

TURNER CARROLL

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Image: Karen Yank, *The Space Between Us*, steel, 42 x 61 in., 2016

Turner Carroll Gallery Presents

Karen Yank and Agnes Martin: *Student and Mentor*

An exhibition that reveals visual relationships between one of New Mexico's most well-known contemporary artists, Agnes Martin, and the student she mentored for the last 17 years of her life, New Mexico sculptor Karen Yank. This exhibition is in anticipation of Karen's upcoming book, *Travels with Agnes*

Opens September 21, 2018

Opening Reception September 21st from 5:00 – 7:00 pm

[SANTA FE, NM July 16, 2018] - This exhibition is extremely significant and personal. Concurrent with an upcoming book project on Agnes Martin's artistic and life philosophy, titled *Travels with Agnes*, Yank and Turner Carroll present an exhibition that reveals visual relationships between one of New Mexico's most well-known contemporary artists—Agnes Martin, and the student she mentored for the last 17 years of her life—New Mexico sculptor

Karen Yank.

Agnes and Karen met in 1987 at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, in Maine. They met at a critical time in both of their lives. Yank had just graduated from art school, beginning her artistic career. Martin was at the end of her teaching career, and chose Yank as the human receptacle for her philosophies about art and living. She regarded Karen Yank as her “true student” on a profound philosophical level. As in John Steinbeck’s *Travels with Charley*, Martin had taken off in her truck, driving all over the U.S., ultimately choosing New Mexico as her home. Yank had chosen New Mexico as home, as well. Martin and Yank continued their close friend and mentor relationship after their return from Skowhegan to New Mexico, for the remainder of Agnes Martin’s life. Yank compares her friendship with Martin to a long road trip like in Steinbeck’s book. Martin loved to travel both literally and metaphorically, and Yank and Martin traveled together for 17 remarkable years.

Martin unabashedly advised Yank on her sculptural works. She reminded Yank that, “we are unfolding flowers. We need to listen to life and let life tell us what is next, relinquishing control and opening ourselves to true inspiration.” In the early years of Yank’s career as an artist, Martin rejected Yank’s use of the circle as “too expansive” because Martin, herself, had not been drawn to it as a vehicle for her own inspiration. One of the greatest insights in both Martin and Yank’s artistic development was Martin’s response to Yank’s circular, banded discs, created from steel in the late 1990s. Martin amazed both Yank and herself by declaring these circular shapes “Yank’s vision and her mature voice” in her art. Martin said the circle was an obviously good choice for Yank and not for her, because Yank’s use of metal made the circular works more object oriented than illusion. The expansiveness of the circular shaped sculptures helps reverse their object-ness and enables the viewer to enter into the various planes and contemplative fields of the works.

Agnes Martin also shared much of her wisdom about how an artist could best conduct daily life. She pointed out to Yank some decisions she had made in her life that she later regretted. Some of the decisions Martin regretted are surprising, like her famous choice to cut herself off from society and live an isolated, solitary life. She encouraged Yank to fully engage, only pulling back from the outside world when she was deeply inspired to create her work, and then to partake again in the social life. She said, “You need to be present and interact with life. You should not isolate yourself as much as I did—I think it was a mistake.”

Toward the end of Agnes Martin’s life, she asked Yank to keep Martin’s puristic artistic philosophies alive by highlighting them through Yank’s own artwork. Martin encouraged Yank to be generous in sharing these teachings with younger artists and creative people in all walks of life.

Yank has let Martin’s teachings ruminate in her mind since Martin’s death over a decade ago. She has witnessed other books emerge about Martin, and she sees that Martin’s teachings have not yet emerged. She now feels like it’s not her choice, but her duty to her friend and mentor, to preserve Martin’s philosophies of art and life so other artists can benefit from them as she did.

Over the 17 years Martin and Yank spent together, Martin taught Yank to notice the small details of life, and to strive for contentment in every moment. Yank says, “In my life Agnes and I had a unique relationship. May she live on through her paintings, her teachings, and those of us who truly understand her genius.”

ABOUT THE ARTIST: KAREN YANK

The primary focus of my work is on non-verbal communication and emotional nuances that are unspoken. I strive to express a context that can be understood in a moment, but with layers that can be seen for those who pause. I try to reveal an organic nature with a sense of history, using a material that is usually cold and industrial. Every weld and grind mark is an intentional decision. I attempt to reflect a beauty that can only be found in the organic.

I like to incorporate circular images with intersecting lines into my sculptural works, because of their rich thematic relevance found throughout history. The circle and cross are one of the earliest symbols seen in human cultural development, dating back to the Stone Age. Circles reference all

that is natural; such as the sun, moon, earth, cycles of life, time, and repetition. I often use the circle to represent the notion of unity. The “X” reflects transit themes of crossing, intersecting, joining, and marking a point in time or space. Also, I use the two symbols combined as a show of affection for the world as a whole.

The Mandorla (almond) shape has a historically significant presence in my work. It has become a symbol that references myself as an individual. In my abstract figurative pieces, the Mandorla shape is placed on top of a “silhouette,” and thus abstractly representing a head. The “silhouette” is another significant shape that I often use in my freestanding sculptures, to symbolize the human figure. The space between spoken word and physical shape intrigues and inspires my creativity.

ABOUT TURNER CARROLL GALLERY

Established in 1991 by Tonya Turner Carroll and Michael Carroll, Turner Carroll Gallery + Art Advisors represents important international contemporary art. The vision of the gallery since its inception is to source significant artwork of our era from diverse areas of the world. The gallery is constantly considering the new international art movements/developments which presuppose historical significance, and the gallery owners travel extensively to curate exhibitions for the gallery from other parts of the world.

Thus far, the gallery has featured important contemporary exhibitions from Romania, Ireland, France, Russia and Mexico. Both owners of the gallery have degrees and backgrounds in the history of art. The art historical significance of the artists the gallery represents is of extreme importance to the gallery. The gallery actively pursues museum acquisitions, exhibitions, publishing and other opportunities on an international level for our artists. Both Michael Carroll and Tonya Turner Carroll are actively involved in arts advocacy and arts fundraising.

Some of the museum collections which feature works by our artists include Russian Academy of Art Foundation, The Vatican Museum (contemporary collection), Irish Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Museum of Modern Art, The British Museum and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

We proudly represent the following Contemporary Artists: Jenny Honnert Abell, John Barker, Jamie Brunson, Squeak Carnwath, Fausto Fernandez, Traian A. Filip, Josh Garber, Raphaele Goethals, Scott Greene, Orlando Leyba, David Linn, Hung Liu, Alan Magee, Georges Mazilu, Mavis McClure, Igor Melnikov, Greg Murr, Deborah Oropallo, Rex Ray, Holly Roberts, Walter Robinson, Suzanne Sbarge, Rusty Scruby, Shawn Smith, Drew Tal, Nina Tichava, Ann Weiner, Karen Yank, Brenda Zappitell, Eric Zener, Wanxin Zhang.

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