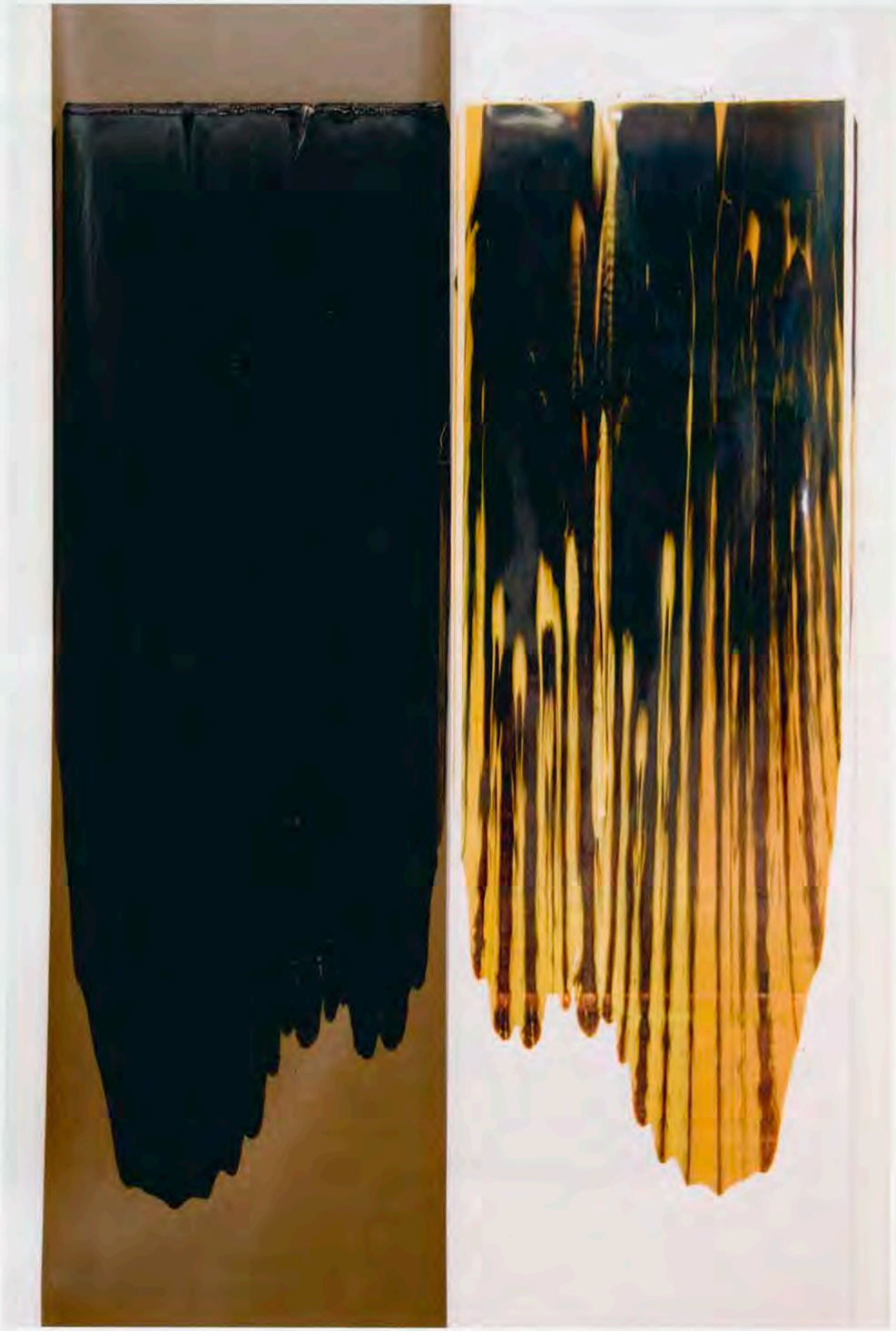
What resulted was a different kind of record, that of my picture-making and its process. This *Pull* was photographic and process, abstract and minimal, where the intersection of image and meaning created a paradox. I needed a new language to describe everything. In hindsight, letting go of the image had precursors, prescient in my previous work of experimenting and pushing boundaries. But in 1996, that day at the Polaroid studio, it was so obvious, *this* breakthrough. Life was changing, as was my life in photography, I created a new language around it as *Photography Degree Zero*.

BA: Your answer clarifies for me your use of the word aporia in your prior response. As I'm sure you know, the classic example of aporia is the story of the Cretan king who said "All Cretans are liars" creating a conundrum—is he lying then and they are not all liars? Your discussion of the void and emptying the frame make sense to me in the context of personal loss, and it becomes an aporia—the void is the subject because the nothingness of loss is still something. Now, I get it!

I relate to the idea of making work about the void. I began my *Apparition* series—ghostly portraits of old men made from Roman busts—six months after my father died, but it wasn't until I was halfway through that I realized I was making work directly relating to his death—the motivation was subconscious. When art making is driven by forces other than the conscious, it seems like a good thing, both for the artist and the viewer. I imagine that as a maker of photograms, working in the pitch black of the color darkroom, the relationship between intent and result can be pretty tenuous. Can you speak more about chance, the subconscious and other unplanned or unknown forces that determine the path of your work?

EC: In this black box of the darkroom, I work blind, so to speak. Though my eyes are open, I see light only upon exposure. What is not seen or perhaps fully understood, by the viewer or someone unfamiliar with color printing, is that all of my color photograms are made in total darkness, very different from the amber light of a black-and-white darkroom. Black box is also a metaphor for the mind. In this context, what is unique and exhilarating is the *experience*.

This *experience* parallels the unknown—subconscious—only now a more heightened sense of touch and sound are active, replacing sight. Colors fall randomly and by chance. Light drawing adds depth as my penlight strikes the dings to make dark shadows. In my newer series of *Dings & Shadows* (2010-14) no object is placed on the light-sensitive paper that traditionally made its outline; this breaks with an historic practice. My penlight drawing flashes across the landscape of my "dings" that were



purposely handmade to capture and create striking forms and synesthetic feelings—sharp angles or circular shapes, bright or soft colors; unusual patterns pinch color bursts—documenting my experimental activity while the visual universe creates bold compositions. A lot goes on in there!

In my printing sessions I keep notes and evaluate. There are definitely ineffable forces at work during my creative process, mysterious yet familiar. Creativity is multilayered and complex, simply elegant and extraordinarily beautiful.

BA: I am particularly drawn to the *Dings & Shadows* series because of the way you turn the physical aspect of color printing upside down. Many people may not know that one of the great challenges of large-scale color darkroom printing is physically handling the paper in the dark without causing "dings" or "creases." It takes some practice to master the skill of making clean, ding-free prints, and the taller one happens to be the easier it is to handle the big paper. I liken it to the physical aspects large-scale painting that earned the Abstract Expressionist painters the sobriquet "heroic." For me it is a classic post-modernist trope to turn that somewhat macho concept upside down and embrace the dings and creases, making them part of the work. Brava!

I would like to go back the earlier discussion about "emptying the frame" for a moment. For me, non-representational abstraction, devoid of traditional subject matter or content, must rely on design and color to make its point, convey its meaning. You refer to the shapes of circle and squares as universal codes and mirrors implying multiple levels of meaning and interpretation. As a colorist, I see color, also, as being content, as having meaning with multiple levels of interpretation. When I show your work in class, I give my interpretation of the colors, so I'm very interested in how *you* think about it. Can you talk about how you see the colors as creating psychological, symbolic or emotional meaning in your work?

EC: Color is the *sui generis* of light, and light, of color. Both are intertwined in my work, like a DNA helix. My given Irish name in Celtic or Gaelic means "bringer of light" or "light," a prescient gift from my parents. In this context, light carries religious weight, a symbol echoed in the phrase *ray of light* or *seeing the light*. The circle is found in the nimbus of a golden halo; the square is found in the frames of stained glass church windows. And both structures are universal in visual thinking

The *Mourning Wall* artworks are monochromatic; I describe them as non-color. This references the early photograms of Talbot, whose tonal variations of earthy brown, aubergine, and sienna are also visual expressions in non-color. My austere palette in Polaroid black, white and grey were the colors I was feeling, the void of nothing, no "real" color, empty frames. The state of "in mourning" is exactly that; rich in feeling but atonal, or colorless. Mourning is a process, like Polaroid and Photogram, and it has various stages, shifting interiors, picture signs that for me were symbolic, psychological and emotional. Minimal and abstract, the Polaroid work presented art objects that were wholly new, simultaneously photographic and process, a huge contact print, producing a positive with its negative, in a one-step, peel-away transfer method developed in 60 seconds.

People often compare my work to painting, especially Minimal and Abstract Expressionism and that is an astute observation about upending that tradition, located in the male domain of the "heroic" as you mention. But painting doesn't often have the same luminosity, opacity, intensity and saturation possible with the spectral variety and hues in color photography and light, especially the way I use it. The "action" takes place in front of my eyes, but I can't see it, the light pours over the sensitive paper in nanoseconds. The performance aspect adds a fascinating experience, both in Polaroid and photogram.

The history of color in art is well documented throughout the centuries, bearing different meanings at different times. Color is universal, like music. My *Family Portrait* reminded me of these links to color and music, this memory of my grandparents' piano, the onyx black and ivory white keys.

BA: When I mentioned the "heroic" and "macho" aspects of large-scale printing I was wondering about how you see yourself as a woman artist. So you have led me to my next question. Could you talk about that?

EC: Photography began with a woman, Anna Atkins (1799-1871), Talbot's contemporary. A British Victorian, she was the *first* woman photographer (albeit cameraless), *first* in color. Her studies used the cyanotype, a

method yielding a Prussian blue. Sir John Herschel taught her his method and she partnered it with Talbot's photogram (1834), his negative image rendered in non-color. Gender codes of blue/*feminine* versus brown/*masculine* (italics mine) underscore these divisions in content, context and concept. Her cyanotype-as-photogram includes her handwriting, another *first*. Historically, women began and advanced color in photography; this "underexposed" area offers a new area of scholarship. Some women have an extra genetic structure, newly discovered; it is called tetrachromacy and involves having four cones rather than 3 which significantly multiplies the amount of color one can discern. So there is scientific data to support my thesis. And color blindness is 20 times more frequent in men.

BA: My final question relates to your place in history. You have been making photograms for quite sometime, and I see you as the preeminent color photogrammist—if that's a word—of your generation.

EC: Thank you Bill.

BA: Perhaps surprisingly, there is a new generation of artists going against the grain of the digital revolution and making traditional color photograms today. Walead Beshty, Mariah Robertson and Bryan Graf, in particular, come to mind. How do you see these artists and the future of the photogram?

EC: It's the 21st century version of the Linked Ring. Very exciting and invigorating! We "photogrammists" are all in this together, an *esprit de corps* that is inclusive. The future is always unpredictable. Would Talbot and Atkins or Man Ray have seen this? Here *and* now?—envision the photogram's possibilities as "back to the future" from their vantage point located in the 19th or 20th century? Color has advanced so much in the chemistry and the ability to print big, but I do remember the excitement around digital and people predicting the end of analog, but it is just too rich a medium, too beautiful to let go; the amazing images, the materials and processes have meaning, the uniqueness of the physical print and by extension, the artist, also unique. The photogram *is* the beginning and to see the next generation of artists take it on, in their practices, means something— they get it. They are wonderful, bold and fearless. I see the work, understand and know their struggles, but this important legacy continues, against the many challenges, predictions and complexities. It enriches the picture culture with fresh ideas and new visions. Maybe my work is the "link" between that past and this present, as I remember when starting these photograms people looked at me as in: "Why bother? Digital is here! Color, Hah! You can do *everything* digitally." But you really can't, can you?

BA: No, you cannot.

NINA FREUDENHEIM, INC.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STRUCK BY LIGHT

New Works by Ellen Carey

NINA FREUDENHEIM GALLERY

140 North Street Buffalo, NY 14201

March 3 – April 11, 2012

Opening Reception: March 3, 2012 - 6 – 8 PM

Artist Talk with Reception for Artist: March 30, 2012 - 5:30 – 8 PM

The Nina Freudenheim Gallery is pleased to announce the exhibition of new works by photographer Ellen Carey.

Throughout her career, Carey has been breaking past convention to explore abstract and minimalist photography. Unlike many photographers whose subject is the reason for the photograph, Carey's artwork allows the process of capturing color and light to be the driving force behind her images. Through her prolific career, Carey has spent much time examining the earliest practitioners of at the dawn of the medium found in the British inventor of paper photography, William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) with his discovery of the photogram method (1834), exploring the "shadow" negative image. His earthy tones and experiments parallel early forays into color by his contemporary, the Victorian Anna Akins, the first woman photographer *and* the first in color, in the cyanotype method (1841); it makes a Prussian blue.

By investigating the very fundamentals of capturing color in a photogram, through light, Carey has mastered a path beyond cyanotype and paper print, bringing to these a unique and compelling range of form and hue, high impact compositions partnered with inventive methods of expression. Her monumental photograms titled ***Dings & Shadows*** take as their visual cue, in content and context, a palette of photographic color theory—R/G/B/Y/M/C—a characteristic inherent in the medium and one that Carey joyfully celebrates with bold innovations.

In ***Struck by Light***, Carey uses light and only light to capture her images in the "light tight" color darkroom. In effect, she works blind to create these photographic works, only afterwards can she see where her process has taken her. The large prints of this exhibition find their compositions located in chance and skill, from the fast-paced process of moving light to the random and deliberate folding and creasing of paper, Carey explores abstraction and minimalism on her own terms. The "ding" is taboo, but here the artist intentionally creates them to serve as "shadow catchers", simultaneously breaking ground and photographic tradition. Her techniques yield spectral variety, the traces of its "prima facie" fluid in the artist's hand. In her ***Polaroid Penlights Pulls*****,** Carey takes a different approach, literally striking the Polaroid negative with light, in effect, making the first 21st century photogram, with Polaroid's instant, color technology.

The Nina Freudenheim Gallery is free and open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 10 until 5 and by appointment on Monday and Saturday.

M+B

The San Diego Union-Tribune.

Artist Ellen Carey is pushing the boundaries of photography

By James Chute
June 19, 2012

Don't even mention the word digital photography to lens-based artist Ellen Carey.

"I'm not sure it's a correct description," said the pioneering photographer, whose images have been widely exhibited and are in the collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, among other institutions.

Carey prefers the term "digital imaging technology."

"I think one has to be careful when one talks about photography," she said.

If Carey is a purist when it comes to defining photography, she's anything but when it comes to making images.

Ellen Carey: "Multichrome Pulls" (2007)

Even as she employs what could be considered archaic technology — one of only five, large format, 20 X 24 Polaroid instant cameras still in existence — she is pushing the boundaries of the conventional preconceptions associated with what a photograph should look like.

"Minimalism and abstraction in photography could be considered a kind of contradiction in terms," said Carey, who teaches the Hartford Art School. But clearly, that's not the way she considers it.

Although she had been working on the large-format Polaroid cameras since 1983, her images were mostly representational until 1996, when by accident, she continued pulling the paper out of the camera and created an abstract, parabolic-shaped form on a scroll-like sheet of paper.

In that single, unintended "pull," which is the name she's given to that form of art work, she moved from representation to abstraction, from a way of working where the process served the image to where the process was the image.

"It was a metaphor for what was happening in my life," said the 60-year-old Carey, who at the time had lost her brother, her mother and a aunt in rapid succession. "Because in photography, one thinks about it being a record and document, a snapshot of human life. My whole life had sort of collapsed..."

Just like that photo, which she quickly realized was not a mistake but a gift that continues to inform her art making.

With the elimination of the narrative and her rejection of the literal image in favor of mystery and metaphor, she's dubbed her art practice "Photography Degree Zero" (inspired by the Roland Berthes' 1953 book, "Writing Degree Zero").

Sometimes she puts the paper through the camera with the lens closed, but most of the time the lens is open, allowing the light to excite the often unconventional combinations of inks that create colors that often no one has ever seen before, and given the inexact nature of the medium, colors that are unlikely to be produced again.

Every time she puts a piece of paper in the camera, she can't be entirely sure of what's going to happen. That's the nature of her medium.

"That doesn't bother me," Cary said. "Part of being a pioneer, or an avant-garde artist, is abandoning and letting go of control."

But is she a pioneer, boldly shattering photographic conventions, or is she a dinosaur, wedded to a outmoded, barely breathing technology that has already died twice (Polaroid declared bankruptcy in 2001, then the company which had picked up the name filed for bankruptcy in 2009. The current "Polaroid" company is associated with Lady Gaga and no longer makes instant film. A couple entrepreneurs have taken that on, at least for the moment).

"Polaroid called me in 2000 and said it was over and here it is 2012 and I'm still shooting," she said. "I'm committed to the materials; they have a soft edge brilliance and character all their own."

And she's committed to the process, whose limitless possible outcomes still excite her.

"There's nothing like it," she said. "I'm having a blast. And I'm going to keep on going."

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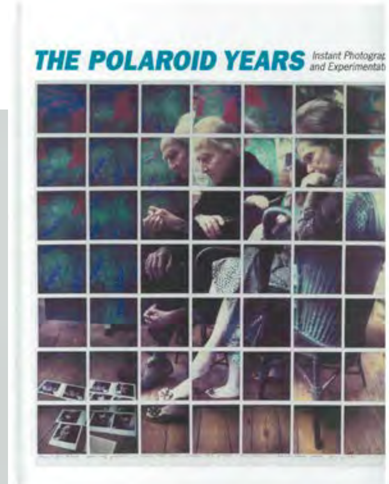

2013

Ellen Carey

The prescient Polaroid slogan "See What Develops" could be a metaphor fo my history with this instant photographic technology. What an invention! M love for all things Polaroid was equally instant—*l'amour fou*—crazy, madl wildly in love, as "seen" at first sight. It all began in the halcyon days of th 1970s, when Polaroid's "point and shoot" met my experiments in photogra phy and art: an ideal fit, if ever there was one. It paralleled the cultural se changes of that time in feminism, war, politics, and music. And where wa photography? On the edge, ready for change: for Polaroid, in other words the shape shifter, an agent of revolution in creative, visual thinking.

This love affair, decades long now, began with Polaroid cameras First came the sleek, compact, minimal SX-70: an image popped out an developed before one's eyes. Seeing my picture unfold in seconds—beauti ful, small, square—framed my ideas in color. Next came the Super-Shoote for a one-step, peel-away process. *My Sparkling Self* echoed the joy of m newly forged creative partnership with Polaroid, asking: "Why not stac them up, extend the 'frame,' add glitter too?"

My biggest love was yet to come. I grew bolder with the large-forma Polaroid 20 x 24 camera. Risk and chance formed a pas de deux of experi mental abandon. As the world moved toward the twenty-first century, ques tions of identity—"Who am I?" and "What is the self?"—seemed as natura for a young artist as standing in Hamlet's shadow. Pushing boundaries le to the innovations in my *Self-Portrait* series of the 1980s. Sometimes someone like Nancy Grover would ask: "Would you do my portrait?" I love her and Polaroid saying: "Yes!"

My Sparkling Self, 1977

Nancy D. Grover, 1995

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As I moved freely through genres and themes, a trajectory from representation toward abstraction propelled me in the 1990s to focus on light and color. These two elements were my subject matter, photographed up close and personal for more exposure. It was in this context, in 1996, that I began my *Pull* series, which produced a radically different kind of document. These minimal, abstract compositions found a parallel (or photographic counterpoint) in Polaroid and process. With each *Pull*, the visual impact was doubled by introducing a new form, the parabola, as a black conical loop, never before seen in photography, instant or otherwise. See what developed?!

Abstraction in photography and lens-based art presents a contradiction in terms, and minimalism in that context is a further oxymoron. Although abstraction was well developed in the twentieth century in other art movements—Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, and Conceptual Art—abstraction as a concept in photography is still evolving, even in 2012. Indeed, in its very monumentality, *Pull XL*, made with the Polaroid 40 x 80 camera, matches the gigantic scale and colossal size of my ideas of photography as art.

It is here, in the early stages of modern and contemporary art with roots in photography, that my work now has a context, and within practices largely based in America. With a full awareness of this legacy, these avant-garde tenets forefronted my umbrella concept and artistic practice in Polaroid, which I refer to as *Photography Degree Zero*.

e), 2003

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20X24 STUDIO

Ellen Carey, 20×24 Polaroid Pulls and Rollbacks

2009
By John Reuter

One of the more unique artists working with Polaroid 20×24 technology today is Ellen Carey. Ellen first began using the 20×24 in 1982 while it was housed at the Museum of Fine Arts School in Boston. Ellen's first work was a series of self portraits, lit with colored gels and later painted with enamel paint. These evolved into another series of self portraits made in New York that combined close up portraits lit with colored gels with intricate collages of black and white graphic images.
These multiple exposures blended the abstract and narrative in compelling complexity. In the 1990s Carey moved on to produce the series of "Pulls" and "Rollbacks". Eliminating the figure altogether, Carey created these abstract images taking full advantage of the camera as a printmaking machine. Exploiting the roll film nature of the system, Carey produced pieces sometimes seven to ten feet in length by letting the camera run beyond its usual stopping point. At times, the positive would be cut away from the negative and "rolled back" into the camera for additional exposures and developing.
Here is an excerpt from the essay "Ellen Carey from Matrix to Monumental", by Ben Lifson.

There are artists who (we are persuaded) are afforded glimpses of another realm, of a better order, or of order itself and its possibilities, which glimpses inform their art from that point on. Ellen Carey is such an artist. Hers is a visionary world from which she has returned to give us reports, which are her pictures.
Abstract? Yes. But also concrete in their forms, details and imagery. Each form is precisely what it is.
She has stripped the photographic process down to its irreducible elements and handles these so as to make them almost concepts, almost representative of photography's means rather than the means themselves: a camera–the Polaroid 20 X 24 inch view camera; an object — a piece of white board; and very bright colored strobe light. This last is reflected off the board at the moment of exposure. And so the camera photographs not the object but only the light.

In a word, Impressionism.
Carey calls it "Photography Degree Zero", after the French writer Roland Barthe's Writing Degree Zero. Her process seems so much distilled to the basic elements of her medium that one might wonder how this can be photography at all. True, the instrument is a large version of the earliest cameras. But as Carey points out, photography "comes with certain historical associations" that its pictures will be descriptive or discursive: portraits, landscapes, still life. There are few truly abstract photographs. "So that when you have pictures that you don't know how they're made, and what they're pictures of—and this is especially true of my work—those expectations are challenged." Nonetheless, in her work light is recorded by a lens and photosensitive materials, which are the groundwork for creation in this medium. Hence the title, which seems to reduce Carey's part in the creation of her pictures to that of little more than a camera operator—a term taken from photography's earliest days in America.
Carey counters this implication by calling herself a "lens based artist", and indeed she is in artistic control throughout the process, choosing the colored gels to place over her strobe lights, choosing the dyes that will develop the image (having a strong sense of how colored light as interpreted by the dyes will behave on Polaroid's paper, she often uses two or more dye pods), down to the moment when she releases the shutter and pulls the Polaroid positive/negative material farther out from the camera than its default length of twenty-four inches—hence her term for these pictures: "Pulls"—and often separating positive from negative before both are ready, or re-exposing a Pull, or interrupting the camera's actions. "It's a very fluid process. I do sketches…but there's a lot of room for…chance, randomness, which of course is one of the activities in art practice." And cites "people like John Cage, Laurie Anderson…"
Thus she creates abstract photographs that are at once truly abstract and truly photographic.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

DOWJONES
A NEWS CORPORATION COMPANY

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2008 - VOL. CCLII NO. 31

★★★★ $2.00

PHOTOGRAPHY

Big Artists, Big Camera: Not a Typical Polaroid

By Mary Panzer

When, back in February, Petters Group Worldwide, current owner of Polaroid Corp., announced that it would stop producing instant photography film, the company left the door open for any interested party to acquire the technology needed to manufacture the film for whatever customers remained. As a result, investor and philanthropist Daniel H. Stern and long-time Polaroid artist John Reuter now have "an agreement in principle" to produce the chemicals and related products essential for making Polaroid images. But don't expect to buy film for your old SX 70 or Swinger.

Their company, 20X24 Holdings LLC, will support only the Polaroid 20x24, which produces images two feet high and 20 inches wide. Polaroid introduced the model in the late 1970s as a glamour product. According to Eelco Wolf, director of world-wide marketing at the time, the gamble paid off. No conventional camera could make film negatives this large, or match the intense colors and the thick, almost three-dimensional quality of the images.

But the cameras did not fly off the assembly line. The 20x24 requires a camera as big as a refrigerator, an enormous lens, movie-bright lights, and, crucially, skilled operators, able to load the camera, prepare for the shot, and pull exposed paper through rollers that distribute the chemicals evenly across the surface. The image comes out as a heavy sheet of paper covered by a light-tight protective layer with active chemicals in between. The operator slices the package away from the camera and sets the timer. About a minute later, technicians remove the protective layer to reveal the final result.

Only six cameras were made. Inventor Edwin Land housed one with the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, to make near-perfect reproductions of paintings. Mr. Wolf, however, imagined that the images could be independent works of art. He invited William Wegman, Lucas Samaras, Elsa Dorfman and Timothy Greenfield-Sanders to experiment with the camera, and their careers became closely connected to the process.

In 1985, Messrs. Reuter and Wolf set up a studio in SoHo, looking to turn the 20x24 from a novelty into a profit-making machine. While commercial clients enjoyed the camera as spectacle, artists were the most loyal patrons. Mr. Reuter and his staff provided the technical support so that the artists could achieve the pictures they wanted.

The camera is a popular choice for portraiture. Everyone describes the intimate relationship that develops between sitter and photographer as the session unfolds one image at a time. Mary Ellen Mark notes that famous subjects are willing to spend more time with her because they are curious about the process. For Chuck Close, who made his name painting portraits as big as a wall, and who is well known for his constant experiments with media, the 20x24 images seemed a logical tool. On a more practical level it suits him, because since 1988 he has been severely paralyzed, confined to a wheelchair and able to move his hands just enough to hold a brush. Making art on the 20x24 requires only what he does best—imagine a picture and react to the image.

Photos: Polaroid Collections (left); Chuck Close, courtesy the Polaroid Collections (above)

This 1979 self-portrait of **Chuck Close** (above) was created using a large **Polaroid 20x24** camera like the one on the left. Only five are still in use.

Over 75 artists have used the camera in the past 30 years, among them Julian Schnabel and Joyce Tenneson, and younger artists such as Dawoud Bey and Caroline Chiu. As Polaroid Corp. declined, Mr. Reuter held on, not knowing how long his contract and supplies would last. Predictably enough, with the end in sight, artists booked every available hour. (Five cameras are still active, including two in New York and one each in Cambridge, Mass., San Francisco and Prague.)

Now 20X24 Holdings has set up a new studio in Tribeca, where, on July 16, Mr. Reuter, executive director, and Jennifer Trausch, director of photography, resumed working with artists and commercial photographers. Buzz Spector, who makes still lifes, was the first; Mr. Close followed two days later.

What makes the 20x24 worth saving? Mr. Reuter calls it the "king of all Polaroids," because "it amplifies every aspect of the process." Size. Near-instant results. The seductive steps needed to produce a picture. The sheer beauty of the prints themselves.

Ms. Dorfman, who does her own technical work, compares every session to "a high wire act. Like hang gliding, either you do it, or you fail. And if you fail, you fail in front of everybody." She notes that the families and couples who are a large part of her business incur the same risk. "It's a daredevil performance for my clients, too." As a result, her sitters appear both spontaneous and alert.

Mr. Close takes pleasure in the finished, tactile quality of the 20x24 images. "Digital is instant, but the image has no object status. . . . It's just something on a screen, an intermediate stage" on the way to being something else.

Ms. Mark concurs. She calls her work with the 20x24 "the purest form of photography. . . . You're making a print and taking a picture at the same moment. You can't correct it in a darkroom."

At a time when digital technology has replaced its analog antecedents in every area of reproduction and dissemination, traditional photographs have a nostalgic quality. Why preserve such an obsolete process?

As Mr. Close points out, being out of date is hardly unique to the 20x24 camera. "All art is a buggy-whip business." He is a fan of obsolete photographic methods. For example, he also makes daguerreotypes, one the oldest forms of photography, and one that, like the Polaroid, was abandoned with the onset of new methods.

Digital technology is an infinitely malleable form of picture-making, with changes almost impossible to detect. So every photograph, even the most innocent, can inspire doubt.

Much of this response is justified. Photographers have always altered their images. Clever technicians could always add or remove details, backgrounds, even people without arousing suspicion. But an original negative will betray any changes made to subsequent prints.

Only the Polaroid process can guarantee that the picture you see is identical to the subject that stood before the camera. The 20x24, a lovely, archaic piece of technology, preserves the one form of photography you can trust.

Ms. Panzer writes about photography for the Journal.

M+B

ARTnews

THE INDECISIVE IMAGE

In pictures of ethereal specks and kaleidoscopic explosions of color, photographers are embracing abstraction.

March 1, 2008
By Eric Bryant

In Marco Breuer's recent photographs, black specks dance across a white surface, leaving faint trails that mark the passage of time. Sensuous blocks of yellow glow like crystals lit from within, and drippy parallel lines that seem to sit on top of the paper call to mind Action Painting. Made without camera or film, these lush, textured works, collected in Breuer's 2007 book Early Recordings, defy our basic notions of what photography can be. Breuer achieves his effects by burning photographic papers, scraping their emulsions, and experimenting with chemical formulas that were popular in the 19th century.

Breuer is one of a wave of photographers now gaining recognition for work that abandons recognizable subject matter. "Abstraction goes back to the very beginnings of photography and has come back in different revivals," says Roxana Marcoci, photography curator at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. "There were the New Vision people in the 1920s and another group in the 1960s, and it is here again right now."

The range of work recently on view testifies to the current strength of abstract photography. Last fall, a miniretrospective of Breuer's explorations of light-sensitive materials was featured at Von Lintel Gallery, and Eileen Quinlan's disorienting close-ups of spaces fractured by mirrors and light were showing on the other side of Manhattan at Miguel Abreu Gallery. This winter Walead Beshty exhibited his folded-paper photograms in lurid colors at China Art Objects Galleries in Los Angeles, while Alison Rossiter's foggy prints made on unexposed photographic paper were on view in "The Death of Photography" at Stephen Bulger Gallery in Toronto. And when the Whitney Biennial opens this month, it will include photograms of screens that appear digital by James Welling, one of Beshty's teachers at UCLA and an influence on a whole generation of photographers looking at abstraction.
The reasons for the resurgence of abstraction are almost as diverse as the work itself. "The question of what sort of object the photograph is inevitably leads to the examination of abstraction," says Lyle Rexer, whose book tracing the history of abstract photography is scheduled to be published by Aperture in the fall. That question has loomed ever larger in recent decades as the notion of photographic veracity has come under assault. The idea of photographic "truth" is undermined by the conceptual investigations of subject matter in Cindy Sherman's film stills and Philip-Lorca diCorcia's staged street scenes as much as by the mass media's embrace of Photoshop. Digital advances in the commercial realm have drawn art photographers' attention back to a range of earlier methods. "I find 19th-century photography most interesting because the medium was not yet standardized," says Breuer. "Now, too many people automatically make 30-by-40-inch color prints, just like printing 8-by-10 black-and-white was the default 30 years ago."

And while recent years have witnessed a market enamored of pristine oversize prints that require labored postproduction, cameraless photography reintroduces immediacy and chance into the process. "Rather than working six hours on the perfect print, I can go into the darkroom without an idea and just let a direction appear as I work," says Rossiter. Other observers see the pull of art-historical influences. "I think that a lot of these artists are getting back to these movements in the history of photography connected with light experiments," says Marcoci. "But they are also looking beyond photography or even abstraction to the artists in the 1960s and '70s who used unconventional techniques, like James Turrell, Gordon Matta-Clark, Anthony McCall, and Robert Smithson."

While various 19th-century photographers inadvertently skirted abstraction, Alvin Langdon Coburn was the first to deliberately embrace it nearly a century ago. Around 1916 he used crystals and mirrors to create works he called Vortographs, tying the images to Vorticism, a movement of Cubist-inspired painters and sculptors in Britain. Since then, many of photography's best-known names—from Paul Strand, Lotte Jacobi, Man Ray, and Harry Callahan to Wolfgang Tillmans—have been drawn to abstraction, but just a handful have made it the centerpiece of their endeavors. "Abstraction was seen as being contrary to the supposedly genuine nature of the medium," observes photographer Joan Fontcuberta.

No single movement has emerged in the field, although a number of loose-knit groups have advocated for the abstract potential of photography: the teachers at the Chicago Institute of Design in the middle of the last century, the Association of Heliographers and the Generative Photographers of the 1960s, and the Concrete Photographers, largely based in Germany, today. But none of these could rightly be called a school, and each embraced a number of approaches.

The Chicago Institute was an outgrowth of the New Bauhaus school, founded in 1937 by Lí¡szló Moholy-Nagy. He had begun experimenting with photograms as early as 1922, and they played an essential role in his "New Vision" theory, which sought to expand human perception. Although an object, such as an eggbeater, may appear in Moholy-Nagy's photograms, that specific image is completely beside the point. The artist's concern was making a fuller range of light effects visible to the human eye.

For two decades after World War II, the institute was also home to Aaron Siskind, whose abstract works could not be more unlike those of Moholy-Nagy. Siskind used a camera and photographed real things, but often in extreme close-up or in other ways that would eliminate the viewer's frame of reference. When stripped of their context, peeling paint or distressed wood became geometric forms and lush textures. Siskind, who showed at Charles Egan Gallery alongside Willem de Kooning, was the only photographer associated with the New York School, and his abstract work is rightly called expressionist.

Even today much abstract work can best be understood as tending toward one or the other of these masters' primary techniques: creating unique cameraless prints in the darkroom or rendering real subjects unrecognizable as a result of manipulations either before the camera or in postproduction. Over the last decade or so, these two techniques have been joined by a third: process-based work, which is indebted as much to recent research into the methods of 19th-century photography as to the process artists of the 1960s and '70s.

Breuer is perhaps the most radical of the process photographers, but he started his career at a very old and traditional school in Germany, the Lette-Verein Berlin. "After that, I needed to find some place where I could work outside the rules," he explains. So he moved to a remote village and began producing all the work that had been percolating in his mind. "I thought if I minimized new visual input—no television, no billboards, no magazines—and maximized my output, I could get everything out of my system. That is when I started digging deeper into the process and engaging with materials."

Today, at his home and studio in Upstate New York, Breuer pursues his work almost as a series of experiments. "Often I am trying to force materials to do things," he says, "and it is the material's resistance that suggests the image." In 2005, for instance, he set out to see if he could instill a sense of immediacy into the gum bichromate printing method, in which the emulsion is traditionally laid down in layers, in the case of color images, and can take days to build up. He eventually came upon the technique of abrading the emulsion with a palm sander. The finished images resemble colonies of mold spreading across the surface and puddling to form richly varied tonalities.

Ellen Carey, who works with a 20-by-24-inch Polaroid camera, also disrupts a carefully tuned process, albeit a relatively new one. Her ongoing series "Pulls" and "Rollbacks" present irregular shapes in deeply saturated colors, sometimes drawn out to several feet long. The work, which was on view through last month at IBU Gallery in Paris, is made by interrupting the dye-transfer process in which pigmented emulsion migrates from the contact negative to the positive print paper, or by mixing incompatible chemicals, such as color emulsions and black-and-white developer. The names for the series came from the physical work of manipulating the camera apparatus, but even after years of experimentation the outcomes are largely beyond Carey's control. "The materials inform the process, and the 'Pulls' are documents of their own making," she says. "In a certain way, this is the action of the thing making itself."

Carlos Motta went even further in letting the pictures make themselves in “A Tree Is a Tree Is Not a Tree,” which was shown alongside the work of Breuer, among others, in “Agitate,” a 2003 show at SF Camerawork in San Francisco that helped define the term “process photography.” For the series, Motta tacked unprocessed photographic paper to trees for a week at a time and let the elements go to work. The prolonged contact with bark, leaves, and rain resulted in surfaces that appear both liquid and corroded.

A desire to engage with the accidental motivates many of the artists whose work can be categorized as darkroom abstractions. To produce his “Chance” series, Silvio Wolf, whose show at Robert Mann Gallery in New York will be up through the 15th of this month, uses leader—the film at the beginning of a roll that is never shot through the lens but may be exposed while loading a camera. Wolf’s chromogenic dye-coupler prints, which are up to six feet tall, present intense monochromatic fields that mimic the compositions and emotional tension of Rothko paintings.

Though Wolf doesn’t control the exposures, he pores over hundreds of leaders looking for a usable frame. Alison Rossiter is more systematic in carrying out the project she calls “Laments.” Printing full sheets of commercial paper that have never been intentionally exposed, she is creating an archive with at least one example with an expiration date in each year of the 20th century. The project began when a search for discontinued film on eBay led her to the auction of a complete photographer’s studio, including paper that had expired in 1946. Rossiter printed a sheet and was surprised to find an ethereal image that looked like a cloudscape at dusk, the result of years of light leaking through the packaging. “The move to digital imagery is fantastic in terms of postproduction and especially in photojournalism,” the artist acknowledges. “But the way that silver gelatin materials make use of light and precious metals is astounding, and there is nothing like the beauty of 19th- and 20th-century materials.”

Rossiter has experimented with darkroom techniques, including “drawing” directly on paper with a light. She began by producing nearly unrecognizable outlines of land masses and now does the same for “pictures” of horses from famous paintings. “The image is not abstract, but the technique is,” she says. “It only requires light and chemistry, and it goes directly from idea to object without making reference to a thing.” Rossiter has also made photograms, the oldest and still most widely practiced cameraless technique.

Both light drawing and photograms figure in Ray K. Metzker’s recent work, on view at Laurence Miller Gallery last winter. Tearing and stacking photosensitive black-and-white papers, carefully controlling the exposures, he creates collagelike geometric images that feature stark contrasts as well as subtle shading.

The same restrictions are made plain in the title of Walead Beshty’s photogram Picture Made by My Hand with the Assistance of Light(2006). Just as the title highlights the lack of an outside reference, the artist has made a variety of such works by creasing and even crumpling the paper, a technique meant to draw viewers’ attention to the physical properties of the medium. Depending on the paper used, the finished imagery ranges from mottled gray tones to pastel mists to brightly colored kaleidoscopic jumbles.

Beshty “is interested in treating the image abstractly rather than the content being abstract,” Whitney Biennial cocurator Shamim Momin says of the photograms. That distinction helps link the photograms to Beshty’s other work, such as the group of multiple exposures included in the biennial that the artist says depict the abandoned Iraqi embassy in Berlin. In both bodies of work, Beshty is trying to make explicit the essential quality of the artwork as an object rather than an image.

A similar emphasis is evident in the work of James Welling, who is showing at the biennial for the first time after nearly three decades of photographic experimentation. “Welling has been tremendously influential on the post–Gregory Crewdson generation, the people who are not pursuing portraiture or setup photography,” Momin says. “But he is also included because this is a very fertile moment for him.”

For his show in the spring of last year at David Zwirner gallery in New York, Welling exhibited three series that exemplify the range of techniques available to those who create abstract images by distorting the figurative or removing its context. In the “Authors” series, for example, Welling printed photos he had taken of drapes two decades earlier as a sequence of high-contrast monochromes in negative. He named each work after a 19th-century writer, but the correlation between the moody colors and the individual authors remains unclear.

In contrast, Quinlan eschews technical manipulations in the darkroom. By carefully arranging objects, cropping, then enlarging the small scenes, she fashions almost indecipherable pictures. Titled “Smoke and Mirrors,” the works are honest about their attempt to deceive. The reflected planes and refracted light hark back to Coburn, but the angular compositions and strong colors more readily recall the experiments of Barbara Kasten in the 1980s. Kasten, however, reversed the play with scale, photographing fractured architectural spaces and printing them as small puzzle pieces. Last year Kasten showed some of these vintage works at Daiter Contemporary in Chicago, but recently she has been working on tabletop arrangements using wire screens shot at angles to create moiré effects.

Rather than manipulate the content before the lens, Roger Newton has manipulated the lens itself. By shooting through glass and plastic forms filled with fluid—water, mineral oil, corn syrup—he creates surreal distortions of the natural world. He has lately been working on a diamond lens; the resulting pictures are nebulous, and as with the earlier works, the lens is both a tool and the subject.

While these aqueous images have emotional resonance, they lack the direct expressive intentions of Siskind and those who dominated the last abstract photography revival, in the ’60s. Conceptual concerns regarding the objectivity of the image, the limits of perception, and the intrinsic properties of materials have moved to the fore as photographers venture into the digital age.

A historian of the medium as well as a photographer, Fontcuberta over the years has revisited many earlier techniques, using them to explore these contemporary concerns. His “Hemograms,” enlarged depictions of a drop of blood, ask viewers what they expect from a “portrait.” His starry “Constellations,” made from photograms of his car’s bug-splattered windshield, prod viewers to question the source of photographic information. But recently Fontcuberta has concentrated on a number of digital projects, hoping to get beyond what he calls third-class surrealism and neo-pictorialism. “Digital photography should be much more than Photoshop and photomontage,” he says.

Two years ago, at Zabriskie Gallery in New York, he showed his “Googlegrams,” photomosaics that piece together miniature digital images selected by the search engine to create pictures with often ironic relations to the constituent parts—portraits of millionaires were assembled into an image of a homeless man, for instance. And Bellas Artes in Santa and Aperture in New York have shown his “Orogenesis” pictures, which use a software program that renders three-dimensional terrain to transform selective scans from art-historical works—a Turner landscape, for example—into otherworldly topography. While both series contain recognizable imagery, they call into question the boundaries of representation in the information age.

Jason Salavon takes these ideas a step further in his show at the Columbus Museum of Art, which runs through May 4. For his “Amalgamations” and “100 Special Moments” series, for instance, he converts similar images—of newlyweds or Playboycenterfolds—into data sets and compresses them. The fuzzy results, as with so much abstract photography, are at once vaguely familiar and completely meaningless.

M+B

The New York Times

Feminist Art With an Edge

January 7th, 2007
By Benjamin Genoccio

The Lyman Allyn Art Museum in New London is not known for displaying feisty contemporary art, which is what makes “femme brut(e), its big fall show of artworks by women, so surprising. Given that this sort of thing is so rarely on display at the museum, it was even more surprising to discover that some of the art comes from the museum’s own collection. This is a terrific show, perhaps one of the best to be staged at the museum in some time.

Nancy Stula, the curator, has assembled an engaging selection of early, confrontational feminist work with more recent, varied offerings by female artists. The contrasts of tone and subject matter between the two groups, spilling across two levels of the building, help illustrate just how far female artists have come.

The title of the exhibition suggests the idea of women who are raw, tough or brutal. But it is more of a metaphor than anything else, characterizing artists who — one way or another — have sought to challenge the historically marginalized position of women. “With the youngest of the artists in this exhibition born in 1959,” Sherry Buckberrough, an art historian, writes in the show’s catalog, “all came of age while the status of women in the art world was still strongly contested.”

The early years of feminism saw female artists embrace numerous strategies to combat art world sexism and discrimination. One popular approach was to reclaim women’s creative histories by adopting materials and art-making practices once commonly, and pejoratively, associated with femininity — needlework, weaving, pottery, printmaking, to name a few. Among the many artists who took up this challenge was Miriam Schapiro, represented here by an ebullient circular collage that draws on patterning and textile traditions.

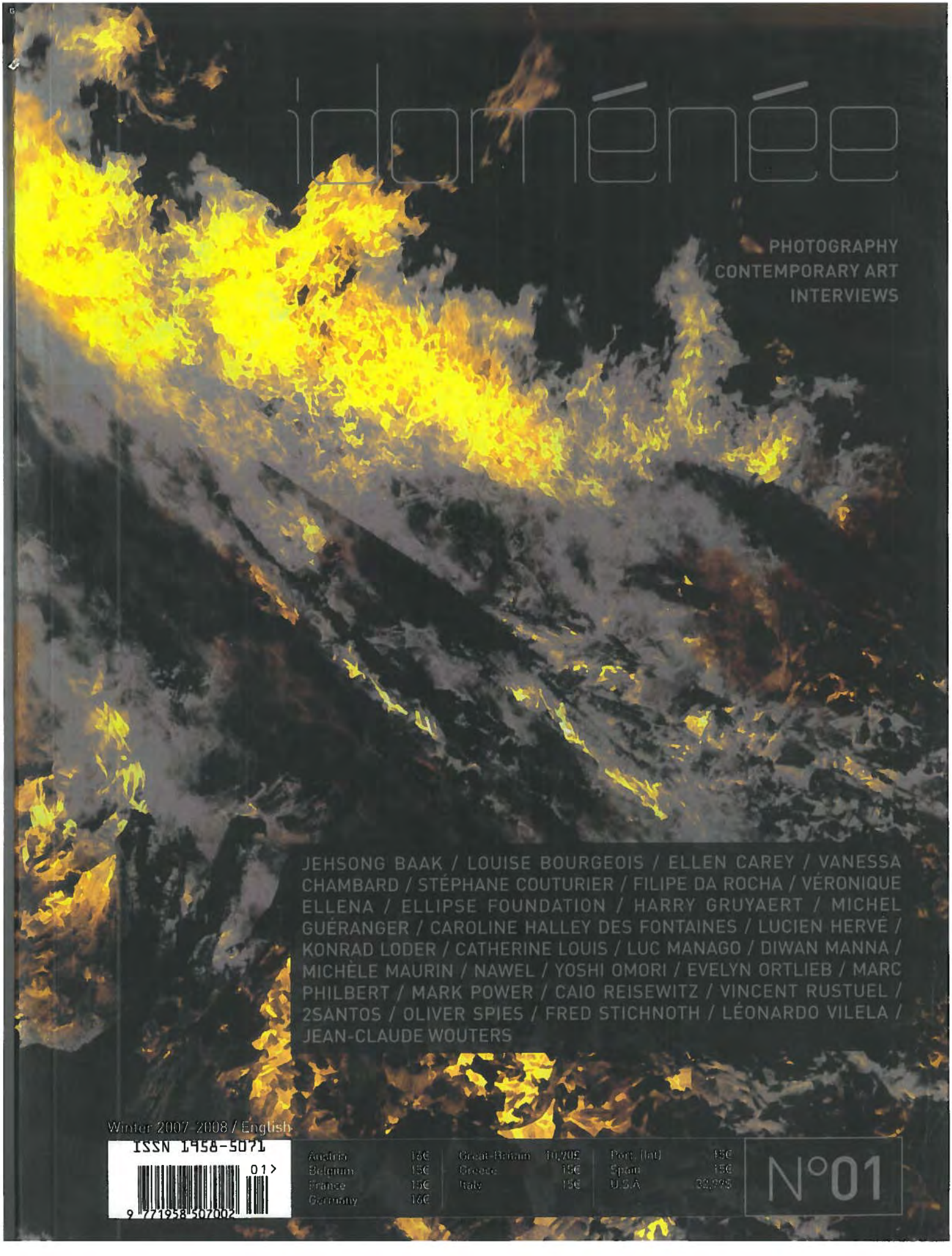
The design of Ms. Schapiro’s concentric, centralizing composition alludes to women’s genitals, which points to another visual strategy adopted by female artists: an empowering use of sexual imagery and depictions of the female body. Before the early 20th century, women were largely excluded from art academies, and even when they were allowed in, they weren’t allowed to study nude models. Men, in this way, maintained a virtual monopoly on their depiction.

Caricature and satire were also important tools for early feminist artists. May Stevens’s “Study for print ‘Big Daddy’ ” (1969) is an early drawing for her “Big Daddy” series of paintings depicting a thick-necked nude man with a slobbering bulldog sitting on his lap. The figure, whom the artist called “big daddy,” is a cartoonlike personification of male authority and of United States militarism during the Vietnam War era; the paintings are some of the most famous works of early American feminist art.

The tradition of feminist satire is carried on in the work of Alison Saar, who is represented by a color woodcut, “Sweeping Beauty” (1997), depicting an upside-down image of a naked woman with hair like a broom head. It is a caricature of the domestic chores commonly ascribed to women, with the figure mirroring the crucified Christ in religious paintings.

Artists like Nancy Spero, Lynda Benglis and June Wayne, who were involved in the feminist art movement from its early days, also have work exhibited here, but it concerns other issues. Ms. Wayne, a master printmaker, is represented in the show by some “exploratory images of interstellar space,” as Ms. Buckberrough writes in the catalog, but which are really formal explorations of the printmaking medium.

Angry social and political protests about gender are largely a thing of the past. The new wave of female artists are working on issues and concerns similar to those of their male counterparts. Among them is Ellen Carey, a photographer who creates startling abstract colored Polaroid images using random developing emulsion flows. The images depart from standard photographic traditions in much the same way that the work of her feminist predecessors departed from art history.



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PHOTOGRAPHY
CONTEMPORARY ART
INTERVIEWS

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Winter 2007 2008 / English

ISSN 1958-5071

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Austria	16€	Great-Britain	10,70£	Port. (Int)	15€
Belgium	15€	Greece	15€	Spain	15€
France	15€	Italy	15€	U.S.A	32,99$
Germany	16€				

N°01

ELLEN CAREY

PHOTOGRAPHY DEGREE ZERO

Under the umbrella concept of "Photography Degree Zero" from the last ten years of my artistic activity are artworks I make in a studio, with a camera, but without a darkroom. This work involves my use of the Polaroid 20x24 camera, housed in New York City, one of five in the world and close to thirty years old. Familiar with the inner intricacies of this camera, I have invented new photographic activities and coined terms, which describe the making of these photographs, such as "Pulls" and "Rollbacks"

These terms have made their way into the language of photography, in much the same way as the 19th century terms for photograms, daguerreotypes and tintypes. This camera produces a unique, large contact positive print, along with its negative, in a one-step peel-away process taking a mere 60-seconds to develop. In a series of changes, actions or functions I am able to make work that is both photographic /process and abstract/minimal at the same time, often exhibiting the negatives along with the positives, giving equal status to both.

The title of my project, Photography Degree Zero, is a direct reference to Roland Barthes' book Writing Degree Zero, published in French in 1953 and in English in 1968, with an introduction by Susan Sontag. Barthes offers theoretical meditations on writing, focusing particularly on the dispassionate tone and minimalist style of the French new novel. In related fashion, my work is meant to represent a departure from the picture sign idea of the photograph, as well as from the historical and cultural expectations surrounding the idea that a photograph will describe, document, and narrate (as in the snapshot, landscape photography, portraiture, and photojournalism).

The first question : "How is this picture made?" addresses photography-as-process.The photographic object often involves an intersection of process and invention, as does the practice of photography it self. In traditional photography, both the process and the invention are "transparent",mere means to an end. The process is the subject my work.

The second question : "What is this a picture of ?" addresses the conundrum of a photographic image without a picture or a "sign" to read. Often there is no exposure and no light, the zero in my practice; sometimes all light upon exposure, as it is light that is photography's indexical, its prima facie. These two questions challenge our cultural and historically prescribed expectations for photography to narrate and document, all the while revealing no trace of its own origins. My art confronts photography-as-process (the Polaroid camera is both invention and a process) and also challenges the prescribed expectation that photographs depict reality.

I approach photography as picture making rather than picture taking. I am interested, both visually and conceptually, in chaos theory, fractal geometry, and symmetry and asymmetry as found not only in art, but nature, science, architecture and mathematics (the golden mean, the logarithmic spiral). Order and chance play key roles in the creation of my work, which has affinities to Abstract Expressionism (size, scale, and "off-frame" space), Surealism (stream of consciousness, the negative image i.e. Ray-o-grams), and Minimalism (material-as-process, seriality, non-representational images, issues of silence).

01
Monochrome Red Negative, 2005
Polaroid 20"x24" color negative print
34 X 22 inches
Unique

Abstraction in photography is a virtual contradiction in terms, Minimalism a further oxymoron. I wish to push the parameters of the photographic medium, both to question the process by which a photograph is made and raise the issue of photographic meaning in the absence from the frame of a recognizable representation.

Abstraction and Minimalism remain distinctly underdeveloped in photography. Affinities have been noted between my work and the sculpture of Dan Flavin, the paintings of Ellsworth Kelly, the conceptual art of Sol Le Witt, the process-as-art found in Jackson Pollock and the sculptural installations of Donald Judd. The work of these artists has a sublime presence and a timeless eloquence that not only challenges ideas about what is and what is not art, but also carries the spiritual and perceptual overtones that are existentially self-defining.

I view myself as a 21st century artist, using tools of this time for personal expression. More often than not, the tool in question is the large format Polaroid 20 x 24 camera. This camera, of which there are only five in the world, was built approximately thirty years ago under the sponsorship of the Polaroid Corporation.

02

02
Yellow Moire with Filigree Pull, 2005
Polaroid 20" x24" color positive print
60 x 22 inches
Unique

03
Blue Negative Pull with Lines, 2004
Polaroid 20" x24" color negative print
80 x 22 inches
Unique

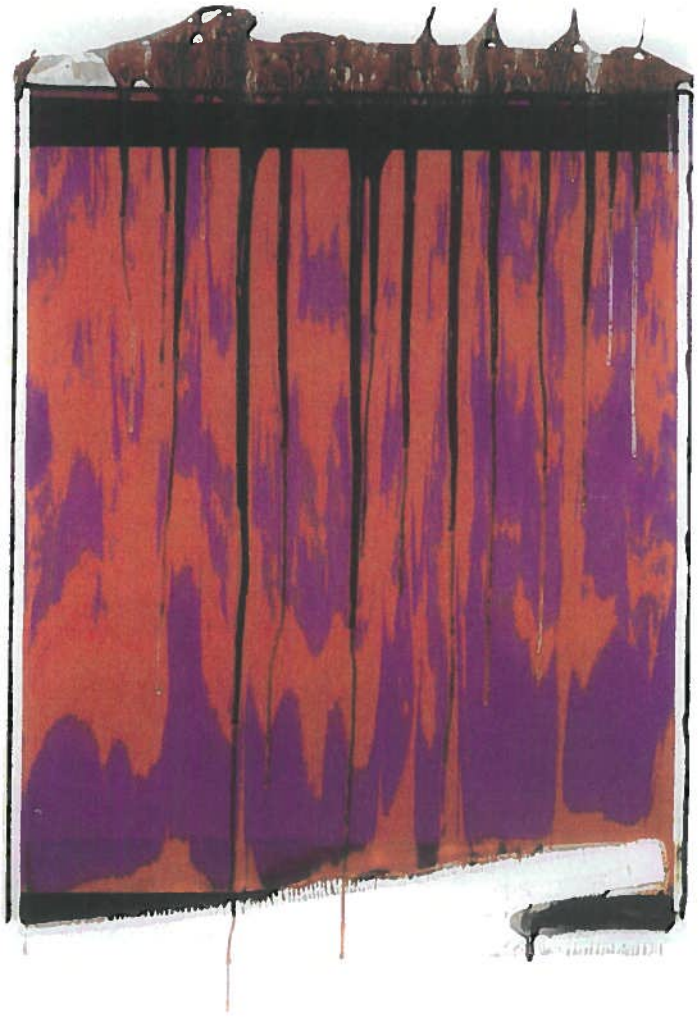
04

Ideas and visual codes that I use freely in my art practices derive from the discoveries of Benoit Mandelbrot, who developed fractal geometry. I also use ideas found in the writings of Rudolf Arnheim, whose basic thesis that art has two structures (the circle and the square) can be seen in connection with the photographic apparatus, its circular lens and rectangular camera body. These conceptual and contextual references give me the tools to create in a more meaningful way and underwrite a richer synoptic clarity in the end result.

Camera-based and technological media seem logical and appealing choices for certain artists. Photography's protean diversity, its comparatively short history, its technical advances, and the universality of its images all speak to the interests of these artists. It is in this spirit that I make a conscious decision to work in a medium with a machine that can combine with imagination to redefine notions of truth and beauty at 1/125th of a second.

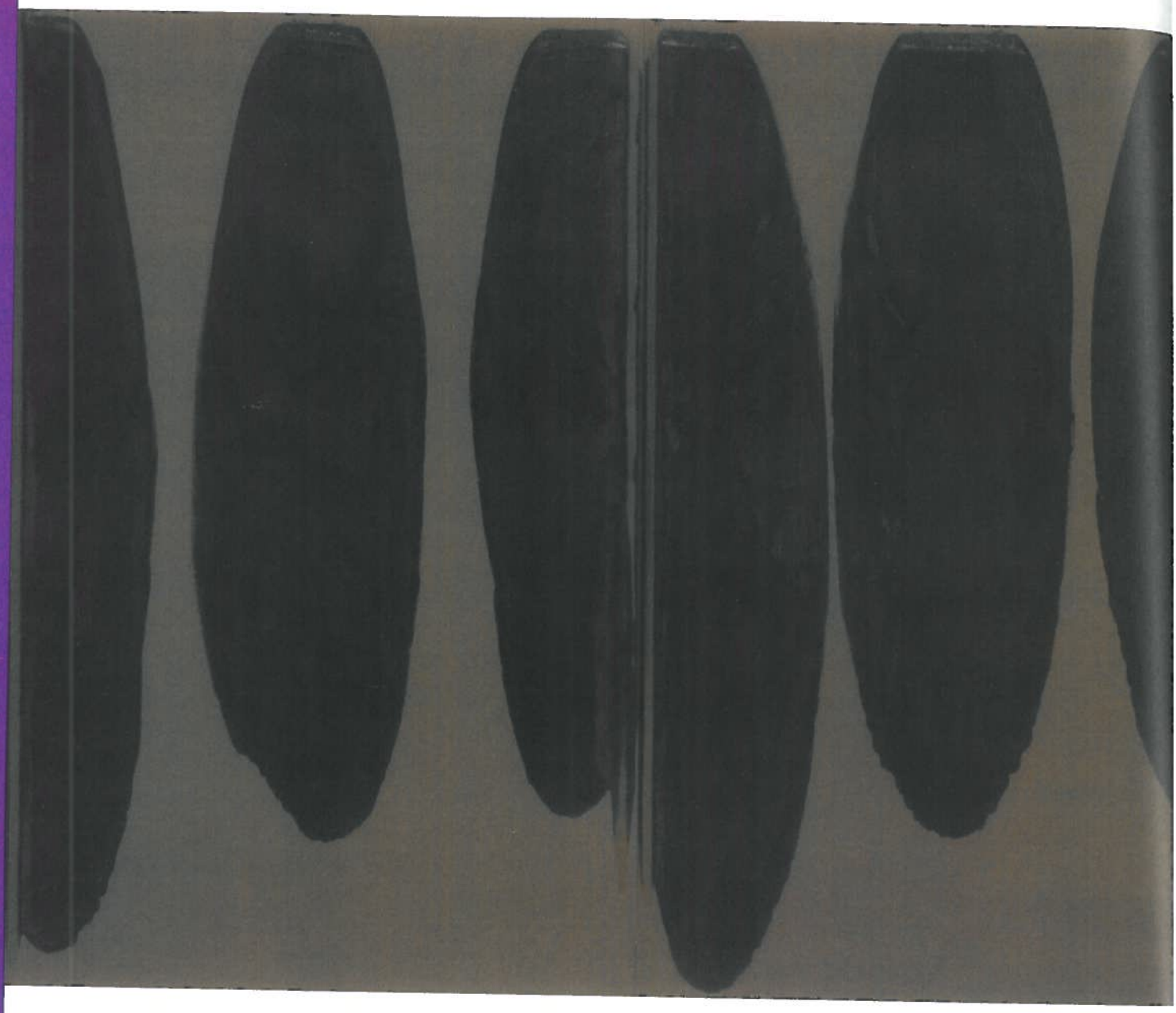
Jayne H. Baum, of JHB Gallery, New York in collaboration with Cyril Ermel of IBU Gallery, Paris are pleased to present, Ellen Carey, Photography Degree Zero. It is the premier solo exhibition of Carey's large scale Polaroid PULLS in Paris, which opened on the 15th of November 2007 and may be viewed until February 28, 2008.

05



04
Detail of
Purple/Blue Pulls with Filigree, 2005
Polaroid 20"x24" color positive prints
80 x 66 inches
Unique

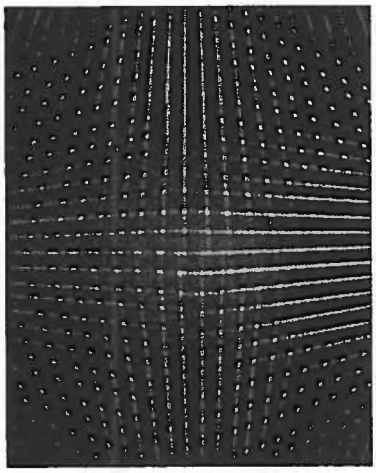
05
Moire Monochrome with Drips, 2005
Polaroid 20"x24" color positive print
34 X 22 inches
Unique



06

Patricia Rosoff

Writing with Light: The Abstract World of Ellen Carey



Ellen Carey, *Blinks*, digital print from color photogram, 55 x 44", 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Paesaggio Fine Arts.

The work of abstract photographer Ellen Carey was given its own space downstairs from the rest of the *Femme Brut(e)* exhibition featured at New London's Lyman Allyn Museum, but it plays a vivid Janus (looking back at photographic history as well as forward to contemporary art) to the bracing work in the field of assertive women artists who are her compatriots in this showing.

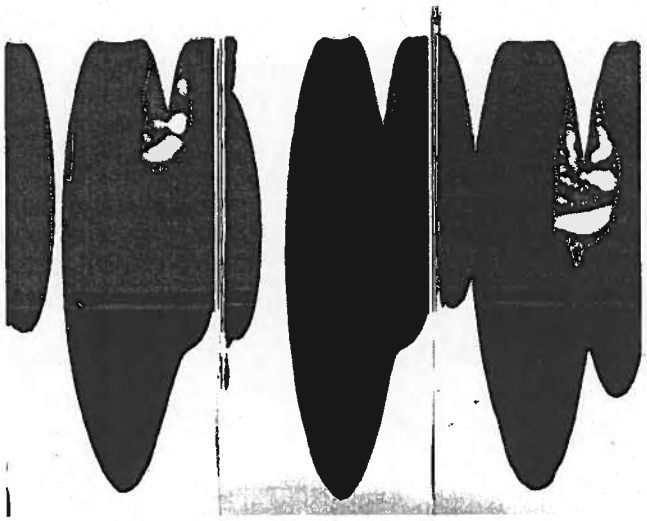
It is a fitting place for someone whose métier is "abstract photography," a term that would seem to be the ultimate oxymoron. How can a camera, a mechanism so entirely unself-aware, be "expressive"?

These questions both drive and explain Carey's work. She is an artist well-known for her pioneering work with the Polaroid 20 x 24 Camera, but not, like her peers William Wegman and Chuck Close, because of her figurative work, but for the opposite—her exploration of imagery generated from resolutely abstract, minimal, and conceptual forms and processes.

Carey began using the large-format Polaroid camera in 1983, and since 1996, she has used it to produce fifteen one-person shows highlighting her umbrella concept "Photography Degree Zero" (a reference to the book *Writing Degree Zero* by Roland Barthes). The concept, which acknowledges her embrace of conceptual approaches, minimalist "real-world" technologies and the installation format, was showcased at such contemporary art spaces as the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art's MATRIX Gallery in 2004–05, the New Britain Museum of American Art's New/Now Gallery in 2002, and at Hartford's Real Art Ways in 2000–01 (*Art New England*, February/March 2001).

The photographs have neither people nor scenery in them. Her Polaroid work is large (her prints can be measured in yards, rather than inches), scroll-like, and varied in proportion. Her photogenic work (done entirely in the darkroom, without a camera) is a visual record of light dancing around and through objects placed directly onto photo-sensitive paper or "drawn" with pen lights in the darkroom.

Carey turns no lens to the outside world. Her narratives are inside stories of the otherwise secret interplay of light and chemistry that is photography. Their inspiration is equal parts history and experiment. They represent a whimsical balance of mindfulness and serendipity filtered through an organic understanding of the photographic process, which is her true subject.



Ellen Carey, *Purple and Blue Pulls w/ Filigree (triptych)*, Polaroid 20 x 24" positive color print, 80 x 66", 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Paesaggio Fine Arts.

She is best-known for her pioneering work with what she has dubbed "pulls," a term she coined to describe the familiar act of pulling the developing sandwich of a Polaroid print out of the camera box. Rather newer (since 1990) are her experiments with photograms, a term used today to describe all camera-less images made with objects placed on light-sensitive materials. Her work in this format was stimulated by Carey's study in 2001 of the work of pioneering British inventor/photographer William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC.

Aspects of Talbot's work continue to inform Carey's relentless experimentation. Still, it is the simple optical fact of the images themselves—such as the "blinking" (a retinal reflex) that happens at the interstices of white lines in her newest *Blink* series—that is the compelling force for the investigations.

Despite her knowledge of lens technology, her work is also profoundly forgetful of that technology—often celebrating what happens when you do things *wrong*. Riveted to the effects that leap from deliberately random combinations of procedural and chemical mismatches, Carey has managed to open exquisitely strange and beautiful new visual ground.

Convention is rarely more than a starting point for Carey's investigative process. Her intention is conceptual experimentation. She refuses, for instance, to tear off the 20 x 24 Polaroid image at the specified 24-inch dimension in her "pulls." (Carey does not sever a print until every last ooze of developing ink is squeezed out of the pods that give it color.) After peeling off the old negative, she might apply a fresh one, rolling the sandwich back into the Polaroid camera to give it a second, or third, exposure. She might pause a pull partway through, resume pulling, and then pause again, just to see what might happen.

Each print is a fingerprint—an inkblot of deeply saturated, glossy color. Some ignite whitely in effects Carey calls "flares." Others fray in delicate, lace-like snags she calls "filigrees." Her photogenic color work (photograms she calls "blinks") reverberate with op-art effects. At the Lyman Allyn, in *Green Pulls with Starts & Stops*, brooding greenish-black shapes (unexposed to any light) gleam with bright horizontal bars of yellow-white at each "stop." In *Moirés*, in what Carey calls "cross-processing" (the deliberate mismatching of Polaroid color chemistry), magenta shivers with electric pink.

Rather than presenting shadows of the outside world in "snapshots," with Carey, what you see is *really* what you get. These are pooling color-shapes that have been squeegeed onto glossy photo paper and push-pinned directly to the gallery wall. No pretense, no illusion.

What is most interesting about Carey's "photographs" is the way she takes us back to the fundamentals of the form—literally, writing with light—rather than offering pictures of *things*. Carey's artistic strategy is to invert our viewpoint. Instead of using her camera lens to look out at the world, Carey employs it as a window onto the physical mechanisms of photography. She defines herself as a "picture maker" (rather than a picture-taker). However you define her, she is in a class by herself.

Lyman Allyn Museum – www.lymanallyn.org
Ellen Carey – www.ellencarey.com

Patricia Rosoff is a painter, writer, and art educator living in West Hartford, CT.

Art in America
June 2001

HARTFORD, CONN.

Ellen Carey at Real Art Ways

Let's start with the facts: Ellen Carey's *Mourning Wall* is composed of 100 16-by-20-inch Polaroid negatives arranged in five rows of 20. For three months last fall and winter, it covered a single wall, 10 by 40 feet, of a converted industrial building in Hartford. The negatives were placed side by side, attached with pushpins. They are all gray and bear no image. Each one is unique. After the wall was installed, the surface emulsion of the negatives oxidized, creating painterly patterns of mottling that contrasted with the silvery sheen of the film base.

Nothing quite prepared me for the experience of this installation, not the Rothko chapel, not Barnett Newman's "Stations of the Cross," not Ad Reinhardt's black paintings, not any of the signature works of minimalist art, which this installation now joins. Carey created the work, she says, as a millennial lament and as a grieving piece for her deceased mother, brother and father. I experienced it as a celebration of the plenitude of being. I couldn't help thinking of other sacred walls encrusted, so to speak, with longing, in Jerusalem and Kyoto.

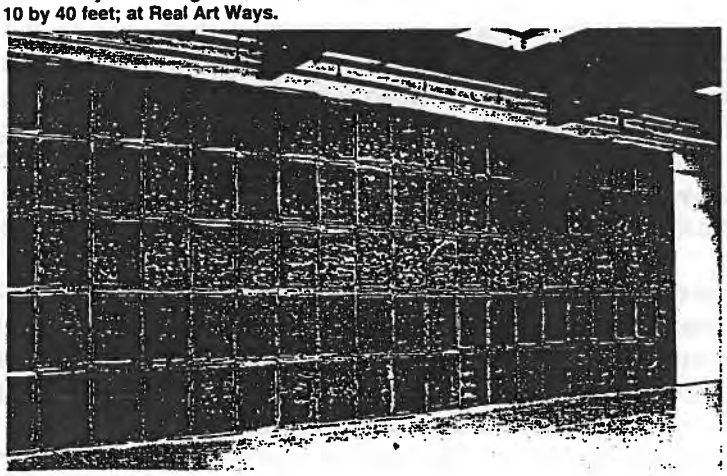
The adjoining rooms were a somewhat different story. One contained three series of seven-piece "Family Portraits," all abstract Polaroids, and these did seem a direct and harrowing expression of grief. One of the series, from 1996, soon after Carey's mother and brother died, was composed of negatives. Because she used color film, these images are blackish green, not pure black. The positives formed the companion series from 1996, and a third series, from 1999, completed the triad. Carey expresses loss through the basic photographic metaphor of positive and negative, and the blankness of the images plays off 19th-century notions of the ceremonial portrait collection. The point, however, is not to reference the cultural past but to remember and reflect on our own experience.

The third room contained *Birthday Portrait*, a triptych of Carey's elongated, bullet-shaped positive color Polaroid abstractions, dedicated as well to her mother, father, brother. She calls them "pulls," because to make them she literally pulls a long, wide strip of film through a huge camera at the Polaroid studio in New York. In terms of process, they are her most innovative work and as dramatic as a Motherwell painting, without the filigree and overstatements.

This exhibition asked fundamental questions: Is it possible to make a truly abstract photograph, as opposed to a photograph of an abstraction? Is it possible to get beyond Moholy-Nagy on the one hand and Aaron Siskind on the other? Does it even make sense to want to? It does if you believe that photography is not first and foremost about freezing an image and stopping time but rather about registering the effects and impact of light on a surface. It's all in the materials. Carey has stripped off the skin of the conventional photo image, leaving a raw surface to register light and time the way a body registers pain. But light and time have healing powers, too, capable of closing any wound. *Mourning Wall* shows us that life is a gift and light is its wrapping.

—*Lyle Rexer*

Ellen Carey: *Mourning Wall*, 2000, 100 Polaroids, 10 by 40 feet; at Real Art Ways.



PHOTOGRAPHY DEGREE ZERO

ELLEN CAREY / MATRIX 153
OCTOBER 31, 2004-APRIL 24, 2005

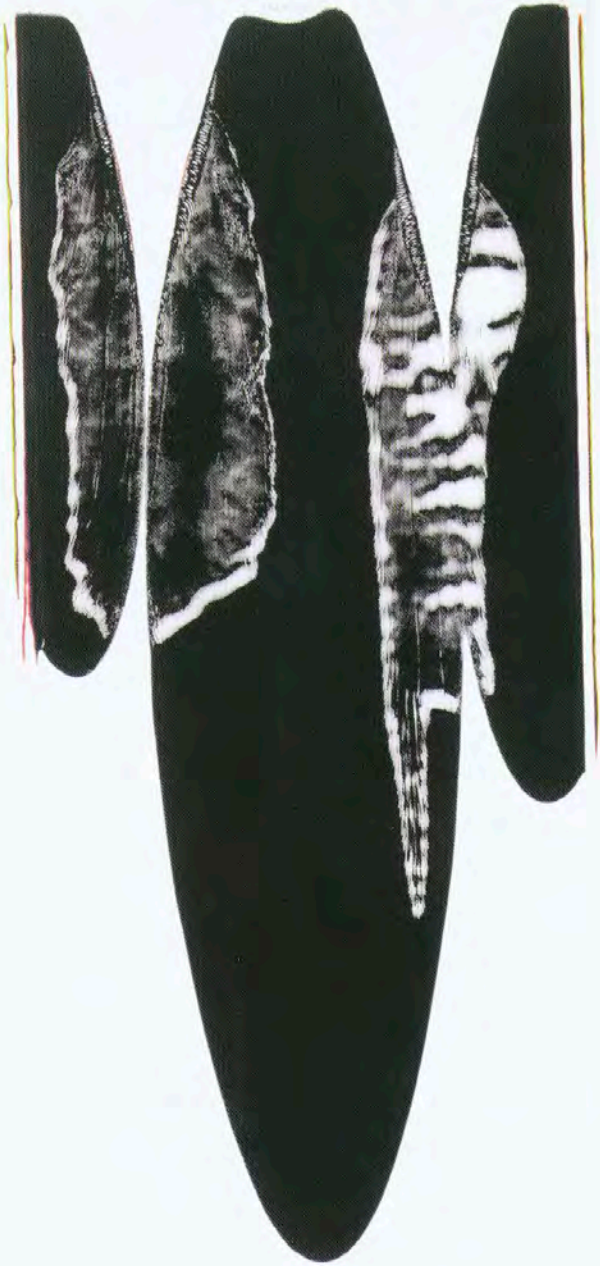
As with minimalist painting, photography degree zero posits not the end of photography, but a new class of photographic objects, fully free of the responsibility and limitation of representing the world and the moment—free also, perhaps to enter into a new relationship with the spectator.

- Lyle Rexer

There is no doubt that photography holds a significant place in the contemporary canon of fine art. However, the journey to this highly-sought position would not have been possible without the development of new techniques and materials which have influenced both the practice and perception of photography. The invention of the Polaroid process by Dr. Edwin H. Land in 1947 stands as a milestone in the history of photographic technology and the elevated status of photography as a fine art. Despite its primary purpose as a commercial and utilitarian tool for taking instant snapshots, Dr. Land recognized the aesthetic potential of his Polaroid camera. By enlisting photographers like Ansel Adams to test new products and films in the late 1940s, Land began a Polaroid tradition of engaging with and promoting camera artists.

The artistic possibilities of the Polaroid process were further expanded in 1977 with the extraordinary development of two large-scale cameras capable of taking pictures of unparalleled clarity and scale. Initially developed in cooperation with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to accurately reproduce paintings and tapestries, both cameras have become legendary in the field of contemporary art for their ability to produce original prints measuring 20-by-24 inches and 40-by-80 inches. Large-format Polaroid photography is now synonymous with innovation and creativity, and has been used by Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Lucas Samaras, Chuck Close, Dawoud Bey, and William Wegman. Among these notable practitioners, however, few have made such dramatic and pioneering advances as Ellen Carey.

Over the past decade Carey has pushed Polaroid technology beyond the limits of usage that Dr. Land could have ever dreamed, developing a technique of camera-based abstraction that has come to define her career. Carey refers to her practice as "photography degree zero," a strategy so reductive that neither the process nor the ensuing images bear any resemblance to conventional photography. The phrase "photography degree



Black Pull
with Two Filigrees,
2003

zero" is derived from the title of Roland Barthes' book, *Writing Degree Zero* (1953), which offers a theoretical analysis of French literature of the early 1950s. Carey's adaptation of this title suggests a formal affinity between the minimalist style of writing Barthes describes, and her own photographic experiments created with the large-format Polaroid camera.

Carey's "degree zero" photography begins with the radical elimination of all subject matter from in front of the lens. She literally reduces the photograph's content to zero, leaving nothing but light for the lens to capture. Carey's most recent and celebrated experiments with large-format Polaroid technology and her degree zero approach are the "pulls," begun in 1996. Created with the Polaroid 20 X 24 camera (and more recently with the Polaroid 40 X 80 camera), "pulls" are produced by allowing the mechanisms of the instant camera itself to produce an image. The term, invented by Carey to describe her work, echoes the physical activity of pulling film through the camera's internal rollers.

The typical "pull" reads as a monochromatic lozenge, stretching the length of the glossy white receiving paper (positive) and the matte green photosensitive paper (negative). Rather than revealing a subject outside and beyond the lens, these attenuated ovals serve as a physical record of pure light, or absence of light, and the chemical development that occurs within the camera body. That process, called diffusion dye transfer, yields a one of a kind image that cannot be duplicated.

The five photographs on view in the first gallery of this exhibition illustrate several of the carefully choreographed variations Carey has developed using the Polaroid 20 X 24 camera. Each image is the result of exposing color-sensitive Polaroid film to a flash of pure light, or no light at all. The three elliptical veils of deeply saturated black dye evident in *Black Pull with Two Filigrees* (2003) are created by the absence of exposure. No object was photographed and no light reached the film. For many photographers this would be considered a careless mistake, equivalent to taking a snapshot with the lens cap on, and the resulting print would likely be discarded. However, for Ellen

Purple

Negative Pull, 2002

Carey this is no accident, but pure alchemy at work. The glassy \pools of unexposed Polaroid pigment mark the trace of that which is absent, light. Interrupting the flow of dyes as they are deposited on the white receiving paper creates the swooping conical shape, a signature feature of all the "pulls."

Carey also blocked light from entering the camera lens to create *Purple Negative Pull* (2002). In this piece Carey mixed Polaroid color film with a developing fluid intended for black-and-white photography. As a result of this chemical crossover, the negative turns a deep shade of purple. This quintessential example of Carey's innovative experiments with the Polaroid camera illustrates one of the most original aspects of the "pulls"—the elevated status of the negative. Unlike a conventional photographic negative, the opaque 20 X 24 negative cannot be used for reprinting purposes and is typically destroyed after the positive has completely developed. In Carey's hands the negative achieves new significance, displayed and appreciated as a unique and precious art object in its own right.

Black Pull with Two Filigrees and *Purple Negative Pull* are precursors to Carey's most ambitious and monumental body of work to date, the *Pulls XL* (2004). Shot in a single session in New York City using the Polaroid 40 X 80 camera (the largest instant camera in the world), the *Pulls XL* signal a new phase in the evolution of Carey's work. Measuring more than twelve feet high and forty-four inches wide, the suite of seven extra-large positive "pulls" and their corresponding negatives rise like totems inside the gallery. Despite their scale and vulnerability, the pieces are tacked directly to the wall, emphasizing their physical presence.

By giving the negatives of these exposures the same status as the positives, Carey further asserts the material significance of the "pulls." Though lacking the sheen and chromatic variation of the positives, the negatives possess a more subtle elegance, an almost organic quality that belies their mechanical production. In fact, like all the "pulls," Carey's new Polaroid 40 X 80 prints are indeed living surfaces that respond to temperature and moisture as they cure—

a process that will continue throughout the duration of the exhibition. This is particularly true of the negatives, whose velvety black and brown surfaces have already begun to shift since their creation in mid-July, gaining both tonal and textural variation as the excess dyes and silver salts oxidize. The effect is nothing short of painterly, endowing Carey's images with a surface sensuality uncommon to photography.

From the beginning of her career, Ellen Carey's photographs have been inextricably linked to painting and drawing. Although she long since abandoned the practice of overlaying her images with pigment[1], the works on view in MATRIX 153 share equal (if not more) affinity with abstract painting of the 1950s and 1960s than with any photographic legacy. Indeed, looking at these works it is easy to imagine Carey as a neo-modernist painter, the likes of Morris Louis or Ellsworth Kelly, creating color field and geometric abstractions. Therein lies the complexity and inherent contradiction of Carey's work. While bound to the early photographic experiments of William Henry Fox Talbot[2], the "pulls" are equally indebted to the tenets of Abstract Expressionism and Surrealism in their reliance upon accident and chance. And like Minimalist painting, Carey's process is central to the meaning of her works—they harbor no underlying message, no truth apart from their material existence in the world.

While the consideration of Carey's reductive photography in the context of modern painting may seem paradoxical, the historical association between photography and painting provides a fascinating counterpoint by which to appreciate the "pulls," and their incongruous identity as photographs that resemble paintings. In fact, the movement known as Photo-Secession, which strove to affirm photography as a fine art at the turn of the twentieth century, was predicated on the manipulation of images to achieve painterly effects.[3] Since then, photography has sustained a combative relationship with painting, jockeying for artistic autonomy in the eyes of critics and the public.

PULL XL, 2004

Now, nearly a century since Paul Strand championed the use of "straight" or unmanipulated photographic methods in order to achieve the true aesthetic nature of the medium, Ellen Carey has staged her own reprisal of "straight photography," stripping the medium down to its essentials—emulsion, paper, and light. In doing so, however, Carey has unwittingly discovered a process that once again blurs the boundaries between photography and painting. The result is what photography scholar Lyle Rexer calls "a new class of photographic objects,"[1] which herald the potential of minimal photography as a site of perceptual and experiential directness. Liberated from the cultural and historical expectation that a photograph will narrate, describe, or document the world around us, the "pulls" occupy a neutral environment where they are free to be viewed, not read; free to be experienced, not interpreted; and free to transform how we think about photography.

Joanna Marsh
Acting Curator
of Contemporary Art

PULL XL, 2004

The International Magazine of Prints, Drawings, and Photography

Art On Paper

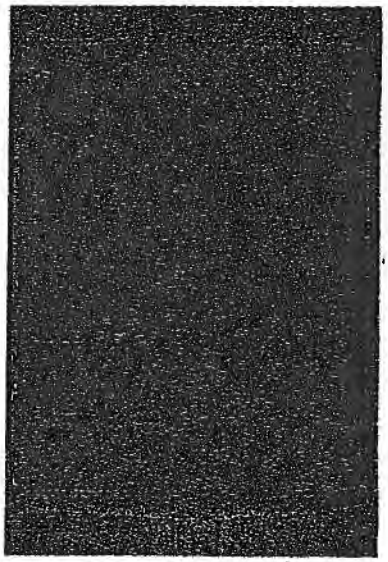
March-April 2001

Ellen Carey: Mourning Wall. Real Art Ways, Hartford.

The works for which Ellen Carey first became known in the mid-80s used abstraction (then in the form of ornamental pattern) to interfere with the representational image typical of photography (specifically, self-portraits). By the end of the decade, abstraction had become the very substance of her art, and she was making large-scale multipaneled works whose subjects were color and pattern alone. With the "Pulls" she began making in the mid-90s, Carey ventured a further degree of abstraction; as Andy Grundberg observes in the brochure accompanying the fall exhibition *Mourning Wall*, she was using "the mechanisms of the camera itself"—that is, the 20x24-in. Polaroid that has been her instrument of choice since 1983—"to produce the image." Those pieces seem to represent a near-limit to photographic abstraction, insofar as their only "content" was the presence or absence of light.

But most recently, Carey seems to have found a further degree of abstraction, and that is in the "flip" between the positive and the negative. There were three versions shown of a piece called *Family Portrait*, whose initial version (1996) is a sequence of seven black or white panels (on color film), each panel meant to represent a member of her immediate family, either living or dead. "While working," the artist writes, "I realized the backs of the one-of-a kind positives (its so-called 'negatives') looked very much alike," despite representing opposite states of light saturation. So the second version of *Family Portrait*, also dated 1996, consists of the seven negatives—densely material rectangles of opaque matter whose apparently random inflections hardly seem to contain the seeds of any sort of image. Carey made the third version, also as a set of negatives, in 1999 after Polaroid introduced a new black-and-white film. The visually weighty (though materially unsubstantial) surfaces of the two negative versions recall, more than photographs, drawings like those of Richard Serra. They are at once the essence of photography and its opposite.

Mourning Wall (2000) is a vast grid of 100 such negatives—the material remains of the process of making 100 Polaroid images of no light. Surprisingly, each panel is slightly different, and the chronological sequence of their making (from bottom left to upper right) shows not just random variation but seemingly sequential shifts in their visual nuances, like laminae of marble cut sequentially from the same stone. Indeed stone is the proper connotation here—after all, this is a wall, as the title tells us, and a sort of monument or memorial to photography. But a living memorial: as Carey points out, the chemicals that make up its surface are still changing. This volatility, of course, is another way in which this work is the opposite of photography as well as its essential reduction, since photographs are made in order to stop or capture time and change. For Carey, these 100 blocks of inchoate pictorial essence represent as many years of war and disaster in the century just ended. This idea is "nowhere inscribed in the works themselves," as Grundberg suggests, yet what else does the universe of photography (whose poison distillate is somehow contained here) represent but the sum total of deaths, losses, and disappearances we would have liked to prevent?
—*Barry Schwabsky*



(Left)
Ellen Carey. *Mourning Wall* (detail). Polaroid negative (panel size 20x24 in.; installation size 10x 36 ft.). 2000. Courtesy Real Art Ways, Hartford.

One Thing After Another. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

For the third and final cycle of the millennial meta-show *MoMA2000* this winter, curators from the Museum of Modern Art's six departments joined forces to produce *Open Ends*, 11 exhibitions of post-1960 art from

(Above left)
Henri Michaux, *Untitled (Painting in India ink)*. India ink and sepia on paper (28-1/8x 40-5/16 in.), 1962. Courtesy Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

ARTnews

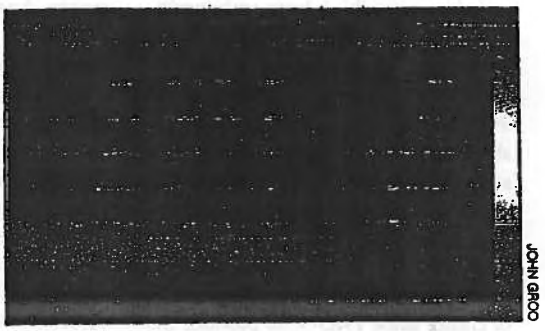
National Reviews

Ellen Carey

Real Art Ways
Hartford

Negation, absence, longing, and loss—the emotions that come in the aftermath of death—are difficult to represent in photographs. To address this monumental subject, Ellen Carey radically departs from the traditional use of photographic materials and reinvents the medium to achieve dramatic results in this exhibition, on view through the seventh of this month.

Stretching 36 feet wide and 10 feet high, *Mourning Wall* (2000) consists of 100 Polaroid negatives—the black paper used in the large-format Polaroid process. Each measuring 20 by 24 inches, the negatives are mounted on the gallery wall in a grid format. Their grayish surfaces depict no discernible images. Instead, they are covered with pockmarks and streaks created by chemical residue. Bearing an uncanny resemblance to headstones, the negatives, taken together, also suggest a sort of wailing wall, a place of mourning where absence is represented without sentimentality.



Ellen Carey, *Mourning Wall*, 2000, installation view. Real Art Ways.

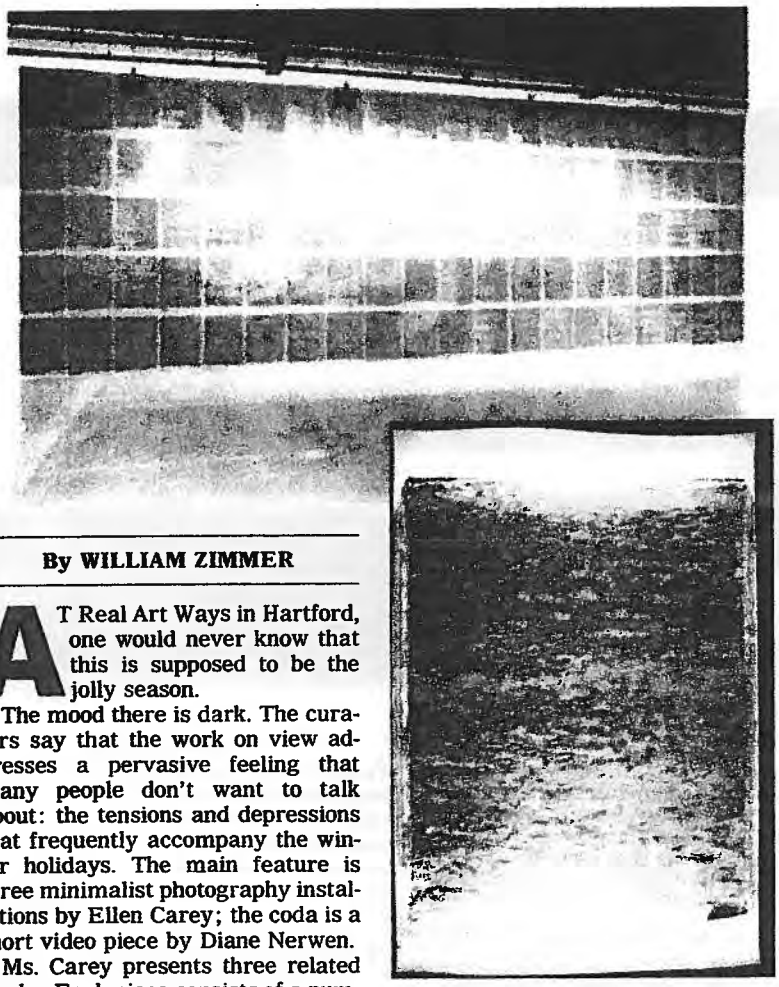
While this work could be compared with Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, it also evokes the dark surfaces of Mark Rothko's and Ad Reinhardt's paintings (and even the towering planes of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*). Yet Carey's wall is not made from granite, canvas, or steel, but from the paper negative—William Henry Fox Talbot's contribution to the invention of photography. Carey's investigation of the end starts from photography's very humble beginnings.

Death strikes closer to home in *Family Portrait* (1996 and '99), a smaller installation in which Carey pays homage to the loss of members of her immediate family. But the exhibition ends on a more hopeful note with the *Birthday Portrait* (1997), a three-panel work exploding with bright green, red, pink, and yellow that's reminiscent of a Morris Louis or Helen Frankenthaler painting. Like *Mourning Wall*, it manages to represent an emotion—in this case, rejuvenation—without taking a picture at all. —***Barbara Pollack***

The New York Times

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2000

A Family Album Of Empty Pictures



By WILLIAM ZIMMER

AT Real Art Ways in Hartford, one would never know that this is supposed to be the jolly season.

The mood there is dark. The curators say that the work on view addresses a pervasive feeling that many people don't want to talk about: the tensions and depressions that frequently accompany the winter holidays. The main feature is three minimalist photography installations by Ellen Carey; the coda is a short video piece by Diane Nerwen.

Ms. Carey presents three related works. Each piece consists of a number of 20-inch-by-24-inch photographic prints: actually, they recall the empty, contentless rectangles often found at the end of a roll of film.

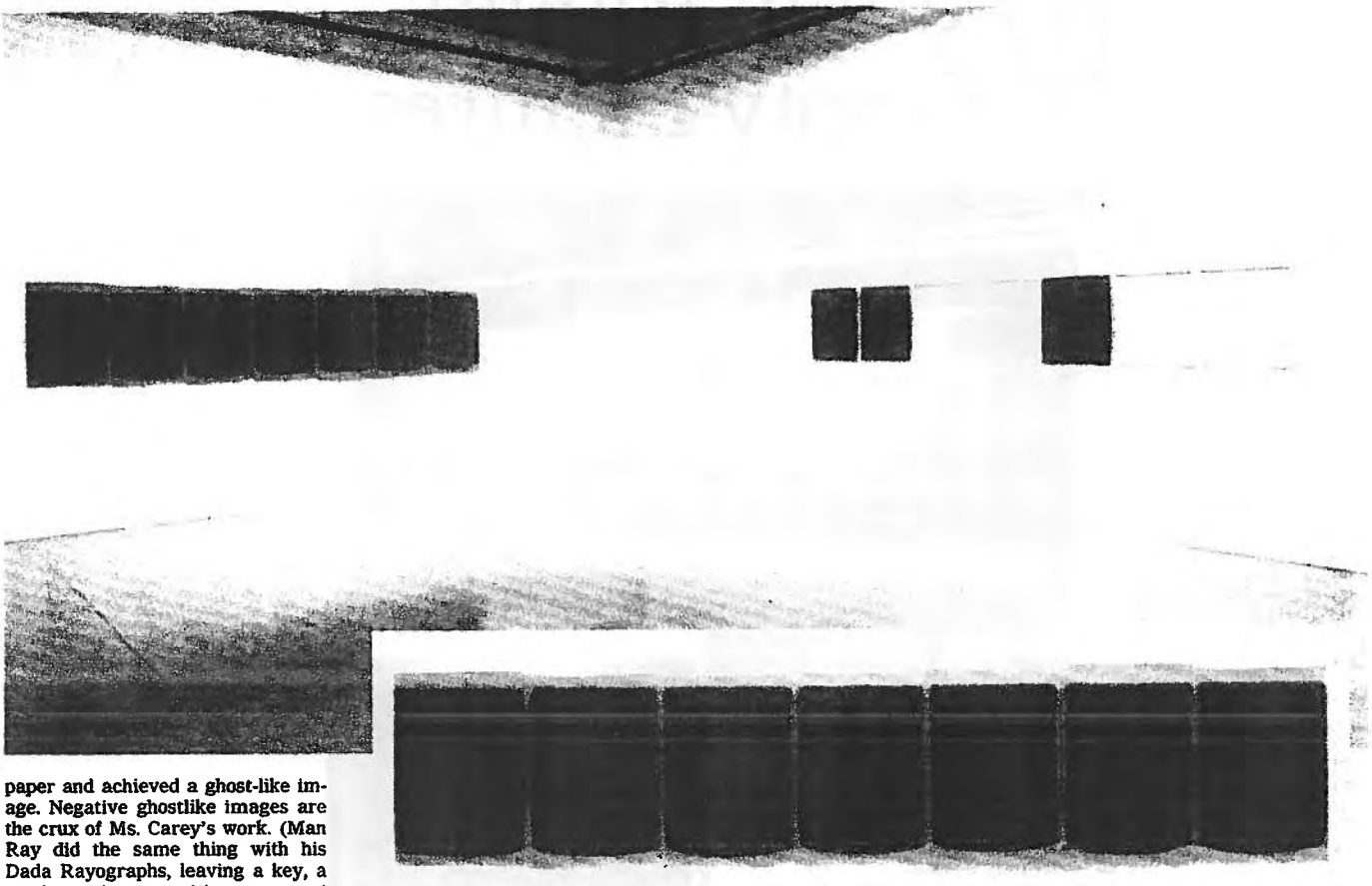
Ms. Carey's prints were made with an extremely rare large-format Polaroid camera. But instead of lush images, in the case of "Mourning Wall" viewers are met by prints that are almost solid gray; in "Family Portrait," dark prints are interspersed with pure white ones; "Birthday Portrait" consists of vertical swipes that seem like gestures — the images were made by pulling the film from the camera while it was exposed.

What is new here is that, unlike most other experimental photographers, Ms. Carey does not manipulate her subjects by adjusting her lens; her camera registers a virtual blank.

In Ellen Carey's "Mourning Wall" installation at Real Art Ways, the gray apparent blankness of Polaroid prints (top) take on the texture of sculptural reliefs when seen close up (above).

Ms. Carey's endeavor aspires to be nothing less than a reinvention, or at least a reconsideration, of the roots or the essence of photography. In written statements, Ms. Carey and Andy Grundberg, a critic who wrote the essay accompanying the installations, invoke major figures from photography's past. Fox Talbot and Paul Strand provide a grand context for the work here, they say. In 1834 Fox Talbot put a leaf on light-sensitive

A R T



Photographs by John Groo

"Family Portrait" by Ellen Carey intersperses dark- and light-toned prints. The artist's three installations, shown together through Jan. 7, form a kind of meditation on family and loss.

paper and achieved a ghost-like image. Negative ghostlike images are the crux of Ms. Carey's work. (Man Ray did the same thing with his Dada Rayographs, leaving a key, a comb, a coin on sensitive paper and letting the objects make their own pictures.)

The three installations seem at first to be the height of impersonality and dispassion — especially "Mourning Wall." Its gray components are stacked like obdurate slabs. Each one could be a grave marker. Close inspection, however, reveals that each print has a unique texture, and the viewer realizes that Ms. Carey has created a kind of relief sculpture.

One of the most interesting facts about the exhibition — which surprisingly doesn't find its way into Ms. Carey's prose — is that, because of Polaroid negatives' inherent surface instability, these pictures are constantly if subtly changing. If things are so changeable, perhaps grief can be as well.

Without much visual content to the show, what then is the subject matter?

In a short wall text, Ms. Carey lays bare the sorrow that has evidently preoccupied her for years. In 1996 her brother, a prominent AIDS doctor, was killed in an accident, and her mother died soon after. Her father had died unexpectedly in 1979.

"Family Portrait" is specifically about that grief while the other two works embody it more obliquely. "Birthday Portrait" might be seen as a bit more festive. These deliberate blurs have a colored ground dictated by the colors of the birthstones of Ms. Carey's parents and brother. There is also animation, a byproduct of pulling the film from the camera.

A problem with this ensemble is that it offers both too much written information and too little visual content.

Ms. Carey seems exaltive about discovering new photographic techniques and at the same time mired in grief: the two states are not a convincing fit, at least not yet.

In the part of the gallery reserved for video presentations, "Spank," a digital film clip and the creation of Diane Nerwen, is in some ways a complement to Ms. Carey's installations. It is also resolutely sober looking; the tape is black and white. Both refer to the family, and both incorporate suffering.

But the grief in Ms. Nerwen's work is not the lingering sort: it comes from a little girl as she is being punished by her father.

If the work relates to Ms. Carey's in the anguish it contains, its source is very different, an unnamed Hollywood movie from one of the middle decades of the 20th century.

Ms. Nerwen's slow-motion tape, shown as a continuous loop, is seven and a half minutes long: in the original, the sequence lasted only eight seconds.

Viewers are plunged into a scene in which a spanking occurs. There is no clue to the child's transgression. In Ms. Nerwen's attenuated version. the man's repetitive arm movement seems jerky and mechanical as if he's enacting a ritual, and her crying is part of the rhythm.

At this grotesquely slow speed, the scene is oddly amusing: it's startling and seems to have been undertaken for its own sake. But in today's art world, ladling on deep meaning is de rigeur, and the curators say that by restructuring the scene, the artist is "exposing and intensifying the socially encoded and authoritative relationship between a man and a young girl."

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Both exhibitions are at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor Street, Hartford, through Jan. 7; (860-232-1006).

HARTFORD
Advocate
www.hartfordadvocate.com
Vol. 26, No. 15 September 9, 1999

art

Playing with the Light

by Patricia Rosoff

The best thing about Ellen Carey's work is how wonderfully loony-toon s. Smart and deft, her pic-es are the products of an derstanding of photogra-y so instinctive that they get all about *taking* pic-es and concentrate instead *how* the fingerprint of nt is recorded in paper. Chance plays a big part in em. It is as if she just sed her eyes, held her se, and jumped.

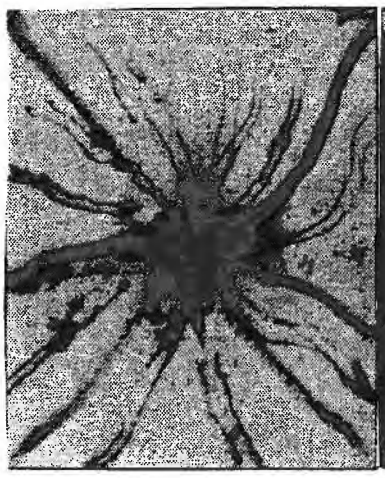
Her work, in fact, is like ld's play—the kind of determined, investigative free play that most adults get about once they pass through the doors of adolescence. The results, wever, are uncannily sensual, glistening and fleshy, remarkably spatial. ny are reminiscent of life forms at the cellular level, of stringy nerve ers, of shallow dishes of fish eggs, of wriggly sperm. But other images re-l distant galaxies whose light is made visible across a synapse of time.

Carey has come to this technique as a seasoned, professional artist. She ides her time between New York and Hartford, where she is a professor the University of Hartford. Her work has been exhibited extensively both the United States and internationally, including a retrospective presented he Wadsworth Atheneum, the National Academy of Sciences and Inter-tional Center of Photography. Her photographs are included in many manent collections such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art In-ute of Chicago, the Albright Knox Museum and the Los Angeles Coun-Museum of Art, and she has been the recipient of grants from the Na-nal Endowment for the Arts and the Polaroid Corporation.

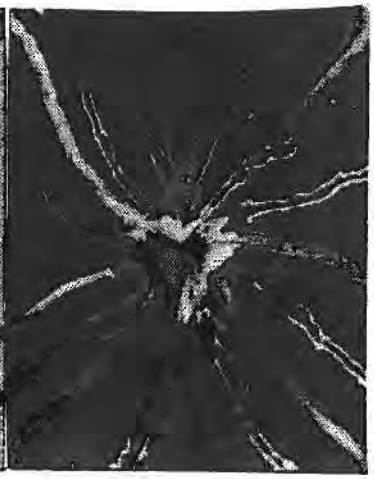
arey's process isn't something you can exactly call systematic, and that's the kick of it. Here is a photographer who trundles off into a darkroom like some crafty adolescent, armed with bags of marbles, a couple of lights, a pocketful of backgammon chips and a sheaf of photosensitive per. Once there, in her darkest, most solitary cavern, she might sprinkle the flat backgammon chips to mask polka-dots in one exposure, or pour various-sized marbles to bend and pinpoint the flow of the light onto photo sensitive paper in others.

So Carey sculpts the light through these methods—layering perforated posures one upon the other, piling them up in transparent layers. The re-t is images that resemble sesame seed crackers seen through an ant-farm obler, or a collection of every size of hardware store washer.

The beauty of her work is found in the overlapping of circles large and small, opaque and transparent, freckled with scattering specks of velvety darks and glistening whites. In some pictures, Carey actually draws with light, using the beam of a penlight much like pencil or a brush.



***Photogenic Drawing*, b&w paper Ellen Carey, 1999**



***Photogenic Drawing*, b&w paper (negative), Ellen Carey, 1999**

It might seem surprising that an artist so concerned with an image "from scratch" would rummage back in photography's beginnings for inspiration. Yet there is a wonderful logic for her nod to William Henry Fox Talbot (one of the earliest pioneers of the photographic method), with her determination to create images as he did—from shadows and light cast from direct physical contact with photo paper. For only Talbot can have stood so unmediated in the middle of such work.

Ansel Adam's genius was the patience to wait for the light to conjure itself. But Carey, cook and acrobat, dancer and chemist, has no patience to wait for God's effects. Instead, she goes juggling and pouring, working light-dodging and light-gathering elements in a variety of chemical stews. So doing, she won't let us forget that photography came from play—and that play remains an open door to new forms. ■

Ellen Carey: Photogenic Drawings *at Paesaggio Gallery, 966 Farmington Ave., West Hartford, 233-1932, through September 11.*

M+B

ARTFORUM

Ellen Carey
Review by Barry Schwabsky at Ricco/Maresca Gallery (NYC)

November 1998

Abstraction in photography can be such an insipid affair. It happens when the photographer conceives of abstraction as an already existing thing---a subject that can be represented like a battle or a nude. Much rarer is the case, as in Ellen Carey's new work, when abstraction represents a real disruption of the assumed link between photographic image and referent---in which an aporia is introduced that leads one to question just how what I am seeing relates to what it is I'm looking at.

In these photographs, I know very well what I am seeing: unframed, irregularly cut sheets of photographic paper on which appear simple, toothlike blobs of intense, saturated color or sharp black. Sometimes the blobs shift from color to black in the same work, but they always retain their identity as simple forms in the process of changing color. These forms are sometimes pierced by radiant circles of white or color, or crossed by thin horizontal bands.

Most of the sheets are limited to a single color plus black, white, and gray, but since the sheets are composed, for the most part, of two to four panels, multiple colors occur in a single work. In No. 78, 79, 80 (Birthday Portrait), 1997, one color is found on each sheet.

The relationship of all this to abstraction in the American painting of the '60s and '70s is pretty clear. The swoop of Ellsworth Kelly's simple curvilinear forms, each with its single bright hue, is an especially audible echo. The paradox is that while Kelly's colored shapes really are abstracted from things seen in the world, their strength lies in formal self-containment that never asks us to search for sources; Carey's shapes---simply because they occur in photography---insist that we imagine a preexisting referent. Their power lies in the frustration of that exercise.

We want photography to show us something. These photographs know that, and use that desire to show us what we don't usually think of as a thing, the light itself (and, in some cases, the darkness) through which images of things come to us. Everything else resides in the physical manipulation of film during the time of exposure and development (with the Polaroid 20-by-24-inch camera that has been Carey's primary instrument for the past three years)---a manipulation alluded to in the exhibition title "Pulls." Of course, something produced these particular shapes and colors, though I may never be able to reconstruct just what that was; but the primary referent here is something ordinarily treated as a medium but now to be experienced as a materialized presence.

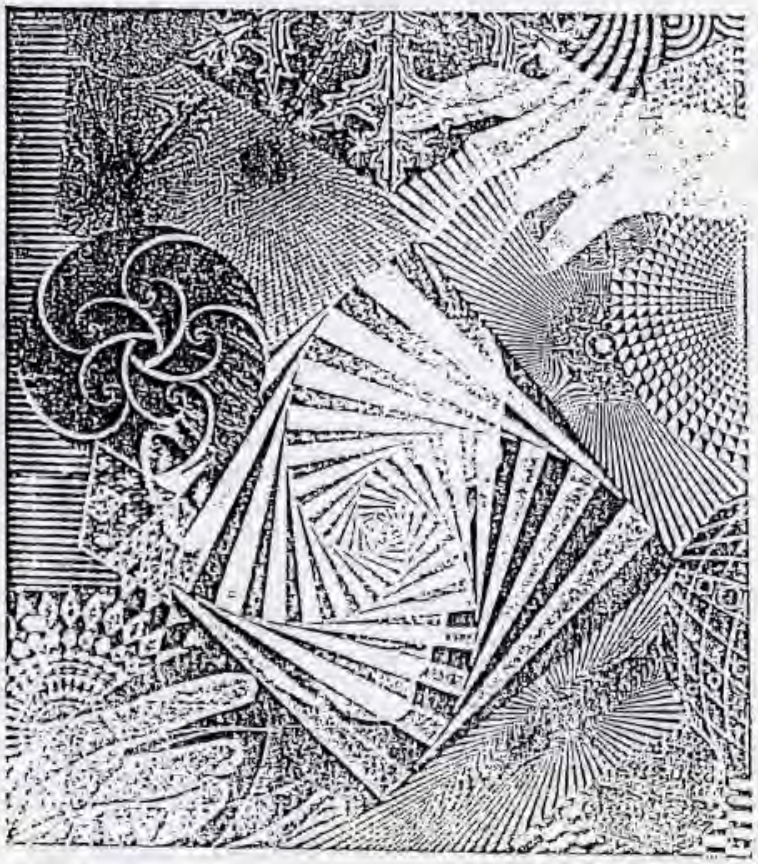
There's a searing quality to the light, as Carey shows it to us, and even more to the darkness that is not quite its opposite. The sharp edges of her forms really seem to cut, and even when light seeps through the edges and makes them hazy, they maintain a burning quality. So although the colors are bright and transparent, the feelings that accumulate around them are far from weightless. Carey betrays a certain distrust of her work's abstractness, or perhaps of her viewers' ability to cope with it, by supplying specific, emotionally charged accounts of her intended symbolic contents for some of the images---as though they might otherwise have collapsed into insipid abstract photography. She needn't have worried. Just as the light of these pictures flows out of the gap between what I'm looking at---out of the bait and switch between referent and medium---so does their specificity of emotion.

M+B

the village VOICE

VOL. XXXII NO. 49 • THE WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF NEW YORK • DECEMBER 8, 1987 • $1.00

CHOICES



Ellen Carey
Untitled, 1987
22 x 24 inches
Polaroid
Courtesy of Al Hirschfeld

'Poetic Injury: The Surrealist Legacy in Postmodern Photography': A few of the many sins committed in the glorious name of Surrealism hang on the walls here, but the best work lives up to its billing—or handily transcends it. Wade through the dreck for Ricardo Block's wild and witty head shots, Barbara Faucon's eerie pinhole camera mindscapes, Elliot Schwartz's weird beauties, and choice items by John Schlesinger, Jimmy De Sana, Ellen Carey, David Freeman, Todd Watts, and Ani Gonzalez Rivera. Through December 23. Alternative Museum, 17 White Street, 966-4444. (Aletti)

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Art in America

November 1987

Ellen Carey at ICP and Simon Cerigo

Ellen Carey's photographic portraits and figure studies have been associated with Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Geo and appropriation art, among other labeled movements and trends. They also may incorporate touches of the surreal. The 10-year survey of her work at the International Center of Photography and an accompanying show of recent photographs and prints at Cerigo underscored Carey's relationship to prevailing "schools" and her ultimate independence from them. Part of a generation that has elevated photography (and, specifically, manipulated photographs) into the high-art mainstream, Carey is, in this writer's opinion, a vastly underrated artist.

Carey's work proposes a merging of the human form with metaphysical energies made visible. In her earlier black-and-white images, she directly applied storms and swirls of black and white paint to the photographs. By the time she moved to color photography, in 1984, Carey's use of acrylic and ink was subtle enough to appear to be part of the photomechanical process itself. That same year she began to work with large-format color Polaroids with patterned acetate covering the lens. This technique creates an effect something like that of a projector throwing a pattern onto the figure, but without the telltale shadow appearing behind the illuminated subject.

Carey's imagery has oscillated between all sorts of self-portraits and a more outward-looking, group-oriented art. The earliest pieces that were included in the ICP show are mostly head and hand shots of Carey in poses evoking a dancer's self-consciousness. There is also a kind of fantastic melancholy operating in the work. Her face and hands are isolated by a blur of marks that seem to describe her emotional weather as she is caught in states of pain, vulnerability, erotic slyness and self-assurance. It should be noted that, though

Ellen Carey: Untitled, 1986, color Polaroid photograph, 20 by 24 inches; at Simon Cerigo.

Carey is, well, *awesomely* photogenic, it's a little mean-spirited to accuse her—as some have done—of anything more than the usual amount of narcissism in doing these self-portraits. Not only is she a conveniently close-at-hand model, she is fully in tune with the moods she's after.

The raw light and rougher surfaces of this early work also recall the stark, fluorescent-lit club and performance scene that was experiencing a resurgence at the time. In fact, Carey's photographs drew upon aspects of performance art as did much of the emerging photography of the period—including the far better known self-depictions of Cindy Sherman. In 1980, Carey began positioning full nude figures, often in pairs, in strangely angled spaces. Silhouetted and illuminated by dramatic lighting, they moved about in poses drawn from dance. There's often a drastic diminishing of scale in these works between foreground and background figures, which creates a relational vortex heightened by Carey's swirls of acrylic and ink which threaten to dissolve the figures altogether.

The sexual identity of the figures in these pictures doesn't seem as crucial as in the earlier self-portraits. The later self-portraits, with their expanded use of color, also seem less gender specific and autobiographical. Carey's own image acting more as a stand-in for the human spirit. In the striking *Luna*, for example, Carey's face is held and caressed by three pairs of hands (one her own, the others painted in) converging from all directions—a spiritual laying-on of hands. *Luna* and other images such as *Tattoo Ocean*—where Carey's head and shoulders turn ecstatically in a field of exploding streaks of color—engage the theme of transcendence without the cool irony that slinks into her recent and more technically accomplished prints, a selection of which was mounted at Cerigo.

Still committed to images of human transcendence, Carey has grown more conscious of the seductiveness inherent in the media techniques she is mastering. The large-format Polaroids *are* alluring, with the soft-edged brilliance that seems the property of Polaroid alone. The models (of whom Carey is only one) are presented as beautiful and androgynous, the overlaid geometric designs appropriated from mass-produced pattern books. Though the transition from figure to pattern and back is now virtually seamless, the images have forgone the organic sense of development previously apparent in her work. That's okay. The *American Gigolo* sleekness of the new work addresses a loss of innocence, not a loss of faith. These are illusions all right, but they are still directed toward the necessary imaging of human beauty in the light of an advancing technological culture. Within that potentially oppressive ideal, the germ of transcendence still exists. —*Stephen Westfall*

ARTSCRIBE
September/October 1986

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Ellen Carey at Art City

Ellen Carey's photographs participate in an essentially painterly dialogue between representational imagery and decorative pattern. In these large-format (20" x 24") unique contact prints made on special equipment at Polaroid's facilities in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Carey has used double exposures to superimpose head-and-shoulders portraits on repetitive, abstract, often geometrical designs (created through photographed drawing and collage).

The heads are both male and female (the female head being that of the artist herself) but the subject's gender is always deemphasized, rendered ambiguous. Likewise, other signifiers of personality and individuality are effaced so that the subjects read simply as prototypically human. The patterns, on the other hand, are endowed with quite specific qualities; it is these that determine the "feel" of each photograph. What is dramatized here is the face-off, so to speak, between a realist mode of representation and an abstract one, but also that between a humanist appeal to the possibility of direct human contact and recognition (typically, the subject in these photographs looks directly into the camera, his or her eyes meeting the viewers' as though to invite communication), and a disillusioned apprehension of the instrumentalized social mediations that are mapped out geometrically and which may be experienced as confinement (the patterns seem to put the faces "behind bars") or even the dissolution of the individual ego.

Ellen Carey *Untitled* 1985
Polaroid

Yet to understand the photographs in this way, taking the head as the positive pole in a duality whose negative pole is the geometrical pattern, does not exhaust the interpretive possibilities they offer. It is equally possible to see the patterns, with their implicit references to mandalas and the like, as expressing metaphysical or spiritual aspiration, the face with its controlling gaze as essentially aggressive. In this regard, it is interesting that when the viewer stands at a certain distance from the photographs, the heads clearly dominate, although never without being obscured by interference from the patterns; but as one approaches to examine the picture more closely, the pattern takes on greater prominence, making the head less recognizable. In a quite literal way, one's interpretation is conditioned by the standpoint taken.

Carey's work has been linked to the neo-geometrical tendency which has been so widely publicized in the last year, but what distinguishes it from the ironic purism of Halley and Taaffe is the dialectical drama with which Carey's oppositions are charged.

Barry Schwabsky

Will Mentor at Wolff

Neo-surrealism as a trend has already begun to fade, and its most fashionable figure, Peter Schuyff, has already switched allegiances to the more correct geometrical mode without skipping a beat. Will Mentor's recent show exemplifies the disarray of the neo-surrealist position as much as Schuyff's recent work, but not by abandoning it. His earlier work presented well-turned visual conundrums whose illusionism constantly contradicted itself without ever unravelling. These paintings walked a very fine line between emphasizing their formal or their poetic implications (not to mention that between opportunism and sincerity) – a glamorous pictorial high-wire act that generated enough genuine intensity to distract us from the possibility that to have emphasized either the formal or poetic dimension of the work might have revealed that neither aspect was sufficiently various, original, or profound.

Mentor's new small paintings (all 12" x 12") and works on paper show that he, at least, remained unseduced by the stylishness of his own construct. In an odd way, the irreconcilable parts of the earlier paintings functioned formally as a sort of mutual support system; the pictures were carefully engineered to use the fact that every negative space asserted itself also as a positive space, and every figure gradually transformed itself into a ground, to lock the composi-

Will Mentor *Lenin Could Consciousness* 1986

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Joe Glasco *Untitled* 19
Acrylic and collage on canva

M+B

Flash Art

Summer 1986

roid print lends itself to this detached emphasis on "mind energy," projecting the images like antiseptic icons of the modern age.

At their worst, the images are static. Pucci-like dramas of Narcissus. At their best, they are Carey's development of very complex theorems. The use of the Polaroid and imposed patterns has been an important point of departure for Carey that has allowed a detached subjectivity in the works. The exploration of her ideas of wholeness, consciousness, time, biology, and, concurrent with the use of the Polaroid, artificial intelligence, promises interesting developments where the organic and the technological are further merged.

Shaun Caley

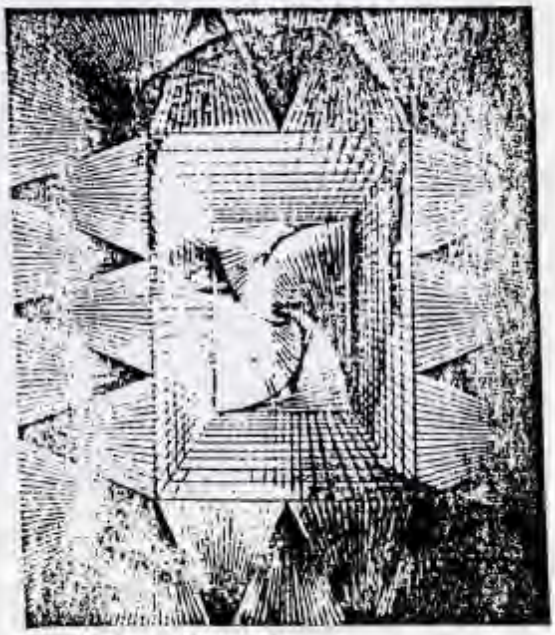
Ellen Carey

Art City

Ellen Carey's new works, sponsored by the Polarioid Corporation, have taken on a new technological twist. Formerly painting over black-and-white photographs of gender-specific scenarios that evoked organic, ritualistic configurations in the over-painting, the new portraits are sleek, androgynous, and superimposed with geometrical patterns that work as a testament to high technology.

In fact it is a hybrid distillation of body decoration, an esthetic, postnuclear humanity that Carey sets forth. The 20 x 24" images of classical heads, shoulders, and sometimes a hand are each unique in the energy of the geometrical patterns. In one portrait a paisley print covers the entire photograph, suggesting a psychedelic dream state, or a veiled prison of some weird, unconscious existence. In another, only the head, shoulders, and arm are covered in geometrical combinations of op patterns creating a mutant figure, exalting in its element of pattern-imposed distortion.

Carey's patterns, be they swirling arrows or optical spheres and graphics, rest somewhere between the molecular and the molar state of consciousness. The seamless quality of the pola-



Ellen Carey, Untitled, 1985.
Polaroid, 20 x 24"