



On the Cover

Ellen Carey ***Pulls with Mixed & Off-Set Pods***, 2010

top • Polaroid 20 X 24 color positive prints • YRGB • 80"H x 22"W (80"H x 88"W overall unframed)

bottom • Polaroid 20 X 24 color negatives prints • GBRY • 80"H x 22"W each (80"H x 88"W overall unframed)

*Collection of the artist*

*Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY*

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# **Let There Be Light: The Black Swans of Ellen Carey**

**January 9 – February 20, 2014**

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## Introduction

When we look at art, we try to find a connection to it. We go through a series of internal inquiries based on images planted in our minds from the very first time we picked up a crayon as small children. We have been molded by our teachings through time to make careful selections that align with widely accepted social and cultural justifications. Ellen Carey brings us back to that pre-molded juncture prior to the progression of concepts derived from others. *What if I don't "complete" the process? What if the process itself is the end to the mean?* Carey explores the darkroom in a manner in such opposition to traditional photography that her studio should be referred to as a light room. She manages to conceptualize two of the things we need to survive in this world, dark and light, to bring forth striking imagery that breaks down the mental barriers we have come to accept over time.

## From the Artist

Questions frequently asked about my work include: "How is this picture made?" followed by "What is this a picture of?" The first question addresses photography as process. The photographic object often involves an intersection of process and invention, as does the practice of photography itself. In traditional photography, both the process and the invention are "transparent," mere means to an end. In my work the process *becomes* the subject. The second question addresses the conundrum of a photographic image *without* a picture or a "sign" to read. These two questions challenge our cultural and historically prescribed expectations for this medium to narrate and document, all while revealing no trace of its own origins; the "zero" in my practice has multiple meanings.

The discovery of my **Pull** in 1996 introduced **Photography Degree Zero**. It refers to "Writing Degree Zero" by Roland Barthes, which offers a critical discourse on the departure from a descriptive narrative in French avant-garde literature. In related fashion, my work represents the absence of a picture "sign" found in landscapes, portraits and still life. Instead, my work consists of an image made without a subject, any reference to a place, person or object.

My art works contain aspects that are conceptually linked and informed through visual characteristics, such as the shadow and silhouette image seen in the object as a negative, referencing this rich history. Formal issues of size and scale, in tandem with palette, create visual impact. The content-laden aspects of my work are weighed in, their echo is embedded and realized in my choices of method and material, an acknowledgment that these contain

symbols and signs, which create and extend my art's meaning. Visual structures and the ubiquitous codes of the circle (camera lens) and square (camera body) underscore my choice to practice photography; my images act as mirrors and metaphors, their echo is timeless, found in my compositions. Parallel work emphasizes *color*, that it has purpose and exists for a reason. Joyful feelings of creativity reflect a discipline where I dig deeper into color's mother lode, revisiting traditional terms, like "color processing," in new ways. Color is subject *and* object, material *with* meaning, process *within* the art. This gives my work context in the relatively short history of color photography.

As metaphor for the field, image/meaning maker, beginning with the photogram wherein object/paper is literally/figuratively **Struck by Light** (1992-2013); this names my darkroom practice. Polaroid's phrase "See What Develops" parallels my work (1970s to present); the discovery of my **Pulls** creates another practice **Photography Degree Zero** (1996-2013). Monumental photograms *Dings & Shadows* "blow-up" forms using color theory; the content-laden "shadow" partners the "ding," a photographic taboo. My own *drawing with light* leads to my Man Ray discovery (2008), adding substance and depth to my artistic endeavors that co-exist with scholarship, research and writing under my practice as **Pictus & Writ** (2008-2013).

## Biography

Ellen Carey (b.1952 USA) is an educator, independent scholar, guest curator, photographer and lens-based artist, whose work uses the large-format Polaroid 20 X 24 camera (one of five) to create her well-known **Pulls** and site-specific installations with a parallel practice in the camera-less photogram. Her Polaroid practice is **Photography Degree Zero** (1996-2013) and **Struck by Light** (1992-2013) finds the photogram; **Pictus & Writ** (2008-2013) names her scholarship and writing.

Her work has been the subject of 50 one-person exhibitions in museums, alternative spaces, galleries (1978-2013) including The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art (Matrix#153); Real Art Ways; Lyman Allyn Art Museum; Saint Joseph University, ICP/NY (mid-career survey) and hundreds of group exhibitions (1974-2014) in multiple venues: museums (Smithsonian); alternative spaces (HallWalls); galleries (Emmanuel Perrotin) and non-profit (Aperture). An extensive bibliography includes reviews/essays/articles; brochures/catalogs/books; grant highlights- NEA, CAPS, Polaroid-interviews on TV (Nutmeg); radio (WNPR); video (Aperture) she has documentary videos **Pulls** and **Mourning Wall** to her credit.

Her artworks are in the permanent collections of more than 20 major photography and art museums: The Albright-Knox Art Gallery (AKAG), George Eastman House, Museum at The Chicago Arts 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 of Art, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Yale University Art Gallery; corporate: Banana Republic, Dow Jones; private: LeWitt Foundation; Linda Cheverton-Wick/Walter Wick; Nancy/Robinson Grover; books: "The Polaroid Collections" (Taschen), "A Century of Colour: From the Autochrome to the Digital" by Pamela Roberts (Carlton Books, Ltd, London); "Innocent Eye: A Passionate Look at Contemporary Art" by Patricia Rosoff (Tupelo Press); "The Polaroid Years: Instant Photography and Experimentation" by Mary-Kay Lombino, group exhibit/tour (Prestel Publishing); "Color: American photography transformed" by John Rohrbach, Amon Carter Museum of American Art (University of Texas Press); "The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography" by Lyle Rexer (Aperture), group exhibit/tour (2009-14); he states:

*"Ellen Carey is among this country's most committed experimental photographers."*

For her writing practice **Pictus & Writ**, Carey's first essay – **Color Me Real** – for "Sol LeWitt: 100 Views," his MASS MoCA retrospective, was published by Yale University Press (2009). Her discovery of Man Ray's "hidden" signature in his self-portrait photograph

**Space Writings** (1935) finds her (750) second (2009) essay – "What's in a Frame? The 'Space Writings' of Man Ray" – cited in "Alias Man Ray: The Art of Reinvention," The Jewish Museum book/exhibit. Online: The Smithsonian ([www.smithsonian.org](http://www.smithsonian.org)); Kansas City Art Institute Alumni News; in print are Carey interview by Krystian von Speidel in VENU magazine, "Man in the Mirror;" Carey's revised essay (250) as "At Play with Man Ray" (Aperture #204; 2011); Google: Man Ray Discovery/Ellen Carey. "In Hamlet's Shadow" for "The Polaroid Years: Instant Photography and Experimentation" publishes Carey's third essay (Prestel Publishing) for exhibition/tour as Norton Museum of Art first opening at Vassar College in The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Mary-Kay Lombino, curator (2013-14).

Ellen Carey (1983-2014) is Associate Professor of Photography-Hartford Art School-University of Hartford ([www.hartfordart-school.org](http://www.hartfordart-school.org)) -HAS/UH Coffin Grant (1990 &1991); Bent Award for Creativity (1990). Visiting artist at Bard College (1995); Loughborough University, UK (1999); ICP/NY (1981-83); Queens College (1980); panels: Abstraction w/ Lyle Rexer (SPE 2002); "Back to the Future: The Avant-Garde Is an Address" for AKAG; Carey lectures widely (1978-2013); MFA Photography (1976-78) from State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY@Buffalo); minor: art history-museum studies (AKAG); BFA (1971-75) Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI); Arts Student's League (1970). [www.20X24studio.com](http://www.20X24studio.com); [www.ellencarey.net](http://www.ellencarey.net); [www.aperture.org](http://www.aperture.org); Google; Jayne H. Baum Gallery: [info@jhbgallery.com](mailto:info@jhbgallery.com); Nina Fruedenheim Gallery (Buffalo) [ninagallery@aol.com](mailto:ninagallery@aol.com); Joseph Bellows Gallery, La Jolla [info@josephbellows.com](mailto:info@josephbellows.com) or [ecarey@hartford.edu](mailto:ecarey@hartford.edu).

Carey lived in New York City (1979-94) where she was born (1952), moving there after receiving her MFA and a CAPS grant, first exhibiting at PS 1 in "The Altered Image." Her childhood years were in New York, Chicago, Atlanta and New Jersey: later travelling in America (South, Southwest, Midwest, West); Middle East (Kuwait); Europe (Paris, Edinburgh, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Dublin, London, Nice, Venice); with an interest in art world destinations (Dia: Beacon, The Chinati and Judd Foundations, Marfa, TX) and to cities for their culture/art.

Ellen Carey lives and works in Hartford and New York. She works on her photograms at J&M Imageworks and her **Pulls** at the Polaroid 20 X 24 Studio ([www.20X24studio.com](http://www.20X24studio.com)); her studio is the historic (1926) Underwood Typewriter Factory in the Parkville section of Hartford. Her website is [www.ellencarey.net](http://www.ellencarey.net) (being updated) and can be seen Google, [www.20X24studio.com](http://www.20X24studio.com), or [www.aperture.org](http://www.aperture.org). Her artworks are represented by Jayne H. Baum at [info@jhbgallery.com](mailto:info@jhbgallery.com); Nina Fruedenheim Gallery, Buffalo (NY); Joseph Bellows Gallery (LA Jolla, CA).



**1** Ellen Carey **Photogenic Drawing**, 1999  
black and white photogram, hand toned, unique  
20”H x 16”W [30”H x 26”W framed]  
*Collection of the artist*  
*Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY*



**2** Ellen Carey **Photogenic Drawing**, 1999  
black and white photogram, hand toned, unique  
20”H x 16”W [30”H x 26”W framed]  
*Collection of the artist*  
*Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY*



**3** Ellen Carey **Photogenic Drawing**, 1999  
black and white photogram, hand toned, unique  
20”H x 16”W [30”H x 26”W framed]  
*Collection of the artist*  
*Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY*



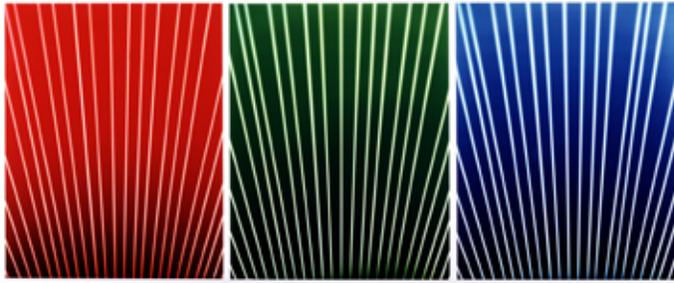
**4** Ellen Carey **Penlight**, 1999  
black and white photogram, hand toned, unique  
24”H x 20”W [34”H x 30”W framed]  
*Collection of the artist*  
*Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY*

### Ellen Carey Object Description for Artworks #1–4:

Paper photography, discovered in 1834 by the British inventor, William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877), and initially called “photogenic drawing” or “sun pictures,” eventually became the “photogram.” The word ‘photography’ derives from the Greek *phōs*, or light, and *graphein*, to write. The Irish name Ellen, with Celtic roots in Gaelic means “bringer of light.”

Carey imaginatively revisits these terms in her series *Photogenic Drawings*. Lines of light — delicate to bold — create

sinuous, amorphous forms, both organic and suggestive. By adding a layer of complexity in her hand-toning, she selectively introduces a palette at once seductive and surrealistic. Her crisp all black *Penlights* echoing the Surrealists’ game of *automatic drawing*, will lead Carey to her Man Ray discovery. These images constitute a more robust investigation into abstraction while marking an end to Carey’s black/white darkroom printing as she turned next to color.



**5** Ellen Carey **Ray Bands**, 2003  
 color photogram • triptych • R/G/B • 20”H x 16”W each [29.5”H x 58.5”W framed]  
*Collection of the artist*  
 Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY



**6** Ellen Carey **Neo-Ops**, 2003  
 color photogram • triptych • RC/GM/BY • 24”H x 20”W each [34”H x 70”W framed]  
*Collection of the artist*  
 Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY



**7** Ellen Carey **Ray Bands**, 2003  
 color photogram • triptych • Y/M/C • 20”H x 16”W each [29.5”H x 58.5”W framed]  
*Collection of the artist*  
 Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY

## Ellen Carey Object Description for Artworks #5–7:

In 2000 Carey’s research on the history of color photography began with Talbot’s contemporary, Anna Atkins (1799-1871), the first woman photographer and the first woman to use color, a Prussian blue, from the cyanotype process invented by Sir John Herschel. Atkins’ botanical studies embedded this blue into the photogram or “sun picture,” as it was also known, thereby integrating two separate processes that would eventually inform Carey’s own color photogram printing.

For Carey, an Atkins cyanotype served as a precursor to minimal and abstract imagery in its reductive composition and sophisticated placement vis-à-vis off-frame space. Other observations include visual impact, underscored through Atkins’ fluid and delicate writing and cursive gestures, naming her botanical studies. This places her work at the forefront of conceptual “word art” and line-as-open form, seen in Jackson Pollock’s paintings.

Carey’s creative endeavors often begin with a question: “What does a 21st century abstract and/or minimal color photogram look like?” She responds with the **Ray Bands** and **Neo-Ops** in which light and color—intersect through vertical line and glowing afterimage. The bright palette expresses characteristics specific to the medium through photographic color theory. Her saturated hues of hard-edged geometries pop out with a soft-edged brilliance that highlights these pristine, one of a kind compositions.



8 Ellen Carey *Dings & Shadows*, 2012  
 color photograms • hexptych • R/G/B/Y/M/C • 40”H x 30”W each [40”H x 180”W overall]  
 Collection of the artist  
 Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY

### Ellen Carey Object Description for Artworks #8:

History finds the photogram belonging to Talbot, and his “sun pictures” in color — the cyanotype — belonging to Atkins. Sir John Herschel, friend to Talbot and Atkins, invented the cyanotype method plus the chemistry needed to fix a “shadow.” Ellen Carey’s **Struck by Light** practice traces a trajectory from this dawn of photography through Man Ray and Moholy-Nagy, to current pictures by Susan Derges, Adam Fuss, James Welling, Chris McCaw, Christian Marclay and Ryan McGinley, to name a few.

A photogram is made without a camera. Color darkroom printing, paper and process, are extraordinarily light-sensitive, different from its low-light counterpart in black and white. Ellen Carey understands her struggle with darkness in the words of philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965): “Every journey has a secret destination of which the traveler is unaware.”

Carey’s *Dings & Shadows*, a suite of six monumental photograms in which materials as well as colors take on meaning, are fresh interpretations partnered with freewheeling experiments untethered by rules, formal structures or conventional procedures. These gigantic pictures in bold colors and expressive

abstract compositions exist within a palette that maximizes photographic theory. Surfaces made tense and dense with visceral interventions capture “shadows” from the “dings.” Dramatic forms double the multiple twists and turns of the artist in the darkroom. Colors fall randomly and in chance encounters as unexpected connections emerge in playful and overlapping exposures on the physical object plane of color paper *struck by light*.

Carey’s palette acts as both formula for color theory and the name of her **Struck by Light** practice. This “light drawing” introduces depth as Carey’s penlight strikes the “dings” to make dark “shadows.” The “ding” also announces the history of the shadow. Its crescent shape, though taboo in a traditional print, is viscerally and visually exaggerated, blown up in the artist’s hands as Carey’s “shadow catcher.”

She is a colorist, bringing out visual sensation in hues as innovative as they are strange. Non-linear and non-representational as they are, biomorphic and anthropomorphic faces and figures are subtly suggested — familiar yet alien, beautiful and grotesque — as they blend the full range of light with dark.



9

Ellen Carey **Pulls with Mixed & Off-Set Pods**, 2010  
 Polaroid color negative/positive prints • octptych • neg. R/neg. Y/pos. Y/pos. R/pos. B/pos. G/neg. G/neg. B • 80”H x 22”W each  
 [80”H x 176”W unframed]  
 Collection of the artist  
 Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY

### Ellen Carey Object Description for Artworks #9:

Instant technology and Polaroid met abstraction and minimalism in 1996 with Ellen Carey’s breakthrough discovery **Pull**. Her name for this convergence in her new practice became **Photography Degree Zero**, a reference to French philosopher Roland Barthes’s “Writing Degree Zero” from critical discourse on the departure of descriptive narrative in French avant-garde literature. In related fashion, Carey’s art represents a shift from picture and sign duality found in the still life, landscape and portrait. Instead, her **Pulls** are photographic images, made without a subject and without reference to any object, place or person, and processed in a mere 60 seconds.

*Pulls with Mixed & Off-Set Pods* records a different document through chemistry and color. Organic and fluid in form and line, with patterns reminiscent of wood, moiré or photographic “Newton rings,” her inventive, emphatic palette offers a range from bright to subtle. Dark irregular shapes float through the vertical **Pulls** and a horizontal line declares a break with or without, exposure or light, and color or non-color.

**Photography Degree Zero** meanings multiply as titles of her solo exhibitions with context added to content. The phrase conceptually mirrors a photographic aporia and visual paradox first seen in Ellen Carey’s pioneering lens-based art for which she uses the large-format Polaroid 20 X 24 camera located in New York, one of five in the world, and renown for expanding our picture culture, also seen in the work of William Wegman and Chuck Close. Carey, too, is a “Polaroid artist.”



10

Ellen Carey *Light Tight*, 2006  
color photogram, (c-print on metallic paper)  
24"H x 20"W [33"H x 29"W framed]  
Collection of the artist  
Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY



11

Ellen Carey *Light Tight*, 2006  
color photogram, (c-print on metallic paper)  
24"H x 20"W [33"H x 29"W framed]  
Collection of the artist  
Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY

### Ellen Carey Object Description for Artworks #10–11:

*Struck by Light* is Ellen Carey’s photogram practice of plentiful, striking characteristics: a palette reductive in black and white, and fiercely bold in color; an investigation into the biology of seeing coupled with imaginative, huge scale artworks; color theory highlighted as subject and object; and objects either placed on paper or light that strikes paper, used in original, unorthodox ways.

Her concepts and images begin with light — its presence, absence or half life — acknowledge it as the primary agent in all photography, being both indexical and *prima facie*. Light informs all her work, often in tandem with universal themes such as joy and mourning. It underscores these states with bright color, shadow image, or the physical positive and/or negative print as metaphor and picture sign.

*Light Tight* alludes to the totally black environment required for color darkroom printing. The nimble, light-fingered nature of working quickly is echoed in Carey’s account of “drawing with light,” the Victorian phrase for photography. These warm amber, honey-hued colors whisper and whisk through the composition. Its shiny metallic, light gold ground, a new paper at that time, supports the light-hearted, airy meshes of contour and line.

Carey experiments with and establishes many linkages among end results and their stellar compositions, inclusive of a diverse, broad palette that underscores and highlights her abstract, minimal work. Taken collectively, these visual attributes allow the final object to “speak.”



12

Ellen Carey *Dings & Shadows*, 2013  
color photograms, split filters • pentptych • RG/GB/BY/YM/MC • 24”H x 20”W [24”H x 101”W overall]  
Collection of the artist  
Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY

### Ellen Carey Object Description for Artworks #12:

Ellen Carey is a keen observer of change expressed in the skies, weather and seasons, in varieties of color as rainbow or flower, and form as trees or clouds. Artists also inspire her — those who use light (James Turrell), color and form (Lynda Benglis), the minimal to geometric (Donald Judd), combine the less-is-more aesthetic through inventive use of size and scale (Sol LeWitt), and enrich art with new meaning through non-traditional art materials (Dan Flavin).

Carey’s sole focus on light led her to the color enlarger, an unusual tool for inspiration. Her aim to turn up the visual volume in intensity, saturation, hue and opacity in photograms was realized in the linear progression of “split filters” organized around photographic color theory in her newest version of *Dings & Shadows*. Two colors in one

composition show selectively smooth surfaces that are angular, flat and geometric. Expansive and minimal areas, pinched here and there, go into off-frame space, creating a mesa of abstraction. Colors, neon-bright, collide, asking: “All this, from an enlarger?”

Kaleidoscopic, high impact images of form and feeling charge forth, rendered in misty, seamless explorations that surge, bounce and ricochet around and off one another. Colors fall randomly and in chance encounters, unexpected connections emerge in playful and overlapping exposures — the paper is *struck by light*. Ellen Carey’s masterful skills in her craft, and her degree of iconoclastic sophistication, reinvent and celebrate the color wheel, to be found only in photography.



13

Ellen Carey *Multichrome Monochromes*, 2008  
 top • Polaroid color positive prints • 34”H x 22”W each • [34”H x 88”W overall unframed]  
 bottom • Polaroid color negative prints • 34”H x 22”W each • [34”H x 88”W overall unframed]  
 Collection of the artist  
 Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY

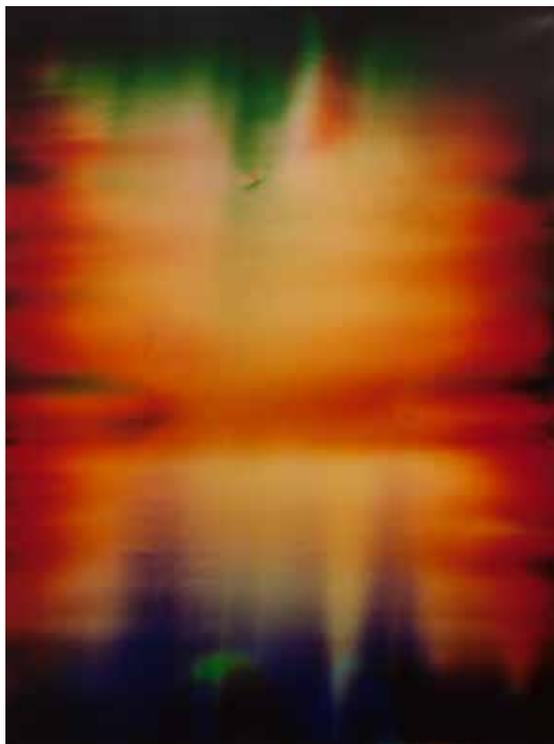
### Ellen Carey Object Description for Artworks #13:

For Ellen Carey, the use of color evolved into an even brighter, bigger and bolder “blow-up.” Revisiting a technique in color film and chemistry known as “cross-processing,” this artist who paints with light uses the Polaroid pods-as-tubes. Her palette digs deeper into color’s mother lode, borrowing ideas from traditional photographic terms. To each change in Polaroid, Carey responds.

*Multichrome Monochromes* present her creative solution to this challenge hidden in the envelopes of chemistry known as Polaroid “pods.” Her innovation finds the classic Polaroid 20 X 24 rectangle, seen in a series of glossy — yellow, red, green, blue — symmetrical exposures in large, unique blocks. The top finds the signature Polaroid-shaped “tulips,” the bottom forms the thick band, and each are

edged in black. The sides show thinner relics of the camera’s rollers, framing the Polaroid instant process.

Each positive picture contains asymmetrical, stitch-like forms, unexpected and striated. A single color shows two glossy surface versions: one is dull grey and mirrored by its super-slick counterpart. These smooth areas change to a porphyritic slice of non-glare matte. Polaroid negatives hang below their positives, the tar-like patinas gone deeper into variations of color, form, texture, surface and invention. Ellen Carey often exhibits the one-of-a-kind positives with their negatives, giving equal status to both, and the only Polaroid artist to do so.



14

Ellen Carey *A Ding & A Shadow*, 2010  
color photogram • 40”H x 30”W  
Collection of the artist  
Courtesy of Jayne H. Baum Gallery New York, NY

### Ellen Carey Object Description for Artwork #14:

Unknown to Carey at the time she was making this over-sized color photogram, and against the backdrop of these brightly hued passages and expressive marks, was the happy art accident of a lone “ding.” Immediately recognized as a potential source for future work, it was a much-needed stimulus for her. With crescent shape minimal and elegant, its tip echoed the conical loop of her **Pulls**.

The “ding” is traditionally discarded as an unprofessional photographic taboo, a mistake that violates the pristine rules of printing. For Carey, it was a breath of fresh visualized air. She was *struck by*

*light* — inspired — literally and figuratively. The “dings” were perfect “shadow catchers” for her process, color, and abstraction as evidenced through the breakthrough large photogram, *A Ding & A Shadow*.

Ellen Carey, the camera-less operator who dances free and alone inside the color darkroom, enlarges that unique, timeless blaze we know as the imagination. In revisiting a 19th century vintage method with only light from enlarger lens to penlight points, this 21st century American artist creates new documents of dramatic and enduring consequence.

## The Black Swans of Ellen Carey: Of Necessary Poetic Realities

Ellen Carey, with or without a camera, pulls and photographs a visual rainbow of poetic realities from a primal darkness that dreams the next moment. Her abstract and minimal pictures range from high impact and fully saturated to restrained, quieter or iridescent colors and forms that she plucks from random encounters in the chaotic flux of becoming, then organizes, and places in motion by any variety of decisions she will make. Her experience, agile, muscular brilliance and energy collaborate with the unpredictable or capricious fact of the image, that is, something new. Her work is unprecedented in photography — a black swan phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

In 1996 Ellen Carey adopted the term *Pulls* to describe the less is more twin axis of her elemental positive and negative images — those bright stars of Gemini, Castor and Pollux,<sup>2</sup> that she pulled out from the rollers of the Polaroid 20 X 24 large format camera, seen for the first time in the diptych *White Pull/Black Pull*. With her original idea she introduced a unique, visual form in both her lens-based art and photography, that of the parabola. "The Concise Oxford English Dictionary" states that the parabola is a symmetrical open plane curve formed by the intersection of a cone with a plane parallel to its side. In nature it occurs in the shapes of elongated pine cones and the shadow portion of the crescent moon at eclipse. Laurence I. Gould, a professor of physics and Carey's colleague, wrote her the following in an e-mail: ". . . certain comets could travel in parabolas if they have the right total energy — coming into our solar system and then leaving . . . never to return." In Carey's *Pulls* it becomes an art form new to photography and is expressed in a conical black loop known as the hyperbola. Since 1996 Carey has called her radical approach, *Photography Degree Zero*,<sup>3</sup> after French semiologist Roland Barthes's (1915 – 1980) book, "Writing Degree Zero" (1953), in which she upends the photograph as sign — the snaps and family portraits standing in for memory and desire — originally realized in her series, *Family Portrait*.

The sudden, unexpected death of her brother from an accident came at a time when her beloved mother was terminally ill. She died shortly afterward. Carey's marriage soon ended following these twin deaths. Any reliable semblance of a normal, everyday world collapsed. The gravitas of such life-changing losses, so shattering as they unfolded, resounded in Carey's mind with the French existentialism of philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's (1905-80) treatise, "Being and Nothingness" (1943) and his play, "No Exit" (1944), in which hell exists throughout lifetimes that do not make sense, yet one must take the responsibility to live anyway; and, likewise with American playwright and film director David Mamet's (b. 1947) film, "House of Games" (1987), which ricochets off Shakespeare's dramatic device of the play within a play, in a layered, elaborate series of deceptions within deceptions, while dovetailing with literature's central theme of appearance versus reality.

Carey realized that the medium of photography, generally presumed to represent what is real, also could show how things are not always what they seem. Contradiction lay at the center of her experience: to understand life through a lens of appearance and reality is to assume the existence of an organizing principle one calls reality to distinguish it from appearance, but French existentialism, which developed between the two world wars in an attempt to explain the evil of mass violence, shows that there is no pattern or organizing principle in life that one can call reality. The artist was left face to face with death in life when the trusted and familiar suddenly turned strange. The American psychoanalyst and author Louise J. Kaplan (b. 1930), in her book *No Voice Is Ever Wholly Lost* (1995) uses Freud's theory of the uncanny to explain some of the profound effects of losing someone, of being robbed by the abrupt emergence of something usually hidden, dark, a shadow coming to light. The loving dialogue established by mother and child in the developmental period before speech is what makes us capable of forming loving relationships throughout our lives. When death reduces the

loved one to an object that can only stare back, so to speak, it becomes imperative to somehow reestablish that capacity for feeling which makes us human. Art can and does restore these lost dialogues. On a single day in August 1996 Carey made her groundbreaking first "Pull", *White Pull/Black Pull*, and the *Family Portrait*. Thereafter she would inscribe her concept and artistic practice, *Photography Degree Zero*.

According to the American philosopher Susanne Langer (1895-1985) in her 1953 book, "Feeling and Form," art gives form to the raw havoc of feeling and in so doing allows for life to fill us once again. These major losses sustained by Carey forefronted her visionary breakthroughs, exponentially expanding her one-of-a-kind art practice. They created her constellation of black swans — vital, fluid shadows of no self, the bird shadow soul, the zero state — emptied by loss, and yet, literal negative markers pointing a way forward to desire, the life force, the filling ecstasy of the erotic, the aesthetic, and the mythic, blue-skinned Vishnu, a lotus arising from his navel, dreaming the eternal world into being. They become a fulcrum for the distinctive direction her work will take for years to come. In his book, "The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature" (1941), the American writer Edmund Wilson (1895-1972), re-imagined the Greek Philoctetes myth as the story of how psychological trauma can be converted to clarity of feeling, insight and strength through dedicated artistic effort. The inimitable Chorus in the Greek tragedy, "Agamemnon" (ca. 458 BCE), by the Greek poet Aeschylus (ca. 525-456 BCE), cautions us "To learn to know through pain . . . ."

Carey's idea for the *Pulls* also derived from studying her photographer-muse, British inventor William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-77), who discovered the photogram method in 1834 by using only materials of immediacy — emulsion, paper, light, pine needles, lace — and without need of a camera. She turned 150 years of photography on its head by hybridizing the idea of the camera with the directness

of the photogram process in her use of the Polaroid 20 X 24 camera. From her knowledge of Talbot's negative and positive method and the French inventor of photography, Louis-Jacques-Mandé-Daguerre's daguerreotypes of pristine clarity, which introduced the medium's hyperreal characteristic, Carey understood what the camera could produce. Her use of Polaroid to accept completely new images with its own content-laden materials, was similar yet different from the historical photogram and daguerreotype. She made object and subject simultaneous in the *Pull* as positive, often shown with its negative. Indifferent to the traditional (and masculine) role of the camera as primary in relation to the secondary subject (i.e. the male gaze), she engaged with it as a collaborative equal, renaming common photographic terms. All titles for this work describe her physical interactions with machine, material, darkness and light: *Pulls*, *Rollbacks*, *Lifts and Drops*, *Multichromes*, and *Penlights*, which are hung alone, as pairs, triptychs or in groups as installations to underscore her concepts and themes.

Carey revisits photographic terms with fresh innovation. A *Pull* that has a double or multiple exposure is a *Rollback*, in which she manually pulls out and rolls back film; in color she returns to cross-processing brand new hues from her chemical wand. She pushes photographic color theory to the hilt, in contrast with Talbot's softer, muted palette of warm tones and cooler aubergines created from the unpredictable English weather — the sunlight's intensity on any given day. In surpassing the origins of the photograph as sign, narrative, and object, she stripped photography of hierarchical, gender-coded relations of subject and object, generating instead a self-referential and nonrepresentational starting point. Carey's *Photography Degree Zero* is a whole new world as verb. Standing close up and face-to-face with her radical images we are finally compelled to experience ourselves as the meaning makers, who collaborate with them as did the artist, to find what is there and not there and to notice how and what we see.

She references American photographer Garry Winogrand (1928-84) when she states that each *Pull* does not record a fact but creates a new fact which is the photograph.<sup>4</sup> These facts are indeed realities as striking to us as they are themselves evidences of the momentary, everyday shadow world we inhabit, intuit and do not see unless we retain child-like eyes and ways of being in the world by feeling, by that which makes us human. Her photographs are a startling counterpoint singularly equal to NASA's thrilling snapshot of Earth from its only moon. We are pulled to them as we are pulled by the mystery of the moon, curious, bedazzled and initially struggling to connect.

Carey and her Black Swans are possible only in America. Their emergence followed several developments, beginning with the 19th century dominance in photography by Talbot and Daguerre, and followed by the American Photo-Secessionist movement<sup>5</sup> of 1902, in which the American photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) organized a group of American avant-garde photographers to break away from a more conventional approach. In 1900 he and American photographer, F. Holland Day (1864-1933) brought the finest works overseas to secure solid recognition by the art world for these new 'photography as art' photographs, which they duly gained in Paris and London, thus establishing a significant link for the medium between Europe and America.

Within two years the Photo-Secessionist movement was underway with the use of special printing processes involving gum bichromates and platinum that were mastered by the American photographer Edward Steichen (1879-1973). By 1905 its practitioners expanded subject matter to include city infrastructure and architecture, and were regularly exhibiting at 291 Fifth Avenue in The Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession or simply 291, in New York City. Though they disbanded within 10 years, their influence continued long after, as did the profound impact of the interim between the First and Second World Wars in which Europe was the capital of the art world with Paris as its center, yielding the

following important western art movements (with some of their representative artists): the Impressionism of Gustav Caillebotte (1848-94) and Claude Monet (1840 -1926); the Surrealism of Max Ernst (1891-1976) and Man Ray (1890-1976); the Dada of Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968); and the Cubism of Georges Braque (1882-1963) and Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). The Polaroid camera, however, was an American invention, and after the Second World War the art capital shifted to New York City, as Abstract Expressionism, via such artists as Jackson Pollock (1912-56) and Robert Motherwell (1915-91), opened up a new horizon within an American utopia of artistic freedom and creativity. Carey's achievements surface from this backdrop as well as the impact of Conceptual Art, Minimalism, and feminism. As a student she independently researched women artists because "Janson's History of Art" did not include them. The invention of photography and the suffragist movement would change that. Women used the daguerreotype for its surging commercial applications and self-portraiture studies. The new, empty field held a promise of sweeping sea changes. This democratic medium included such women photographers as Anna Atkins (1799-1871), Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-79), Claude Calhun (1894-1954) and Americans, Lee Miller (1907-77), Diane Arbus (1923 -71), and Cindy Sherman (b. 1954).

Black Swan Theory,<sup>1</sup> applied to Carey's art-making over time, shows a cascading movement and form of investigation and discovery, beginning in 1995 with the Polaroid process and *Color Theory*<sup>1</sup>, and reverberating into *Pulls* and *Family Portrait*. This activity parallels the function of the camera's interior mirror apparatus as one discovery upon another successively bounces, shutters, and kaleidoscopes into the next. Every four years or so, Carey creates a new cluster of bold, visual rainbows that take yet another view. The grey card shale of the *Mourning Wall* and the even more colossal installation, *Pulls XL*, of burnished browns and blacks constituting Carey's 2004 Wadsworth Atheneum Matrix #153 exhibition, erupt into the sensate world of

*Push Pins*, the high saturation of *The Red Photogram*, and the inter-receptive *Blinks* and, I wonder that she is also shocking us back to life after the events of 9/11. The next cascade comes with *Polaroid Penlights*, her extraordinary essay, *Color Me Real*,<sup>6</sup> on Minimalist Sol LeWitt (1928-2007), the *Multi-chrome Pulls* (2008) of her cross-hatched, feather-blended, chemical colors, and her essay about her instinctive and pivotal sighting of Surrealist Man Ray's penlight signature in reverse in his photograph, *Space Writings*, which has eluded the art world since its creation in 1935.

Carey brings to the pitch black surface of the color photography darkroom her investigations into art and science, including mathematics, art history and art brut,<sup>7</sup> chemistry, optics, psychoanalysis, semiotics, feminism, mysticism, the self. Her tool box is vast: she might draw with a penlight; rotate a piece of light-sensitive paper with glass marbles; puncture color paper with metal push pins used in her installations; spin the whirligig wheel of photographic color theory, dialing in settings on an enlarger, or cross-process, either way for categories of utterly new colors; expose and roll back film into the camera for yet more exposures; lift and drop her *Pulls* to create air pockets where developer and dyes cannot reach; separate negative from positive, hanging each as is, unframed and often side by side while chemicals continue to react and change over time. Visiting with her work sends me scurrying into every pocket of myself — books half- or unread, musical passages or something out of tune, a sense of alarm, an instantaneous rise of my body Fahrenheit, and rushing for words to hold it all there in its zone system quiet.

*Photography Degree Zero* bridges two categories of Ellen Carey's work: the Polaroid *Pulls* and separate site specific Polaroid installations. These are large-scale works showing all evidence of the Polaroid process, even the downflow of exhausted chemicals. Those *Pulls* of more than one image also sequester massive spherical silences imagining three-di-

mensionality within their negative spaces. Her *Struck by Light* photograms, entitled *Push Pins*, *Ray Bands*, *Neo-Ops* and *Blinks* are different. Whereas the *Pulls* answer the question, 'What is a minimal photograph?' the photograms are Carey's responses to the question, 'What is an abstract photograph?' In place of Talbot's common materials of pine needles and lace in muted colors, Carey prefers nontraditional materials mostly in high saturation created by color photographic theory and united by the common fact that they are all, in her words, "struck by light." The four poetic realities of earth, sun, water and fire are abstracted to dense saturations of the primary colors green, yellow, blue and red. Her glass marbles trace their own controlled chaotic movements and metal pins push through the surface of the photographic paper. Carey has said of her color *Push Pins* photograms, "The push pins create actual holes in the surface of the paper, suggesting edges of peripheral vision . . . of raised, irregular surfaces."<sup>8</sup>

The American poet, assistant professor of English, and Carey's former colleague, Connie Voisine, thinks Carey's work defies Roland Barthes's assertion in "Camera Lucida" (1980) that the essence of photography is representational via two elements, the 'studium' or generally obvious meanings understood by most viewers and the 'punctum' which pierces through captive time along the surface of the photograph into a personal memory that wounds. "Ellen's *Pulls* are defiance," Voisine told me. "They prove that representation is not a key to her art." Carey felt she turned a corner when she began puncturing light-sensitive paper with push pins. She became interested in the biology of seeing and the creation of new colors from chemicals. Her art is of the process itself that makes pictures.

I stand in front of the *Pulls* and the *Struck by Light* photograms transfixed by a sense of eyesight doubling back as inner vision mirroring our intact humanity in this digitally on-and-off, fragmentary and commodity-driven world. I revisit the disorientation and hesitancy of being

and moving within the layers of the dark and of the self in a kind of delectable confusion: the Where am I?, What is me?, What is not me?, What do I see?; and like a child, whole by feeling, with need no different from desire, crashing through the phenomenal world with a funny bone imagination, by turns carefree, delighted and seriously alert. The artist's desire is urgent with a will to find and give form to the place of absence in order to assure presence. It is only in this kind of pre-cognitive, eyes-closed-dream that one can really see inwardly by feeling — even the apperceptions of the child one once was. Children, as we all know, 'get it' — the onrush of a moment lived without comprehension — in a way free of the need for meaning by being fully present in the Buddhist sense of intuitively grasping that to which intellectual concepts can only point.<sup>9</sup> An ardent observer of the extrinsic world, Carey recalled seeing an infant, wrapped in a snugly upon his mother's chest, who was enraptured with the shadow of his own little hand on a wall as he turned it over and over again in the sunlight.

This artist transliterates with her color darkroom sensorium, bringing to light the visual equivalences of her multiplexed interactions amid variations "in timing, scale, distance, framing, grouping or isolation, detail, perspective, length of light-wave: in a camera image these are not mere aesthetic factors but matters of epistemology."<sup>10</sup> How it must wreck one's sense of time when a decimal point extra instant of light for a photographer can make all the controlled combinations of space and time collapse or come into play!

The great poets, Shakespeare and Yeats, were wonderfully confused with their world. Carey's work is alive with questions equal to Hamlet's soliloquy of Act III, Scene I, "To be or not to be: that is the question."; or to William Butler Yeats's "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"<sup>11</sup> It sends its motile feelers out among the strange dark in-and-out spaces the way organisms interact with feedback from their environment. The American poet Gary Snyder (b. 1930) wrote: "It is in the deep mind that wilderness and the

unconsciousness become one . . . our relation to the outer ecologies seems conditioned by our inner ecologies . . ."<sup>12</sup> Swiss writer, Adolph Muschg, (b. 1934) praises the radical: "How is the middle related to its fringes? . . . there lies its sense of touch for all the new that comes towards it; there the health of its metabolism is decided . . . there at the fringes the system learns — or closes itself off against its own survival."<sup>13</sup> It is in this greater sense that Carey's process urges our collective thinking toward new paradigms and mythologies to progressively replace the broken models we still use for thinking about our wondrous, perplexing and dangerous world, clearing a way for what poet and philosopher Heriberto Yépez calls "spontaneous truth."<sup>14</sup>

Ellen Carey's photographic and lens-based art is also a fearless and physically demanding arena that relates and seizes upon whatever new exists along the edges; being in the whale-belly of darkness in a near bottomless sea, sensing and receiving what we cannot see; and reminiscent of Cartier-Bresson's 'decisive moment' of which Carey is acutely aware, opening and moving within it as do we who take her cues from the other side of her pictures. Sometimes there is no camera when she directly collaborates with light, paper surface, emulsion, and mystery in her photograms, her pick axe color photographic theory striking at what she calls "the mother lode of color."<sup>15</sup> Occasionally, I imagine, she also must take respite in certain Polaroid *Pulls*, of multiple exposures in cooling hues — refreshing whorls upon the cheek — refuge where we may catch our breath to think and feel our next step toward necessary poetic realities. We are in need of such experiences to help us understand how we construct the world by making meaning. Carey's *Photography Degree Zero* offers that. We are called upon to react as wholly as the chemical reactions that are her images to the presence and absence (periodically only presence) of darkness, an inner shadow place where all that there is tentatively becomes.

Pliny the Elder, in his *Natural History* (ca. 77-79 CE), relates the myth of art's origin in a fable about the daughter of Butades, a Greek potter from Corinth. She drew the outlined profile of her lover's shadow as it was projected on the wall by a lamp, just before he left for battle, and which her father made into a sculptural relief. Thus, before the real shadow departs with its owner it offers the young woman an image with which to represent her beloved — that which she fixes on the wall for all time.<sup>16</sup> According to art historian, Victor I. Stoichita, in his remarkable book, "A Short History of the Shadow" (1997),<sup>17</sup> the hidden meaning of this myth involves the transcendence of death. The image of the lover's face on the wall is a vertical, erect, life-like projection, a figure. What is the daughter's intent? To memorialize him?, Give him life?, Induce a phantasm of foreplay when besieged so by the throes of Eros and Thanatos? We simply do not know. She seems to vanquish the threat of his death in war by making an image that literally stands in for his absence — she makes him upright, that is, forever alive. Although the image she traced is only a spectre, it is, nonetheless, the immaterial counterpart or double of the absent lover. It is not lost on us here in the 21st century that Butades' daughter is nameless — a namelessness standing in for the fact of women's absence throughout art history, and a marker of women's invisibility in language that ignores this one fact: the need to name the world is a human need. Nevertheless the daughter's image remains. It is timeless, as are Carey's symbolic *Family Portrait*, *Self-Portrait at 48*, and the immense minimalist tableaux, *Mourning Wall*.

Art-making involves an impulse to fix a world threatened with harm. It is a necessary poetic reality born of the artist's love affair with the world and is a survival strategy for individual and planet alike. Ellen Carey's Polaroid *Pulls* include negatives that are assigned equal status with their positives. Each negative is the poetic *topos*, literally the place of the figure's absence, its shadow — the parabola of a dragonfly's wing, a lost feather, a warrior's shield; of the

human tongue, penis, and breast; of the silence imperative for speech, and the necessary darkness of the world, the mind, before light, before an image.

In his book, "The Poetics of Space" (1969), the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962), wrote of nature imagining how to make the human ear by practicing with seashells for sound and form. I like to think that Carey's art fine tunes the ear of the imagination. As I see into any one of a number of *Pulls* I may hear Bach on someone's baby grand<sup>18</sup> or on American poet Wallace Stevens's "blue guitar,"<sup>19</sup> and turning just so, hear Nina Simone, and quench myself on long, deep breaths, and smile in all that loam, until from within Carey's massive and monumental *Mourning Wall* (2000) I hear Victoria de los Angeles singing Dido's lament, "When I am laid in earth,"<sup>20</sup> holding off the inevitable, final silence created by such blackness. The installation of one hundred Polaroid negatives (15 ft. high and 40 ft. wide) form the appearance of a nicked and scarred gun metal grey mosaic wall of silence as incomprehensible as the shadows left behind of the people who were vaporized in Hiroshima.<sup>21</sup> There is an immense gratitude toward the artist who gave so much to express such unfathomable sorrow. Even though this work predates 9/11 by one year it offers Americans, in particular, its haunting scroll of vacant comprehension as sanctuary in the aftermath of that event. Connie Voisine has said that Carey does, with the color black, in the *Mourning Wall*, what the Bulgarian-French philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (b. 1941), writing in "Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art" (1980), states the Florentine painter Giotto di Bondone (ca. 1267-1337) did with blue in his Arena Chapel frescoes at Padua. I venture to guess he defied the traditionally restrained use of color in the frescoes of his time. Giotto's blue expressed a human joy free of mystical projection. Instead of making silence that points to the period of human development before speech, Voisine thinks of Carey's silence of black as abstract. I feel it points to the

time when an infant first perceives color in its fullest sense as separate from objects — a time when color exists for itself and our unthinking immersion in it. Voisine and I noted that Carey's black has texture yet is not painting or sculpture. To give silence texture is to enliven it, make it palpable. Again her work bypasses representational photography. It is abstract. It is the very thing itself. Within the negative and positive *Black Multichrome Pull* (2008), I peer into ink black folds of a garment rent and almost laid flat by a furious and futile search for the loved one's body and stark with silence. The photogram *Light Struck* (2009), interrupts this bled-out scene with a single flower of red, yellow, magenta, cyan, green, blue and white, spilling out at us from its blackening central vortex an infinite array of miniature color wheels, dancing rainbow jewels, and oh, how tipsy I become.

*Color Theory* (1995), a Polaroid positive print that references "Rotary Demisphere" (1925), a machine by Dadaist Marcel Duchamp, is a fascinating vertigo: Imagine a roulette wheel, sans numbers and partitions, spinning countless, small wheels in symmetrical and asymmetrical orbitals of the primary additive colors red, green and blue into a blur of centrifugal and centripetal patterns as some blend off the edges of the print while others gather vehemently sharper toward the center, and overall, create the primary subtractives, yellow, magenta and cyan wherever they overlap, and intervals of white where all the colors meld — a big bang galaxy, our serpentine mortal coil, and a fantastic foreshadowing of what Carey will do with photographic color theory. I return to the humid red of *The Red Photogram* (2001), with its forefronting of colorful, floating, circular notes and broken black strings that we gaze past to a red interior, music still inside. I recall a line from a poem of the same name: "If only one could look inside this dark room of the body."<sup>22</sup>

The installation view, a suite of six *Blinks* (2008), one for each of six colors — red, green, blue, yellow, magenta, cyan — have me looking past Talbot's *The Oriel Window* (1835

or 1839), with new eyes. Each of these six interdependent *Blinks* is composed of a singular, irregular lattice pattern of its own (as if swayed by the wind) of thickening, black net that peripherally bounds the seeping color and stacks all colors toward a cloud-like, white center. Other *Blinks*, a small photogram and a midsize inkjet color print (2003 and 2004), and an even larger one (2005), an oversized, digital inkjet color print composed of her original color photograms, are architectures of color, color the architecture of light. The orderly, plaid matrices are composed of Carey's *Ray Bands* (2003), that seemingly 'blink' at us, as we at them, our rods and cones bewildered by afterimages of such proportionality and proximity. We are looking at and into a multi-story building without walls and aglow with infinite depths. The rooms are formed by supporting beams of rainbows cubed, and where they intersect each node blinks — a Galaxy? Earth? Mind? All three?

Contrast these *Blinks* with the *Push Pins* series, particularly *Push Pins* (2002), in which each push pin puncture is a moment through time, struck by light (to borrow the title of Ellen Carey's 2009 photogram retrospective from 1992-2009). See the sparks fly off her anvil — her mother lode of color. Move past this scrim of lightsparks peeling off in every direction to the more solid blocks of color in all their variation, and beyond these, shock your self with a faintest sense of a free human presence, raw and elegant, somewhere there. Here.

### **Donna Fleischer** **Poet**

A Personal Note: It was a tremendous pleasure to be enriched so by Ellen Carey's generous flow of ideas, knowledge, questions and humor throughout the development of this essay.

## Notes

1. Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, (New York: Random House, 2007). Black swans are major, exceptional and unpredictable events, including artistic achievements, conceived as extreme outliers, which we later rationalize as foreseeable. Malcolm Gladwell, in *Outliers: The Story of Success*, (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 2008), describes outliers as extraordinary people whose accomplishments surpass our range of experience, and so, puzzle us; have clocked at least 10,000 hours of resolute labor in their fields; and, whose cultural, historical backgrounds are equally important to individual characteristics. (Ellen Carey's idea to use Taleb's adaptation of "Black Swan Theory" developed in part from her reading of this essay in first draft form. n.b. Although her use of the Polaroid camera began in 1983, for the purposes of this article, only specific works dating from 1995 to the present are discussed.)
2. Castor is the first star in the constellation Gemini (or the Twins) and Pollux is the second star. In *The Greek Myths: 1* (1960), English poet and scholar Robert Graves (1895 – 1985) explains that they represent the twin sons of Greek myth generally described as children of Zeus and Leda. The Greek tragic poets tell the story of "Leda and the Swan" in which Zeus couples with Leda in the form of a swan, creating Helen and Clytemnestra, from the one egg, and Castor and Pollux from the other (pp. 206 – 208). Yeats's poem, *Leda and the Swan*, (1924, 1928) relates the twin tragedy of this story: the fall of Troy, caused by Helen's elopement with the Trojan, Paris and the murder of the great King Agamemnon, by his own wife, Clytemnestra. According to Graves, in an earlier version of the myth, the moon goddess, Nemesis, of the Peloponnesian swan cult, was similarly tricked by Zeus (p. 208). American mythology scholar and writer, Joseph Campbell (1904 – 1987), in his book, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (1970), notes that in Lascaux, in southern France, is a cave picture of a shaman "dressed in bird costume lying prostrate in a trance and with the figure of a bird perched on his shaman staff beside him." (p. 258) Shaman birds of Siberia, India, China, Germany, and Native American cultures emphasize the bird as a spiritual messenger capable of flying beyond this life and returning while in a trance. There is a rich and uncanny association between these symbols in their creative and spiritual incarnations and the sui generis nature of Carey's first *Pulls* that even extends to her given name, Ellen, the bringer of light, from the Greek Elene, of which *ele* means sunlight, and to her surname, Carey, which is the common Anglicized version of the original Irish *Ciardha*, from the Irish word *ciar*, for dark or black (Ida Grehan's *The Dictionary of Irish Family Names*, 1997). One final correspondence involves the fact that Carey makes Polaroid *Photography Degree Zero Pulls* and black-and-white photographs in a studio with ample light, while the *Struck by Light* color photographs are shaped in total darkness before and after transient exposures to light.
3. Michael Walsh, film studies scholar and Ellen Carey's former husband, used this phrase in 1996, upon seeing her first Polaroid *Pulls*, to describe her new discovery concepts and artistic practice.
4. Yseult Chehata and Grant Willing, Aperture Foundation on Vimeo: *The Edge of Vision Interview Series*, (7:06) video clip of Ellen Carey presenting her works in the Aperture Gallery exhibition, *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography*, book and exhibition curated by Lyle Rexer, New York, NY, July 2009 (<http://www.aperture.org/exposures/?tag=ellen-carey>).
5. Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography*, third edition, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1997), 325 – 329.
6. Ellen Carey, "Color Me Real," in *Sol LeWitt: 100 Views*, eds. Susan Cross and Denise Markonish (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
7. Ellen Carey exhibited and collaborated with curator Nancy Stula of the Lyman Allyn Art Museum, New London, CT in its 2006 – 2007 exhibition, *femme brut(e)*, and gave the event its striking, uncooked title.
8. Yseult Chehata and Grant Willing, Aperture Foundation on Vimeo: *The Edge of Vision Interview Series*, (7:06) video clip of Ellen Carey presenting her works in the Aperture Gallery exhibition, *The Edge of Vision: The Rise of Abstraction in Photography*, book and exhibition curated by Lyle Rexer, New York, NY, July 2009 (<http://www.aperture.org/exposures/?tag=ellen-carey>).
9. Robert Aitken, *The Mind of Clover: Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics*, (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), 6.
10. "What Is a Thing?", describes a 2009 photographic exhibition from the Princeton University Art Museum's permanent collection presented in response to German philosopher Martin Heidegger's question posed in his 1950 lecture, "The Thing", as posted on the Web site of the Princeton University Art Museum, June 2009, [http://www.princetonartmuseum.org/events/Extended\\_Pages/WHATISATHING/](http://www.princetonartmuseum.org/events/Extended_Pages/WHATISATHING/).
11. William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939), from his poem, "Among Schoolchildren," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, rev. vol. 2, ed. M. H. Abrams, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1968), 1,587.
12. Gary Snyder excerpt, posted on poet Tom Cheetham's official Blog site, "A Music Beyond Meaning," <http://archaicfragments.blogspot.com>.
13. Adolf Muschg, cited secondarily and without attribution in a letter to the author from the director of the World Wildlife Federation, Swiss chapter, and translated from the original German by Bettina Viereck, June 2005.
14. Heriberto Yépez, "Ethopoetics, What Is It? (Part One)," posted on Jerome Rothenberg's official Blog site "Poems and Poetics," June 2009, <http://poemsandpoetics.blogspot.com>. Yépez wrote, therein, that French philosopher Michel Foucault rediscovered "how to rethink philosophy not [as] a discourse-based discipline but as...the re-making of man...producing language in unexpected ways...to produce spontaneous truth."
15. Ellen Carey, slide show lecture, presented by the artist in tandem with the exhibition, *Struck by Light*, A Retrospective of Photographs (1992 – 2009) by Ellen Carey, Saint Joseph College Art Gallery, West Hartford, CT, June 2009, Ann H. Sievers, Gallery Director and Curator.
16. *Sun Pictures Thirteen*. An exhibition catalogue. Text by Larry J. Schaaf, in association with Hans P. Kraus, Jr., (New York: Hans P. Kraus, Jr. Fine Photographs, 2004), 38 – 39.

17. Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1997), 15 – 20.
18. Ellen Carey has stated that her grandparents had a baby Steinway piano. When critics compare her artwork to abstract painting she says that for her “photography is an independent art form, separate from painting, and it’s more like music, a universal language.” August 2009.
19. Wallace Stevens (1879 – 1955), from his poem “The Man with the Blue Guitar,” *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 133.
20. In Henry Purcell’s opera, *Dido and Aeneas*, 1689.
21. John Hersey, “Hiroshima”, *The New Yorker*, August 31, 1946. In this magazine article, Hersey, an American novelist and journalist, interviewed six survivors of the atomic bomb blast conducted by the American military in 1946, which almost obliterated the entire Japanese city of Hiroshima. He maintained a reporter’s integrity for the facts by letting the survivors’ stories speak for themselves.
22. “The Red Photogram,” 2009. A haibun written by Donna Fleischer in correspondence with a different red photogram by Ellen Carey, and published with other poems of ekphrasis in “Visions, Voices, and Verses,” an anthology for the New Britain Museum of American Art, C. Haskins & A. Barton, editors, Exiles Press, Willimantic, CT 2012:

The Red Photogram

The unplanned for trip began as I stepped back from Ellen Carey’s red photogram; “The shape of grief is circular,” the book reviewer wrote of Forrest Gander’s novel; and I wonder that my avidity for procrastination takes the shape of walking in circles. I stand still before the red photogram for which I have no words, of relevance. But those red swirls, they are there, every day, and they make me smile.

Especially there in the late winter bone-cleaving days when I begin to feel out my circle walks, looking out of windows, returning to a place only to leave. My own Greek chorus. First movements, away from a mother. Stepping back from a mirror, startled by the absence of something. Remembering and forgetting, until it becomes me. The it of absence already staged in the blood.

Burroughs called it “the soft typewriter of the womb” the place where we begin to make first words. Buffering ourselves from her overloud heartbeats, I suppose. The better words, says Rimbaud, are in the silence of color.

shadows of geese  
flickering ‘cross tree trunks  
quiet spring morning

So there it is, Art, the ultimate road trip, with rickshaw and naked feet and kasa strung under the chin while floats a pillow of consciousness on last night’s dream. A painter friend’s words in an e-mail, “ — the need to reject the written word / numbers (ego) from our thought process...When it comes to art, I don’t know anymore,” he says.

Fleeting perceptions, apperceptions. Glory of the everyday of ordinary things that stay as we pass by them...*Those classical Chinese poets, Wang Wei, Li Po, Han Shan, minimalist in style and so completely embodied in their endless leaving and returning. The circle.*

The first time there is Loss it’s already too late — Loss circulating in endless loops. You look and wait, look and wait, for your love, your lost one, to return. The sound of your own blood in your ears when you are most alone. The sound of the earth all opened up and speaking, and the mourner, who listens; the underworld starlitdarkness of the body emerging on the horizon of birth.

fixing  
Li Po’s gate  
November wind

If only one could look inside this dark room of the body. See the quiet, orderly procession of blood. Contained. Purple. A royal life of its own. Hear the soft, murmuring canals bloom. Just stand in the sunlight and close your eyes. Those red swirls, they’ll make you smile.

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