

LE POIDS DES MOTS/BETWEEN HANDS

cast paper and lithography, edition
of four

BY KAREN TRASK

In today's society, being an artist and a woman seems a little like being a tight-rope walker with bound hands. The equilibrium is precarious, and one must at all costs "free one's hands."

I expressed this quest for freedom in the form of an artist's book. The images were printed in lithography and then cast with paper pulp in the various molds of my own hands and torso. These were then assembled in book form. The text—a poem—slips from one hand to the other, half in English and half in French. Living and working in Quebec since 1980, I have learned

to juggle two languages. Rather than translating, each language instead influences and nourishes the other.

I owe much of my inspiration to the Grimm fairy-tale, "The Handless Maiden." This legend exists in countless versions in Europe and North America. "The Handless Maiden" speaks of silence, waiting, and the passiveness of women. It is the story of hands searching to reunite with the rhythm of the body and the passing of time; a possible prediction of a society where women consider taking up their own place once again.

Le poids des mots/between hands tells the story of my hands and of their unfolding. It presents the rediscovery of their creative force: one without ties.

Four copies of the work exist. One remains in my possession, the others are part of the National Libraries Collections in Ottawa and Montreal. ◇



Le poids des mots/between hands, page 4

Le poids des mots/Between hands

Sage comme une image
le geste est répété
Mot après mot
Une main retient l'autre

Line after line of folded hands
Seemingly tied
An empty gesture
On a tight tight-rope
A tip-toe balance
for hands attached

Funambule aux mains attachées
A défaire ce geste
Dénué de sens sans perdre
Sa balance
A droite à gauche, left and right
Hands swing to separate
A new meaning between the lines
Mais,
Sans habitude et sans attaches
Chaque mot pèse
Chaque mouvement
Pour trouver l'équilibre
A silent balance
En lieu sûr

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