

GAVLAK

KAREN CARSON  
Faces and Places

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April 23 - May 29, 2022  
GAVLAK Palm Beach

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GAVLAK Palm Beach is pleased to announce *Faces and Places*, a solo exhibition of new and historic bas-reliefs by the artist Karen Carson. Inveterately experimental throughout her career, this show finds Carson applying her longtime practice of minimalist fabrication towards a new realm of portraiture — making faces from the planar woodwork she has previously put toward abstracted ends. *Faces and Places* will be on view from April 23 to May 29, 2022 at GAVLAK's Palm Beach location.

Blending architectural drafting and carpentry with the intuitive identification of portraiture, Carson effortlessly weaves together disparate styles and practices previously deployed over her remarkable career into one — a cross between figuration and abstraction that playfully evokes both Cubism and the Mexican luchador mask. Inspired by the prevalence of masks in the pandemic, and looking in a time of isolation and dissonance for a quasi-social aspect to her creative work, Carson traces her new artistic direction to the early days of quarantine. “I wanted to have colleagues in the studio,” she states, “Figuration is like that.” Making bold choices through fabricative design, the artist strove to evoke the most basic elements of identity and personhood that become present in a face, refining her work through bold and simple colors to arrive at something disarmingly playful and complex.

A touchstone of the exhibition is Carson's *Swinging Door* (1997), which, as an early work in her exploration of bas-reliefs, represents a significant contribution to her oeuvre. Working with increasingly complex visual overlays as she developed out of a largely Minimalist background, *Swinging Door* is limned with smart detail work and sly art-historical references in the form of visual cues — evoking Renaissance realism through its distribution of scale and the artist's use of depth. Due to the strategic placement of mirrors, it is often considered to be Carson's first figural work, as the eye-level positioning of these reflective surfaces aims to introduce and enmesh the viewer into the space of the frame.

Carson's recent creations form a clear through-line to her bas-reliefs of the 90s while appearing more straightforwardly figural and contentedly companionable. Works like *Blue Brain* and *Red and Yellow Face*, both 2022, employ into a shallow three-dimensional field the features which Cubism sought to collapse into two — in the process beginning a primal game with the viewer of making faces: recognizing human features and even expressive dispositions in objects as inanimate as clouds, cars or knots of wood.

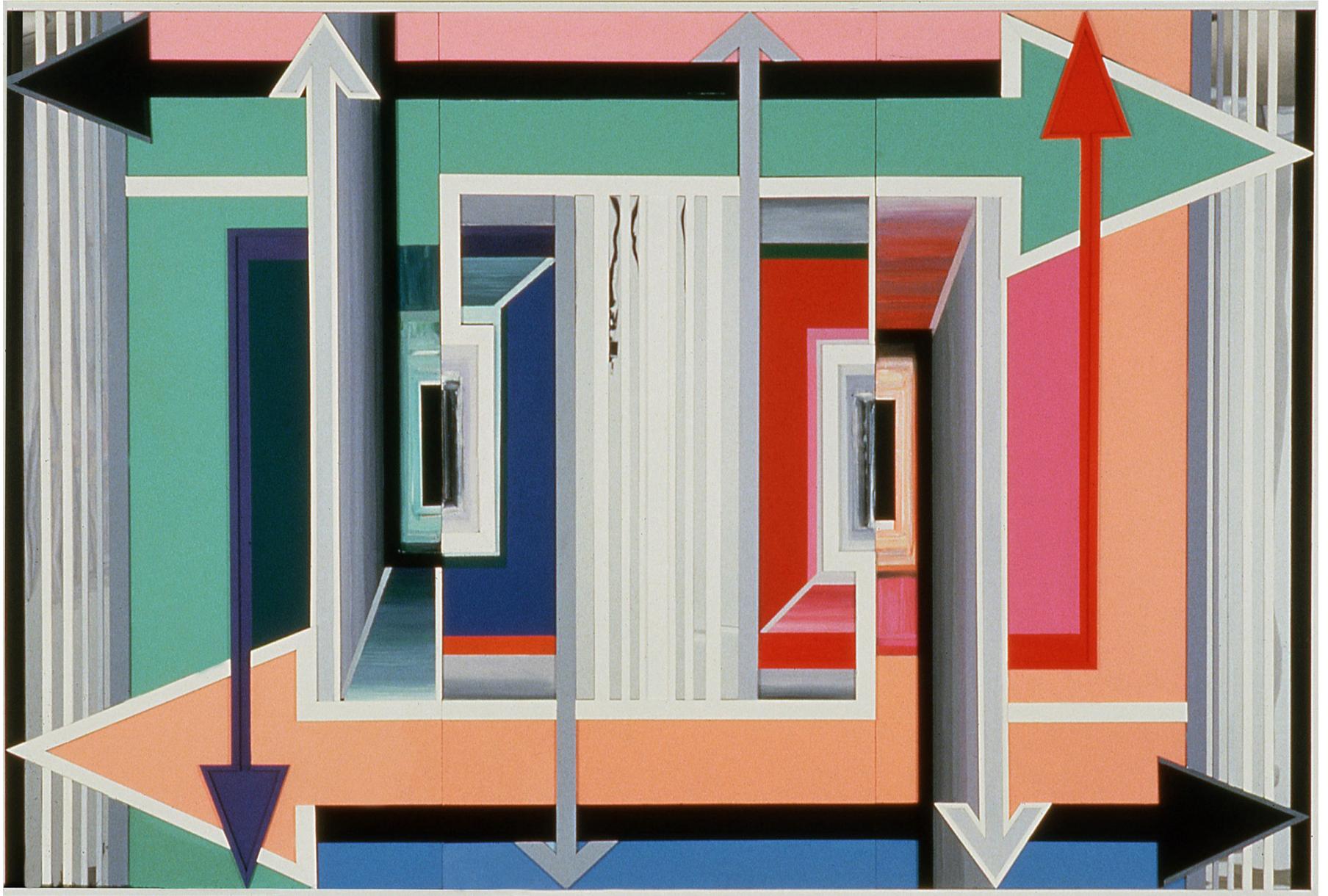
Encompassing one facet of Carson's diffuse and inimitable career, *Faces and Places* clarifies an aspect of her body of work and presents a micro-history of gestural minimalism, while testifying as readily as anything the artist has done to Carson's protracted and ecstatic exploration of color. Boldly juxtaposing primary and tertiary hues across a picture plane as complex as she sees fit to fabricate, the colors of her bas-relief portraits call up the subjectivity of emotions and the subtlety of skin tones. They, too, serve to situate the works not only in the context of minimalist restraint but as strangely spirited sensibilities and personalities — faces on the wall, which require your noticing them to come alive.

## KAREN CARSON

b. 1943, Corvallis, OR

Lives in Los Angeles & Big Timber, Montana.

Carson debuted in 1971 with wall pieces made of zippered canvases that could be re- configured to create multiple abstract compositions. Since then, she has continued to shift and change, working in a wide variety of genres and mediums, including abstract painting, figuration, collage drawing, large scale installation, painted vinyl banners, and light boxes. After the zipper works, Carson discovered painterly expressionism as the fitting style for her vision of the turbulence of contemporary life. Her projects seem united by a desire to represent the flux of visual reality, manifested both in nature (earthquakes, fires, windstorms) and culture (wars, politics, spirituality). All her projects— including abstract paintings that emulate tectonic shifts (1980), symbolic tableaux with feminist themes (1990-91), painted globes representing celestial struggles of mythic gods, (1992), commercial-style banners that advertise spiritual truths and the glories of nature (1994, 2001), light boxes depicting blurs of forest fire and smoke (2004), skyscrapers of clashing herds of Pegasus-like horses (2007), and beachscapes filled with mysterious dancers in silhouette (2010)—have manifested Carson's desire to find visual analogs for the spiritual commotion of contemporary life. Unlike so much of today's art-about-art, her ambitious work speaks to what we see and feel in the experience of the everyday.



Karen Carson  
*Swinging Door*, 1997  
Arrows + Mirrors  
Acrylic, mirror, plexiglass on bas relief wood  
72 x 108 in (182.9 x 274.3 cm)  
KCS0023  
\$80,000



Karen Carson  
*Pink Face*, 2022  
Acrylic on wood  
27.5 x 24.5 in (69.9 x 62.2 cm)  
KCS0051  
\$20,000



Karen Carson

*Pink Pole*, 2018

Bas Relief

Acrylic on bas relief wood

21.5 x 29.5 x 3 in (54.6 x 74.9 x 7.6 cm)

KCS0043

\$18,000



Karen Carson  
*Sad Face*, 2022  
Acrylic on wood  
27.5 x 24.5 in (69.9 x 62.2 cm)  
KCS0056  
\$20,000



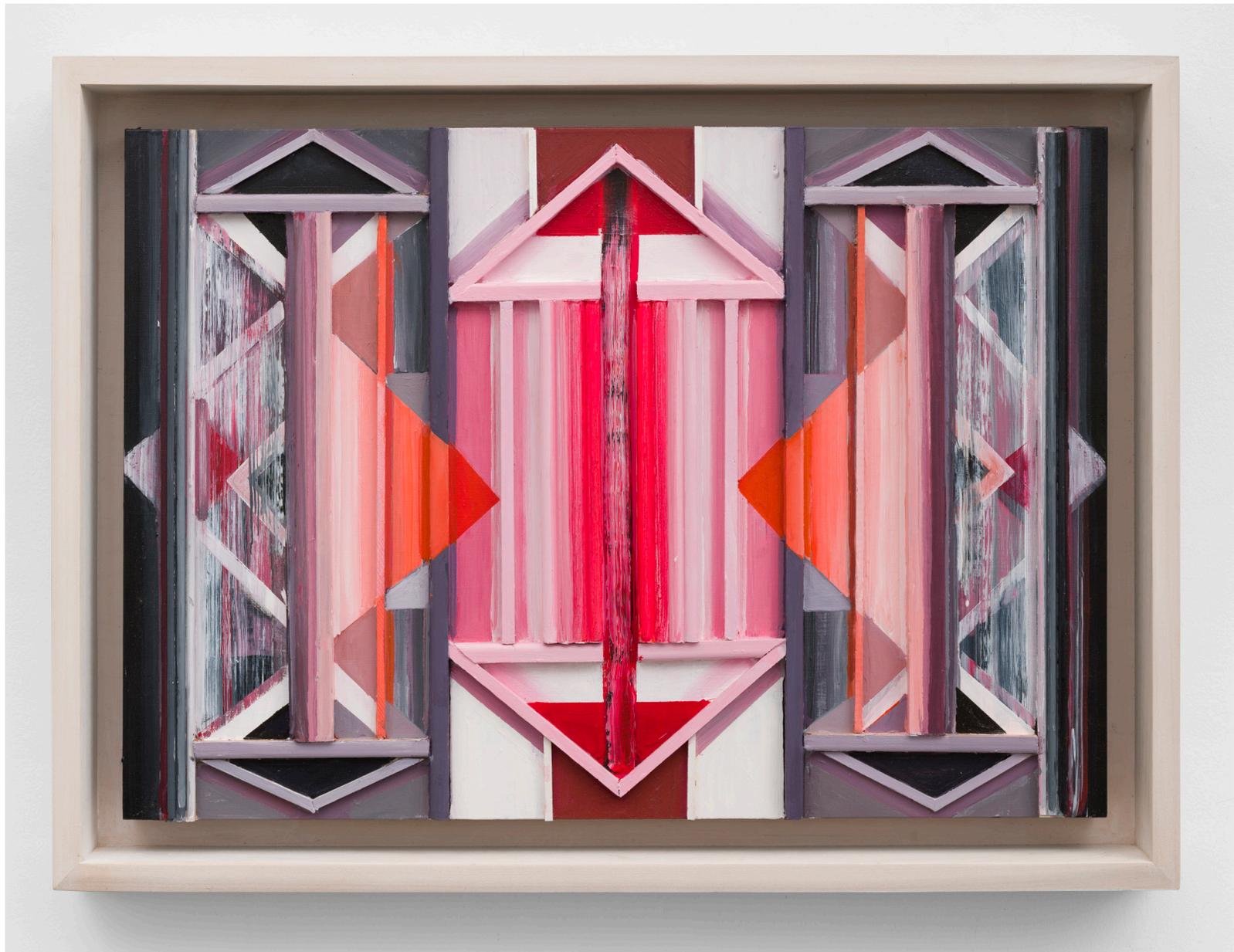
Karen Carson  
*Turquoise Eyes*, 2018-2019  
Bas Relief  
Acrylic on bas relief wood  
27.5 x 33.5 x 3.5 in (69.9 x 85.1 x 8.9 cm)  
KCS0011  
\$22,000



Karen Carson  
*Red and Yellow Face*, 2022  
Acrylic on wood  
27.5 x 24.5 in (69.9 x 62.2 cm)  
KCS0055  
\$20,000



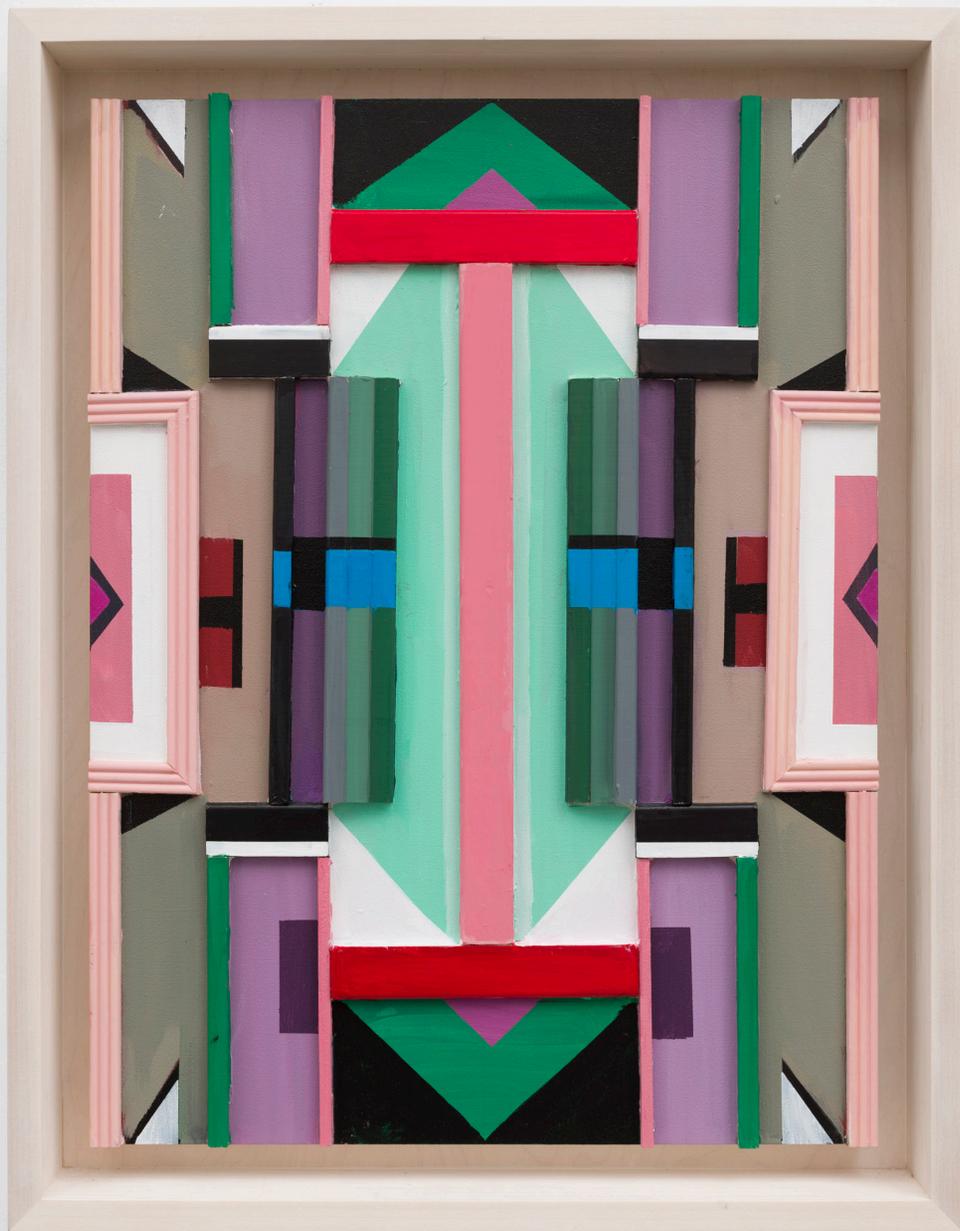
Karen Carson  
*Blue Brain*, 2022  
Acrylic on wood  
27.5 x 24.5 in (69.9 x 62.2 cm)  
KCS0054  
\$20,000



Karen Carson  
*Pink House*, 2020  
Bas Relief  
21.5 x 29.5 in (54.6 x 74.9 cm)  
KCS0050  
\$18,000



Karen Carson  
*Crazy Blue Eyes*, 2022  
Acrylic on wood  
27.5 x 24.5 in (69.9 x 62.2 cm)  
KCS0053  
\$20,000



Karen Carson  
*Green Mask*, 2022  
Acrylic on wood  
27.5 x 24.5 in (69.9 x 62.2 cm)  
KCS0052  
\$20,000

## CURRICULUM VITAE

## KAREN CARSON

b. 1943, Corvallis, OR

Lives in Los Angeles Big Timber, Montana.

### EDUCATION

- 1994 Artist in Residence, University of Nevada, Las Vegas.
- 1971 M.F.A., University of California, Los Angeles.
- 1966 B.A., University of Oregon.

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 "Middle Ground," Gavlak Gallery, Los Angeles, CA.
- 2016 "Zip Line," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 2015 "Movers and Shakers: Combines, Tractors, and Swathers by Karen Carson," Oklahoma State University Museum of Art, Stillwater, OK
- 2013 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 2011 "La Condition Humaine," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 2010 "Let's Face the Music and Dance," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 2007 "Ride the Wind," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 2005 Pomona College Museum of Art, Project Series, Claremont, CA
- 2004 "Putting Out Fires," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 2001 "Making the Seen," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 1998 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 1997 Crockett Rodeo, Seattle, Washington.  
Bill Maynes Gallery, New York.
- 1996 "Art From the Heart," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.  
"But Enough About Me," a three-venue exhibition, organized by Anne Ayres: "The Language of Space," Otis Gallery, Los Angeles.  
"It's A Small World," Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions.  
"Karen Carson: A 25-Year Survey, Santa Monica Museum of Art, curated by Noriko Gamblin, Bill Maynes Gallery, New York.
- 1994 Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, brochure.  
"Simple Lessons, Easy Pieces," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.

- 1992 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles
- 1991 "A Time and a Place for Everything," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1990 "Hot Flashes - Dangerous Drawings," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1989 "Spiritual Vanities," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1988 "Abstract Narcissism," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1987 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1985 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1984 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1982 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
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- 1979 Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1977 Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1976 Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1973 Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1969 Atheneum Gallery, California Institute of Technology, Pasadena, CA

### GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2020 Nasty Women, Gavlak Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 2014 "The Avant-Garde Collection," OCMA, Newport Beach, CA  
"Valley Vista: Art in the San Fernando Valley CA. 1970-1990", California State University, Northridge Galleries, Northridge, CA, curated by Damon Willick.  
"Canvas Constructions" Karen Carson and Allan McCollum, Henry Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle.
- 2011 "Under the Big Black Sun," MOCA, Los Angeles, CA (catalog).
- 2010 "Side By Side," The Colburn School, Los Angeles, exhib. of artists' portraits by Wayne Shimabukuro and artworks by each artist, (catalogue).
- 2009 "Is This The Real Life?" Galerie Califia, Horazdovice, Czech Republic, curated by Phyllis Green.
- 2006 "Plainer: A Contemporary Take on Landscape," Torrance Art Museum, Torrance.  
"Driven to Abstraction," Riverside Art Museum, Riverside, CA.
- 2005 "Contemporary Soliloquies on the Natural World: Karen Carson, Merion Estes, Constance Mallinson, Margaret Nielsen, and Takako Yamaguchi," Fisher Gallery, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, catalogue.

- 2004 "Beyond Geometry," Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, catalogue, curated by Lynn Zelevansky.  
"MCCF View & Vote," The Marian Koogler McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX.
- 2002 "Parallels and Intersections: Art/Women/California 1950-2000," curated by Diana Fuller, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, California.  
"Post-Cool," curated by Michael Duncan, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA.  
"Curators' Choice," McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX.
- 2001 "The L.A. Scene," Numark Gallery, Washington, D.C.  
"The Importance of Being Earnest," curated by Michael Duncan, Occidental College, Los Angeles.  
"The Magic Hour: Die Konvergenz Von Kunst und Las Vegas," curated by Alex Farquharson, Neue Galerie at the Künstlerhaus, Burggring, Graz, Austria.
- 2000 "The Big G Stands for Goodness: Corita Kent's 1960s POP," curated by Michael Duncan, Luckman Fine Arts Gallery, California State University, Los Angeles.  
"100 Rooms, 100 Artists; The Spurgeon Experience," Raid Projects, Santa Ana, CA  
"12 Divas," curated by Dextra Frankel, Molly Barnes Gallery, Santa Monica.
- 1999 "Radical Past: Art and Music in Pasadena, 1960-74," Norton Simon Museum, Armory Center for the Arts, and Art Center College of Design, Pasadena.
- 1998 Pop Abstraction, curated by Sid Sachs, Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia.  
Beauty is the Beast, Nevada Institute for Contemporary Art, Las Vegas, NV.
- 1997 Four Los Angeles Artists, Robin Gibson Gallery, Sydney International, Sydney, Australia.
- 1996 "Made in L.A.: The Prints of Cirrus Editions," Los Angeles County Museum of Art.  
"Drawn from L.A.," Williamson Gallery, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena.  
"Sentimental Extremes," Bill Maynes Gallery, New York.
- 1995 "Flowers," curated Irit Krygier, Boritzer/Gray/Hamano, Santa Monica.  
"Selections from the Robert A. Rowan Trust Collection," Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena.  
"Eye Tattooed America," Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA.
- "From L.A. With Love," Galerie Praz-Delavallade, Paris.  
"La Demande esta en Barata," Galeria OMR, Mexico City.  
"LA," Guerra Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City.  
"Sentimental Extremes," Bill Maynes Gallery, New York.  
"Bread," Airport Terminal, San Francisco.  
"Lotus Motel Show," Lotus Motel, Inglewood, CA.
- 1994 "Love in the Ruins," curated by Noriko Gamblin, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, catalogue.  
"Pen and Ink," curated by Michael Darling, Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara.  
"Balls," Newspace, Los Angeles.  
"Romance," curated by Irit Krygier, Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena.
- 1993 "The Contemporary Psychedelic Experience," Guggenheim Gallery, Chapman College, Orange, CA.  
"L.A. STORIES," Jack Rutberg Fine Arts, Los Angeles.  
"the elegant, irreverent & obsessive: DRAWING IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA," Visual Arts Center, California State University, Fullerton.  
"BACKTALK," Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara.  
"L.A. Next," curated by Annette Carlozzi, Contemporary Arts Council, New Orleans, LA
- 1992 "Bedroom Eyes Room with a View," California State University, Fullerton, CA.  
"LAX: The Los Angeles Exhibition," Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Los Angeles.
- "Tattoo Collection," Air de Paris, Urbi Orbi, Paris.
- 1991 "Individual Realities," Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo and Tsukashin Hall, Osaka, Japan.  
"Quick Coagulation Forms The August Corpse," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
"Addictions," Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA.
- 1990 "Past & Present - Selected Works by Gallery Artists," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles, CA
- 1989 "The Pasadena Armory Show," The Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, catalogue.
- 1988 "New Works on Paper," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1987 "The Years of Passage: 1969-1975," Fresno Arts Center and Museum, Fresno, CA.  
"Group Exhibition," Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA.

- 1985 "Perpetual Motion," Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA, catalogue.
- 1985 "Sunshine and Shadow: Recent Painting in Southern California," Fisher Gallery, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, catalogue.
- 1984 "Watercolors: A Contemporary Survey," University Art Gallery, San Diego State University, San Diego.  
"Karen Carson, Janet Cooling, Amanda Farber, Gillian Theobald," Patty Aande Gallery, San Diego.
- 1983 "Summer Show," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.  
"The First Show," The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, catalogue.  
"Group Exhibition," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1982 "Drawings by Painters," Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, CA, catalogue.  
"L.A. Art: An Exhibition of Contemporary Paintings," Nagoya City Museum, Nagoya, Japan and Municipal Art Gallery, Bardsdall Park, Los Angeles.  
"Recent Acquisitions from the Collection of Robert A. Rowan," Art Center School of Design, Pasadena.  
"New Work," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.  
"Theatrical Abstraction," Jan Baum Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1981 "Decade: Los Angeles Painting in the '70s," Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, catalogue.  
"Abstractions," San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco.  
"The Museum as Site: Sixteen Projects," Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, catalogue.  
"Professor's Choice," Lang Gallery, Scripps College, The Galleries of the Claremont Colleges, Claremont, CA.
- 1980 "Contemporaries: 17 Artists," Security Pacific Bank, Los Angeles, catalogue.  
"New Work," Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1979 "L.A. Drawing Show," University of New Mexico Art Gallery, Albuquerque  
"Los Angeles -Toronto Exchange," A.C.T., Toronto, with Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art.
- 1978 "A Point of View," Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.  
"L.A. Women Narrations," Mandeville Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego.  
"Group Exhibition," Libra Gallery, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA.
- 1977 "Six Faculty Artists," California State University, Northridge.  
"Current Concerns," University of Iowa, Fine Arts Gallery, Iowa City.
- 1976 "Contemporary Masters," Libra Gallery, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA.  
"Artists, West L.A.," Tortue Gallery, Santa Monica.  
"American Artists '76, A Celebration," Marion K. McNay Institute, San Antonio, TX, catalogue.
- 1975 "Drawings," Newport Harbor Art Museum, Newport Beach, CA, catalogue.  
"North, East, West, South and Middle (American Drawings)," Moore College of Art, Philadelphia; Pratt Graphics Center, New York; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Fort Worth Art Museum, Fort Worth, TX; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA.  
"Drawings," Dootson-Calderhead Gallery, Seattle.  
"Graphics-Cirrus," Van Stratten Gallery, Chicago. "Paintings," John Doyle Gallery, Chicago.  
"Cirrus Graphics," Santa Barbara Center for Graphics, Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, CA.  
"Drawings," Brooke Alexander, New York.
- 1974 "Exprint," Libra Gallery, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, CA.  
"Sixteen Los Angeles Women Artists," Cerritos College, Norwalk, CA, catalogue.
- 1973 "Carson, O'Shea, Trowbridge," 118 Gallery, Minneapolis.  
"Recent Drawings/California," Long Beach City College, Long Beach.  
"Some California Artists," The Gallery of the Loretto-Hilton Center, St. Louis, MO.  
"Young American Graphics," Loyola University, Los Angeles and Hamburg, Germany.
- 1972 "Fifteen Los Angeles Artists," Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena.  
"21 Artists: Visible/Invisible," Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach.  
"32nd Annual Exhibition for the Society of Contemporary Art," Chicago Art Institute, Chicago.  
"California Women Painters," Lang Art Gallery, Scripps College, The Galleries of the Claremont Colleges, Claremont, CA.  
"Soft Sculpture," Brand Art Center, Glendale, CA.  
"The Wall Object," La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA.  
"Drawings," Cirrus Gallery, Los Angeles.
- 1971 "Southern Illinois Centennial Years," Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (Purchase Award).

- 1970 "New Talent, Los Angeles," Auspices of Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, San Pedro Gallery, San Pedro, California.  
 "11 Young Sculptors," Mt. San Antonio College Gallery, Walnut, California.  
 "Eighth Annual Small Sculpture and Drawing Exhibition," San Diego Museum of Fine Arts, San Diego.  
 "Seventh Annual Small Sculpture and Drawing Exhibition," Western Washington State College, Bellingham.  
 "Eighth Annual Southern California Exhibition," Long Beach (Purchase Prize).
- 1969 "Los Angeles '69," Municipal Art Gallery, Barnsdall Park, Los Angeles.
- 1964 "Oregon Annual Painting Exhibition," Portland Museum of Art, Portland, Oregon.
- 1963 "Northwest Printmakers' Annual," Henry Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle

- 1972 Mt. San Antonio College, Walnut, CA, Purchase Award  
 1970 Western Washington College, Bellingham, Purchase Award  
 Long Beach Museum of Art, Purchase Award  
 1969 Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Young Talent Award

#### PROJECTS

- 1996 Levi's commercial (artwork featured), H.S.I., New York, Los Angeles  
 New York Art Pick, <http://www.art.icons.com>  
 1977 Billboard, located at Santa Monica & La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles  
 1973 Installation, Brand Library, Glendale, CA.

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 1995 - 1999 Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara  
 1994 - 1995 Lecturer, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
 1986 - 1995 Lecturer, University of California, Irvine  
 1987 - 1993 Lecturer, University of California, Los Angeles  
 1989 Lecturer, Otis College of Art and Design  
 Lecturer, Art Center College of Design  
 Lecturer, Claremont Graduate School  
 1985 - 1986 Lecturer, University of California, Santa Barbara  
 1972 - 1977 Assistant Professor, tenured, California State University, Northridge

#### AWARDS

- 1981 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Painting Fellowship  
 1996 Research Grant, University of California, Santa Barbara.  
 1994 The J. Paul Getty Trust Fellowship administered by the California Community Foundation.  
 1985 National Endowment for the Arts Grant  
 1972 Mitchell Gallery, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, Purchase Award

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