

## VISIONARY EVIDENCE

Karen Kunc and Hilda Raz

Hilda Raz is a Professor of English and Women's Studies at UNL and the Luscher Editor-in-Chief of the venerable literary quarterly *Prarie Schooner* as well as a writer and poet. Her most recent books are *Living on the Margins*, *Divine Honors*, and *Trans*, and she has just finished a memoir called *What Becomes You* with her son, Aaron Raz Link.

HR: Karen, what were your guidelines for this new show of work you've done over four years?

KK: I wanted to create invented landscapes and forms, derived from visions, or imaginings of invisible realities, like breath, wind, currents, evolutionary growth. My interest continues in color, abstraction of natural forms, images that push against the limitations & the extremes of natural forms; hybrid forms that are themselves the weird aberrations sometimes caused by human interference but which are necessary for survival: knots, whirls, mazes, circles, tumors, embedded seedlings, sproutings; a celebration of process and surface physicality. So this show is a continuation of my invented quasi-science; an inner geometry of natural images to create previously inaccessible landscapes.

HR: Which elements in your new work differ from your previous work?

KK: Maybe illusion-play – a heightened interest in surfaces; multiple readings of dimension; also a series of nine images made over two years that I call "waxed etchings," which complicate notions of surface – etching one side, woodcut on the other, multiple aspects of single sheets of paper on which I printed front and back and then made translucent by waxing, allowing for an interaction of the color from both sides – a very thin but readable difference of surface; also a continuation and deepening of my interest in fabrics, so the surfaces may seem to invite folding, and flying like kites; border undulations and irregularities; architectural structures that imply movement, the play of inside/outside, negative space that fills and implies positive space as the images turn and reverse.

HR: Your work has been praised for its rich layering of color, images and complex structures. This show includes some of these images – embodiments, fossilizations, if you will – as well as evocations of your well-known artist books in some of the major collections in the world – the Library of Congress, Washington, DC; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NE; the Walker Art Center Library Collection, Minneapolis, MN; and many others. But this show also reveals a paring down of these images. Why?

KK: Maybe the deconstruction of complex images documents my interest in the physicality of surfaces, the ways surfaces change, ink beads up, is glossy and/or matte. Also I wanted to explore two dimensional readings of natural and human structures, so towers, for example, a potent image after 9/11, can stand or lie down as images of inner sancta, rooms that unfold like maps, to be refolded and carried into and out of danger, perhaps political or personal: mazes that threaten/promise to unfold and contain as well as release; to make space show the tension between a geography of danger and safety by using linked images that, like synapses in the human brain, lead to vision.

HR: Why have you returned to etching now when you've used woodcuts for so long?

KK: To have a fixed image – unlike the constantly changing reductive woodcuts where I destroy the forms in the printing process; images in the etching plates are reusable, a form for further permutations and recombinations. Etchings are also the physical reverse of woodcut – being below the surface, often based on line, whereas the woodcut is the relief surface and I deal with area – all a mental game for my printmaker's mind.



HR: You've been said to be the consummate printmaker, Karen. What in the process of making this show did you find most interesting?

KK: This show deals with my own "print" issues – reading and perception questions – how one is aware of subtle printed elements, how one reads on multiple dimensional printed levels, how the eye moves through the works into my designed entrances and exits, where one gets entwined and held, and where a simple ending forms. How I transform my world, what I see, study and the ways I interpret my simple surroundings – from instinct, to forms, to concept, to abiding life issues. The experience of making, thinking, influences my visual instinct and interconnections, which results in the works themselves. They are the proof of my art – the evidence.

HR: You seem to illustrate the ways human perception is always both personal and revelatory. In this show your linked images, like synapses in the brain, seem to lead us to vision. Are you a visionary artist?

KK: In a way I would love to be thought of as a "visionary" – although that is usually associated with one who has a larger purpose, a naive power, being out of touch with reality – whereas I know my visual voice, my aesthetics – is real, based on real experience, but also purposefully strange, otherworldly, and I hope is uniquely, powerfully intriguing on many levels.

HR: Thank you, Karen, for this magnificent show.

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Jennifer Ghomley (2005)  
Kathy Puzey (2003)  
Andrew Schroeder (2003–4)  
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