

**Karena Karras  
&  
Bert Menco**  
*Daydreams & Night Dreams*



Karena Karras, *Hybrid*, 2007



Bert Menco, *Senses*, 1997

**College of Lake County**  
**Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art**  
November 9 – December 14, 2007

## Karena Karras: Biography

Surrealist painter Leonora Carrington once said, "The task of the right eye is to peer into the telescope, while the left eye peers into the microscope." This is a statement that holds a world of meaning when it comes to the work of native Chicagoan surrealist painter Karena Karras.

Kevin Nance, Art Critic for the Chicago Sun Times has said that "Karras is part of a direct line that goes back to [Surrealism's] founding in the early 20th century, connecting with [Max] Ernst and [Salvador] Dalí by way of two female Europeans who learned from their brethren and went on to find their own voices in Mexico..." These two women were Remedios Varo, from Spain, and Leonora Carrington, the British expatriate who lived with Ernst. The lineage of Remedios Varo and Leonora Carrington are evident in Karras' work. Carrington eventually settled in Oak Park and Karras formed a close friendship with her. Nance goes on to say, that Karras is no pale imitation of Carrington. Karras "... takes the best qualities of her predecessors' work (especially its ironic echoes of the Italian Renaissance) and intensifies them, then layers on her particular mélange of psychology and mythology."

Karena Karras is a contemporary surrealist painter whose work speaks a universal language based upon archetypes. Her work is mainly about metamorphosis in that it reflects the intrinsic interplay between the collective unconscious, or the spiritual, and the tactile realm of the senses and conscious mind. With and through the utilization of the study of mythology, psychology, philosophy, the spiritual, alchemy, metaphysics, fantasy and the world of dreams, Karras' work attempts at a visual projection of an interplay between these worlds. The work reveals what lies deep within us all and exists, as Carl Jung termed, "the shadow side" of our nature. It rises to the surface, untouched by time or place, yet transforming and regenerating, or better, challenging our widely accepted ideas concerning reality.

Karena Karras is a Chicago native and a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago where she received the Smith Merit Scholarship. She also attended the American Academy of Art (Chicago), the Naguib School of Sculpture (Chicago), the Vogue School of Design (Chicago), and Triton College (River Grove, IL). Karras works mostly with a 5/0 to an 18/0 brush and at times uses a magnifying glass to paint the painstaking detail evident when one studies her work closely.

### Karena Karras: Artist's Statement

The metamorphic imagery in my work is primarily based upon years of study concerning the nature of reality that lies behind the so called veil of appearances and the interconnectedness or oneness of all things that some refer to as the 'collective unconscious'. Insights and visions, seen by some as primitive, are really just a momentary connection to the inherent nature that exists within all of us. It only remains necessary to look within and draw these images to the surface. This is what I attempt. Painting for me is a form of meditation. Metamorphosis for me is a reality.



Karena Karras, *Ostrich Dream*, 2006

## Bert Menco: Biography

Bert Menco (born in 1946, Arnhem, The Netherlands) worked as a Research Associate Professor in the Department of Neurobiology and Physiology at Northwestern University (Evanston, IL) from 1982 until 2006. As an artist, he draws, paints, and prints, the latter at the North Shore Art League in Winnetka. He has had several one-person shows in this country as well as abroad. Most recently he exhibited in Chicago at the Oculus Gallery in the Pilsen neighborhood. He has participated in numerous invitational and juried exhibitions. His artwork has been featured in books, newspapers and magazines. Menco's work is represented in private as well as museum collections. He received a Sponsors' Award in the 3rd Sapporo International Print Biennale (1995) and his work is included in *The Best of Printmaking: An International Collection*, Rockport Publishers, Gloucester, MA (1997). Menco curated and co-curated several exhibitions in the Chicago area, most recently (October 2007) *Devils & Beasts* at The Art Center in Highland Park.

Bert Menco's Dutch-Jewish background has had an unavoidable personal impact on him. Much of his interest in art came from his mother's father, who was murdered by the Nazis. Another important factor in kindling his interest in art was his childhood neighbor, Mr. van der Giessen, the retired grade school teacher and surrogate grandfather (as Menco never knew one). Mr. van der Giessen, who, by the way, was Audrey Hepburn's grade school instructor, had an incredible collection of art books, which he generously shared with Bert and his brother Ido. Menco did not elect to pursue a career in art, but rather chose a career in science. However, throughout his scientific career he managed to be very active in the arts. In 1972 he left The Netherlands for Coventry, England, to pursue an advanced degree in science at Warwick University. In 1975 he returned to The Netherlands, where he worked at the University of Utrecht, and in 1982 he left for the United States, after a brief German intermezzo. In each country where he lived and worked he also pursued his art. As a scientist he studied the cellular biology of the sense of smell using electron microscopy. His art is insofar affected by his scientific activities, that the often-tedious discipline needed in research is also used in his art. However, Menco believes that his actual images do not relate to his scientific work; he does not use nature as his main source, but rather his quite active inner world.

### Bert Menco: Artist's Statement

Though they may seem simple, my drawings, intaglio prints, and paintings are actually quite elaborate; half a year's work on an image is no exception for me. I draw directly or use small sketches, even doodles, as image-generating nuclei, often combining two or three that appear to complement each other. I rarely use concrete references, but rather work from inner visions. I tend to be narrative in my own art, perhaps even poetically narrative.

BERT MENCO: Brief biography and statement adapted from "A self-portrait Inside Out", an essay written for the magazine of the American Print Alliance, *Contemporary Impressions* (Fall, 1998 issue).



Bert Menco, *Tied Hands, Scattered Books*, 2006

## **BERT MENCO** (www.bertmenco.com)

**Born:** Arnhem, The Netherlands      **Resides:** Evanston, IL

**Education:** Ph. D., Agricultural University Wageningen,  
The Netherlands

**Representation:** Morpho Gallery, Chicago, IL; Oculus Gallery, Chicago, IL

### **Selected One-Person Exhibitions**

- 2007 *Paradeigmas of Silent Spring*, Oculus Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2004 *Sketches and Beyond*, Illinois Institute of Art, Chicago, IL
- 2003/04 Niendieker Galerie, Arnhem, The Netherlands
- 2002 *Images from Beyond*, Libreria San Pantalon, Venice, Italy

### **Selected Group Exhibitions**

- 1998-2010 American Print Alliance, 5 traveling group shows, over 50 venues
- 2005-06 *Bookplates*, Printworks Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2005 *Rotterdam Geraakt*, Historisch Museum, Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- 2003 *5th Anniversary Exhibition*, Hyundai Arts Centre Gallery, Ulsan, South Korea
- 2000 *5th Sapporo International Print Biennale*, Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, Sapporo, Japan

### **Selected Public Collections**

Rotterdam Historical Museum, The Netherlands; Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL; Hokkaido Museum of Modern Art, Sapporo, Japan

## **KARENA KARRAS** (www.karenakarras.com)

**Born:** Chicago, IL      **Resides:** Chicago, IL

**Education:** BFA, painting, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL

### **Selected Solo and Two Person Exhibitions**

- 2007 *Alchemical Transformations*, Vanderpoel Museum, Chicago, IL
- 2007 *Myths, Dreams and other Revelations*, Noyes Gallery, Evanston, IL
- 2007 Gruen Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2005 *Surreal Hybrids*, Gruen Gallery, Chicago, IL

### **Selected Group Exhibitions**

- 2007 *Chicago Society of Artists Members Show*, Anderson Gallery, Kenosha WI
- 2005 *Gallery Artists Group Show*, Gruen Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 2006 *Wild Things and Beyond*, Mars Gallery, Chicago IL
- 2005 *They Burn Giraffes Don't They*, 4 Art Gallery, Chicago, IL
- 1993 *Personal Rituals*, Womanmade Gallery, Chicago, IL

### **Selected Awards**

- 2005 *Surreal Hybrids* exhibit selected Top Ten cultural events in Chicago by Kevin Nance, Chicago Sun Times
- 2005 Selected by Chicago Artist's Coalition as the *Best Emerging Artist* in Chicago
- 1982-85 Awarded *Smith Merit Scholarship* by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago

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**Born:** Chicago, IL **Resides:** Chicago, IL

**Education:** BFA, painting, School of the Art Institute, Chicago, IL

### **Selected Solo and Two Person Exhibitions**

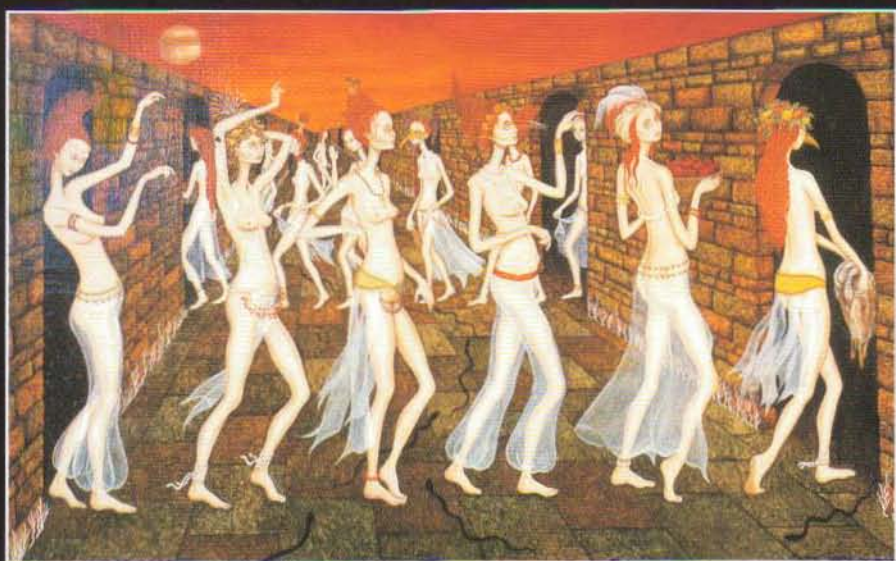
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Karena Karras, *Night of Pomona*, 2006



Bert Menco, *Extinct*, 1999

## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

### Karena Karras

*Ezgadi*, 2007, oil on board  
*From Fire by Fire*, 2007, oil on board  
*Hybrid*, 2007, oil on board  
*Liquor Hepatis*, 2007, oil on board  
*Shadow*, 2007, oil on board  
*Tabula Rasa*, 2007, oil on board  
*The Alchemist*, 2007, oil on board  
*Anjana*, 2006, oil on board  
*Habundia*, 2006, oil on board  
*Night of Pomona*, 2006, oil on board  
*Ostrich Dream*, 2006, oil on board  
*Genesis*, 2005, oil on board  
*Swan Song*, 2005, oil on board  
*Deluge*, 2003, oil on board  
*Flora Fauna Flora*, 2003, oil on board (triptych)  
*Oracle*, 2001, oil on board  
*Insomnia*, 1998, oil on board (diptych)  
*Reflection*, 1995, oil on board

### Bert Menco

*Braided*, 2007, Pencil/Colored Pencil  
*Tied Hands, Scattered Books*, 2006, Pencil/Colored Pencil  
*Inside Out-Outside In*, 2005, À la Poupée  
Etching/Aquatint  
*Origin of the World*, 1984/2005, Etching/Aquatint  
*Halo*, 2004, Pen and Ink  
*Blue Bride*, 2003, Oil/Canvas  
*Mutilated Alphabet*, 2003, À la Poupée Etching/Aquatint  
*Pious Jester*, 2002, Pencil/Colored Pencil  
*Rotterdam, May 14, 1940*, 2000, Mezzotint  
*Annunciation*, 1993/1999, Oil/Clayboard  
*Dunce*, 1999, Oil/Clayboard  
*Extinct*, 1999, À la Poupée Etching/Aquatint  
*Musical Chairs*, 1997, Mezzotint (+ plate)  
*Senses*, 1997, Oil/Canvas  
*Jugglers*, 1996, Oil/Masonite (Diptych)  
*Partners*, 1996, Pencil/Colored Pencil  
*Shiva/Reptilia*, 1996, Pencil/Colored Pencil

Gallery Closed: November 21-25

#### Information:

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The Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art is a project  
of the College of Lake County Foundation