

# Be·hold

**Be·hold**, Yonkers, NY, presents *Self in Polaroid*, an exhibition of photographs by Ellen Carey and Judy Coleman opening June 4. These works explore the self-portrait in unusual ways, using Polaroid materials.

Ellen Carey exhibits for the first time, her series from 2001 titled, *Stopping Down*, with its referenced camera aperture as it relates to the spatiality and durative nature of light, to the punctual and directive passing of a life in time. This series, created with instant Polaroid technology, is a precursor of the global 'selfie' phenomenon.

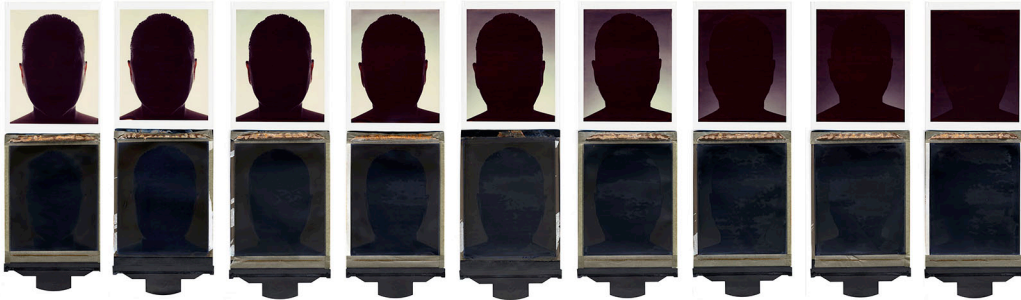


Ellen Carey, *RGB:YMC*, 2001

Carey used the large-format 8 X 10 camera and Polaroid color film to position her head, neck and shoulders, front and center, in increasingly diminishing exposures, beginning at the largest aperture of f#/9 to the smallest on the lens in f/#128, a range of nine stops. Each attendant self-portrait in Polaroid shows less and less of the artist; her features are subtle and barely seen, camouflaging her gender. These hyper-real, pristine prints are

backlit, forming an afterglow of light, a shimmering soft halo that emphasizes both the dramatic silhouette and her fluid outline. The incremental progression, in each of the nine apertures, as they "stop down" suggests time passing, until it is, as we are, out of time. The face lacks any clues or expressive self-revelation, often the goal of self-portraiture. The head, neck and shoulders are silhouetted, stand-ins for anyone and everyone, as she/we/they fade into darkness, conceptually highlighting for Carey the existential dilemma of living and dying as found in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.

RGBYMC presents a suite of six Polaroid images that take photographic color theory as its conceptual and contextual point-of-departure, it also signals another kind of self-portrait, Carey's love of color. Her experiments in color can be seen in her Polaroid *Pulls* and *Rollbacks* and camera-less photograms, such as *Dings & Shadows*.



Ellen Carey, *Stopping Down*, 2001

Carey's adds photographic and symbolic significance to the Polaroid process, finding the negative as a "picture sign" for mourning and loss, the empty rectangle a void, reminiscent of an earthy open burial pit, black cool and opaque. One thinks of photographic history vis-a-vis the self-portrait, a large and long tradition, however in Hippolyte Bayard's "Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man" (1840), he imagines himself for the camera, drowned and dead. Ellen Carey puts her *Stopping Down* negatives underneath (the ground) of the positives, the universal flip of life and death.

Carey is the only Polaroid artist to keep the negatives, often exhibiting them with their respective positives, highlighting Talbot's negative-to-positive duality, its origins located in the "shadow" image, often seen as a ghostly silhouette or outline in his early photograms. This rich history of the shadow image in art and photography find Polaroid's haunting remains in the negatives, chemical residues that have oxidized over time, their patinas a rich velvety black, the opposite of their stark monochromes in Carey's self-portraits-as-positives. *Stopping Down* offers contemplation on many of life's big questions, while offering reflective silence for answers, it links photography and time to Polaroid and aging, adding to the discourse on what it means to have and be a "self."

The show opens on Saturday, June 4 at 1:00 p.m.,  
with a reception at 4:00 p.m. with the artists present.

**The exhibition will continue through July 16.**

Viewings may be easily arranged by appointment. **Be-hold** can be contacted at  
914.423.5806 or at [behold@be-hold.com](mailto:behold@be-hold.com).

**Be-hold** is located at 66 Main Street, Apt. 1013, Yonkers NY 10701.  
It is 1 block from the Yonkers Metro North train station. Trains run from Grand Central  
Station every half hour, and the trip only takes half an hour.

**Ellen Carey, artist website:**  
[ellencareyphotography.com](http://ellencareyphotography.com)