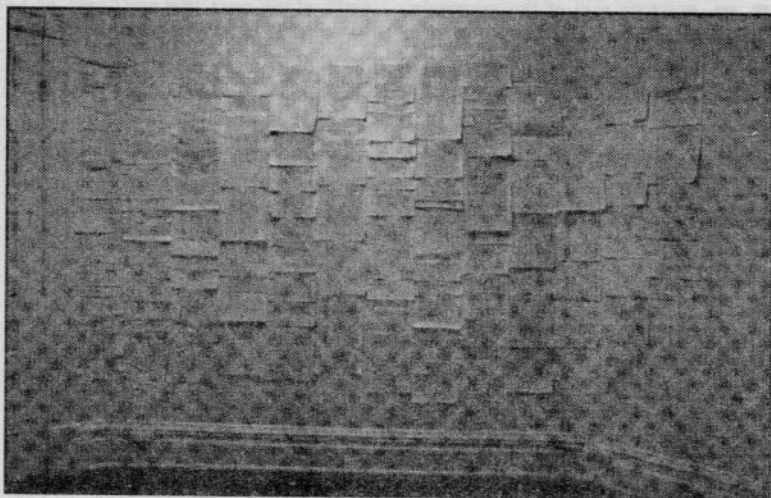


Gilded tongues

Karen Trask's words of wisdom and sorrow



Illusions of fullness and meaning

Lucinda Catchlove

Words – be they meaningful, empty, unspoken or sought after – both fill and illuminate Karen Trask's world. She is obsessed with text and uses it as a vehicle for her art and the heart of her intricate installation *L'une fait lire l'autre*. The work is a densely layered experience and the elements' intricate connections only become clear if you take the time to examine all the minutiae.

The story Trask tells is her own; she takes us on a circuitous journey that includes her move to Montreal as well as the loss of her mother. The installation – which combines journal entries, collected snippets of other people's writing and poetry, a projection, notes to her dead mother and a multitude of small sculptures – goes beyond the facts of these events and ponders the illusive nature of experience and the illusions we weave for ourselves as we write the stories of our past, present and future.

A verse on the wall muses about the artist/writer's relationship with the space she inhabits; "...the walls white and rounded stretch out like arms to hold me..." The words extend down onto the floor and hover above the wood casting shadows are echoing themselves. On the opposite wall is a projected image of a wall covered with sheets of paper that blow in the wind.

A pale-blue glass bowl covered with a round of glass, printed with a photographic image of waves, is attached to a central column in the room. To the side, a wooden square on the floor frames a round photographic image of a woman rubbing her eyes. Next to it, what appears to be a bowl full of water is really a stack of decreasing circles of thick green glass. With her visual tricks Trask alludes to illusions of fullness and meaning.

A cabinet is mounted on a wall above a simple wooden table. A veil hangs over an open panel that contains a model of an open mouth. Drawn onto the veil are translucent hands that make a vain attempt to cover the mouth. A smoothly sculpted nose and mouth are hidden behind one of the doors of the cabinet, and, when the other door is opened, it reveals a cacophony of multi-hued tongues: tongues of wood with etched red and green whorls; a scarlet tongue with a golden burr stuck to its tip; a tongue with "fuck you" inscribed on its tip. Hairy, spiky and deformed, they speak the unspeakable – both ugly truths and beautiful fabrications.

A box with *sucré/selé* carved into its white lid rests on the table below. The box contains a mosaic of vivid blue letters made of salt, and sugar cubes carved with the word *espoirs*. These salty/sweet morsels of hope crumble as words are lost on the tip of the tongue and meaning dissolves. Beside the box on the table are two books: one that contains a poem and drawings, and another that contains the clues needed to decipher the layers of Trask's words. The book, entitled *INTERSECTIONSconjunctions*, binds together all the disparate elements and chapters of Trask's investigations.

Sitting on the table are a pair of white gloves, ostensibly to be worn while reading the books. One realizes just how effectively Trask has drawn you into her world when one reads the phrase, "I wear your gloves Mama. If I turn them inside out will I find your hands there?" When the white gloves are removed, we realize that our ears and eyes are filled with the artist's words, and we find her mother's ghostly presence in all that Trask's hands have created. ♦