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] Dali' 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, 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, Vanderpoe l 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

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

The Robert T. Wright Community Gallery of Art is a project of the College of Lake County Foundation.
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
Halo, 2004, Pen and Ink
Blue Bride, 2003, Oil/Canvas
Mutilated Alphabet, 2003, À la Poupée Etching/Aquatint
Pious Lester, 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:
Voice: 847-543-2240, E-mail sjones@clcillinois.edu
Web page: http://gallery.clcerrillos.edu/
College of Lake County / Robert T. Wright Gallery
19351 W. Washington St., Grayslake, IL 60030

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