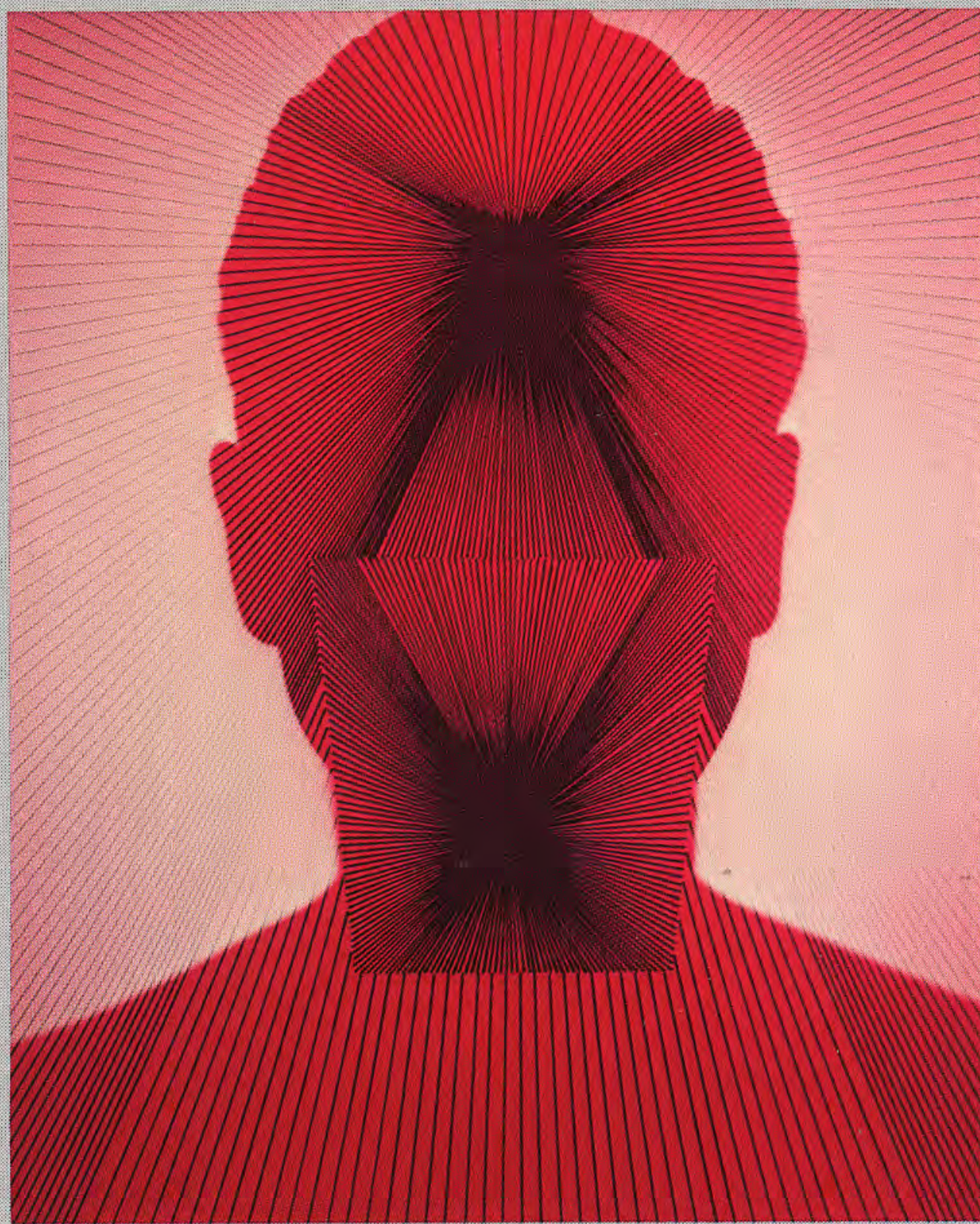


ELLEN CAREY

survey 1978-1986



Untitled, 1986

February 27 through April 19, 1987

FIFTH IN THE SERIES **NEW DIRECTIONS** SUPPORTED BY
POLAROID CORPORATION, THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
AND THE JEROME FOUNDATION, INC.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

ELLEN CAREY

survey 1978-1986



Checklist

Self-Portrait, 1978 ►

Gelatin silver print with ink

15½ x 15½ inches

Collection: Eileen & Michael Cohen
Great Neck, New York

Self-Portrait, 1978

Gelatin silver print with acrylic and ink

15½ x 15½ inches

Collection: Steven & Cecile Biltekoff
Buffalo, New York

Self-Portrait, 1978

Gelatin silver print with acrylic and ink

15½ x 15½ inches

Collection: Joseph M. Erdelac
Cleveland, Ohio

Figure in Energized Field with Semi-Circles, 1980

Gelatin silver print with acrylic and ink

20 x 16 inches

Collection: Fredericka Hunter &
Ian Glennie
Houston, Texas

Leaning Figure, 1980

Gelatin silver print with acrylic

20 x 16 inches

Collection: Fredericka Hunter &
Ian Glennie
Houston, Texas



Blocking The Light, 1981 ▲

Gelatin silver print with acrylic

20 x 16 inches

Collection: Gail F. Forberg
Cincinnati, Ohio

Three Circles, 1981

Gelatin silver print with acrylic, oil stick
and ink

39¼ x 29¼ inches

Collection: Susan & Kent Seelig
Syosset, New York

DNA, 1981

Gelatin silver print with acrylic, oil stick
and ink

39¼ x 29¼ inches

Collection: The Brooklyn Museum, Gift
of Nancy Graves. 85.240

Linked Ring, 1981

Gelatin silver print with acrylic and
oil stick

38 x 28 inches

Collection: The Artist

Melody, 1984

Gelatin silver print with acrylic and ink

24 x 20 inches

Collection: Chuck Kelton
New York City

Lightning, 1984

Polacolor ER with enamel

24 x 20 inches

Collection: Sandi Fellman
New York City

Dreams, 1984

Gelatin silver print with ink

24 x 20 inches

Collection: Mr. and Mrs. Donald Tranin
Kansas City, Missouri

Luna, 1984

Gelatin silver print with acrylic and ink

24 x 20 inches

Collection: Dr. Martin Aronoff
New York City

Tattoo Ocean, 1984

Polacolor ER with mixed media

24 x 20 inches

Collection: Fredericka Hunter &
Ian Glennie
Houston, Texas

Vertigo, 1984

Gelatin silver print with mixed media

24 x 20 inches

Collection: Fredericka Hunter &
Ian Glennie
Houston, Texas

Untitled, 1984

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Collection: The Artist

Untitled, 1985

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Collection: The Artist

Untitled, 1985

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Collection: Jeanne Siegel
New York City

Untitled, 1985

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Collection: The Artist

Untitled, 1986

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Collection: The Artist

Untitled, 1986

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Courtesy: Melinda B. Wolfe/Portico,
New York Inc.

Untitled, 1986

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Courtesy: Texas Gallery
Houston, Texas

Untitled, 1986

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Collection: The Artist

Untitled, 1986

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Collection: International Polaroid
Collection

Untitled, 1986

Polacolor ER

24 x 20 inches

Courtesy: Texas Gallery
Houston, Texas

Photography's ability to depict "reality" has been one of its most praised and valued qualities. Faith in the believability of the photograph led to the assumption that the appearance of an object somehow revealed its essence. This belief is particularly strong in our attitudes toward the portrait and its supposed ability to express the inner state and thoughts of the sitter. Yet, the appearance of discernible truth beyond the surface characteristics of the subject is an illusion. The photographic portrait is able to convey only clues to the sitter's thoughts. It is understandable, then, that an artist interested in expressing internal states of mind would look for ways to extend the connotative power of the image. Ellen Carey combines the realism of the photograph with the evocative power of paint and collage to create an image that not only records appearance but suggests essence.

Ellen Carey's work begins with the photographic self-portrait as a mirror of the physical self. The photograph transforms the artist into an object that can be contemplated from a physical and psychological distance. Then Carey intentionally disrupts the photographic illusion of reality by altering the image. As she states, "the photographic self was created to allow the unconscious self to materialize with the marks." The work suggests both instinctual and conscious states, how things feel and how they appear. The tension between her expressionistic markings and the realism of the photograph underscores the split between the internal and external selves.

In "Self-Portrait," 1978, bands of paint are layered across Carey's face and form the background of the image. Body decoration, a central theme throughout the work, functions here as a method of ceremonial beautification and cosmetic individuation. The gesture is caressing, the image isolated in contemplation, the art activity a continuous conversation with the self about the self.

When Carey moves from self-portraiture to working with the figure in 1980, she grows away from an absolute concern with the self to explore the relation of the individual to the world at large. In "Blocking The Light," 1981, Carey's markings on the photograph resonate with tactile and auditory allusions as a figure stands in an emotionally charged environment. Covered with swirling dashes of paint, the body appears to be made of pure energy and is at once still and in total motion. The ambiguity of the figure's form and pose, and the hostility of the environment, create a disquieting sense of the individual's relationship to the world. This is not the feminine form and pose of Carey's earlier self-portraits, but shows an androgyny that she will increasingly use to symbolize integration. While Carey's work of this period is dominated by references to unity, the struggle between conflicting elements is also apparent.

Carey returns to the self-portrait in 1983, but with an interest in using the image, as she says, "with references beyond the self while commenting on the complexity of 'selfness.'" In "Luna," 1984, the celestial figure is in harmony with the environment. The negative print gives a nocturnal sense of the inner radiating out. Around the face are six arms, each hand touching and framing the face. Two of these arms are Carey's, four are painted "spirit" arms. She is at once herself and part of something larger.



Luna, 1984

In 1984, Carey began to reevaluate the process of overlaying the photograph with paint, not only as a means of expression, but also as a signifier of a state of mind or feeling. Carey saw the potential of utilizing the purely photographic technique of multiple exposure to combine the image with pattern. "The realization that I was now painting with light triggered a more minimal aesthetic, symbolizing integration. Previous references to body decoration or the cosmos, for example, now allude to the machine, science and

mathematics, especially geometry." The dichotomy between the gestural markings of the artist and the smooth surface of the photograph is gone. We are left with an image that blends the human face and abstract patterning through the seamlessness of the photographic print. In an untitled work from 1986, a red "starburst" pattern infuses the head completely, as if the mind and technology had become one. Carey balances the metaphysical imaginings of the inner self with references to the structured rationality of geometry and science. Self-awareness coupled with the assurances of science provide sustenance for Carey. Her work supports a belief in unity within diversity: regardless of how chaotic and unrelated the elements of the world may appear, they are governed by guiding and unifying principles.

Ellen Carey's work since 1978 is consistently motivated by an attempt to visualize the struggle of the internal and external selves and has evolved to reflect her changing attitudes and strategies. This is art about imagination. At a time when many artists choose to appropriate their imagery, Ellen Carey continues to use her own feelings and perceptions as a source for her art. Through the alteration of the photograph Carey gives form to a reality that is not otherwise visible to either the camera or the eye. The work uses a variety of techniques and materials to maintain its energy and go beyond the limits of photographic realism. The strength of Carey's art lies in the complexity of its observations and the vitality of its methods and incessant investigation.

Willis Hartshorn
Director of Exhibitions

Born 1952, New York City

Education State University of New York at Buffalo, MFA, 1978
Kansas City Art Institute, BFA, 1975
Art Students League, 1970

Select One Person Exhibitions

1986: ZONE, Springfield, Massachusetts
Art City, New York City
Real Art Ways, Hartford, Connecticut
1985: Concord Gallery, New York City
1984: Texas Gallery, New York City
1983: Memorial Union Art Gallery, University of California, Davis
1982: University Art Museum, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque
1981: Concord Gallery, New York City
1978: Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York

Select Group Exhibitions

1986: "Self-Portrait/Photography 1840-1985," National Portrait Gallery, London
Baskerville-Watson, New York City
"Painted Pictures," Houston Foto Fest
"P," 303 Gallery, New York City
"Modern Art at Harvard," The Sackler Museum, Harvard University
"Recent Acquisitions," The Brooklyn Museum
"Weird Beauty," Palladium, New York City
1985: "Summer Selections," Castelli Gallery, New York City
"Persona Non Grata," Daniel Newburg Gallery, New York City
"KCAI Centennial," The Nelson Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri
1984: "New Images in Photography," The School of Visual Arts, New York City
"The Heroic Figure," The Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art, Brazil
1983: Pace/MacGill, New York City
"Contemporary Self-Portraiture in Photography," Hayden Art Gallery, Mas-

sachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge

1982: "Figures: Forms and Expressions," The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

1981: "Lichtbildnisse," Rheinisches Landesmuseum, Bonn, West Germany

"Photo," Metro Pictures, New York City
"The Markers," The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

1980: "Hallwalls/Five Years," The New Museum, New York City

1979: "Altered Photographs," P.S.1/Center for Urban Resources, Long Island City, New York

1977: "In Western New York," The Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York

1976: "Recent Portraiture," The Renaissance Society of The University of Chicago

1975: "Subject: Women," Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, Lawrence

Grants

1986: Massachusetts Council on the Arts, New Works Grant

New York Foundation for the Arts, Artist's Fellowship

1984-86: 20 x 24 Artist's Support Program, Polaroid Corporation

1984: National Endowment for the Arts

1980: Artist In Residence, Lightworks

1979: Creative Artists Public Service Grant

Collections

The Brooklyn Museum

Fogg Museum, Harvard University

Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

The Dannheisser Foundation, New York City

The Patrick Lannan Foundation, Palm Beach, Florida

Chase Manhattan Bank, New York City

The Ruttenberg Foundation, Chicago

International Center of Photography
Fifth Avenue at Ninety-Fourth Street
New York City