



**REBECCA KAMEN < meta**

April 21-June 4, 2005 <> McLean Project for the Arts





*above:*

NETWORK, 2003

*Steel wire, copper*

9 x 22 x 10 inches

*left:*

LISTENING I, 2004

*Acrylic on mylar, steel wire*

37 x 12 x 15 inches

*cover:*

BLESSING: FOR HALOLI, 2004

*Acrylic on mylar, steel wire*

16 x 16 x 12 inches

It's a long story that has brought Rebecca Kamen to this culmination of work, a journey of approximately thirty years.

Rebecca Kamen began first to consider materials for their resonant surfaces, and form for its associative influences, following graduate school. Early sculpture explored tactile, physical characteristics and how to draft them to the service of other effects. Beginning with rubber inner tube material, Kamen became interested in how the process manipulation of something industrial and unaesthetic could transform its soft black matte skin into an object of sensual undulating appeal. Wrapping the rubber to encase wood forms, Kamen employed the wall to support and situate these early works, to distance the functional place of the tire from the ground and site it where objects go to be offered eyelevel importance and consideration. These early sculptures were heavily involved with contour, posi-

tive and negative, and with the repetitive process of wrapping. They led the artist to incorporate tarpaper, through which she would interpret the tube origins, often framing in one dimension, in some continually developing manner, a void and/or a portal. The ambiguous portrait of a reverberating aperture shifted again through another medium to become ephemeral receiving devices in her current series entitled *Listening*. Kamen was also, at that earlier time beginning to investigate scientific and sacred writings, and collecting natural and cultural phenomena that discharges or conducts energy. Energy would eventually become Rebecca Kamen's underlying thesis. She would, over the years, explore and tease it out in its various manifestations in every series that she undertook.

I met Rebecca Kamen some fifteen years ago, about midway through her art career to this date. She was then beginning a collaborative project with Zhao





above:

CODED SEQUENCE 3, 2003

Steel wire

52 x 24 x 3 inches

left:

WAVE PILOTING, 2004

Acrylic on mylar; steel wire

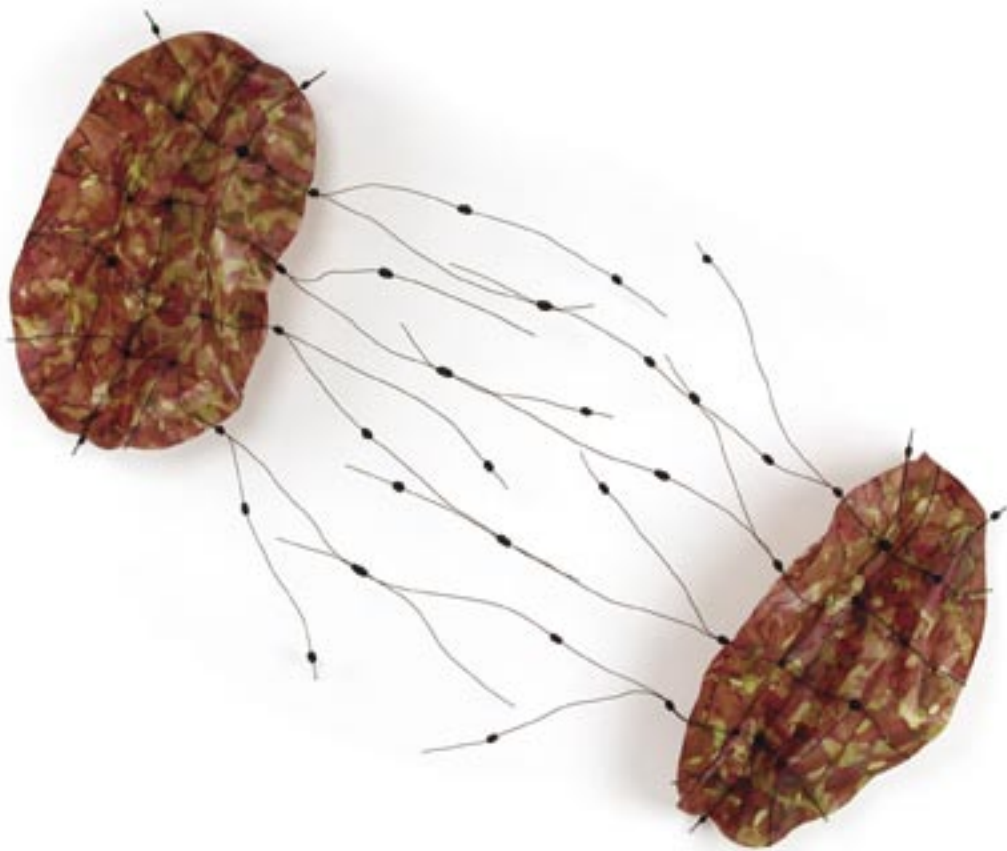
43 x 26 x 7 inches

Shu Tong, a Chinese sculptor in Sichuan Province. Their collaboration was at a very early point in the reestablishment of the West's relations with China. It was also a period when once esoteric computer terminology was moving into common parlance, and terms—such as integrated circuitry—were becoming part of our collective experience. Zhao and Kamen undertook an exploration into determinant mathematical systems that could be identified as significantly in ancient Chinese landscape principles as in the effective organization of the computer's circuit board. Out of this collaboration, her *Kami* series of paintings on aluminum became suspended gardens which indicated visually diagrammed energy. Soon after this period Kamen was including found stones in her media and considering orbits of emanation. The marriage of ideas later influenced the tableau sculptures that preceded and gave way to her *Meditation* pieces.

Kamen was also becoming fascinated with the psychological effect of artifice, developing surfaces that seemed to be one material, when in fact they were a contradictory medium, not unlike gar-

dens made of stone and sand that intend the metaphor of a green garden. During the period that she was making dynamic floating realms that housed a rock somewhere within, she was contacted by a Native American tribe, who had taken notice of Kamen's work. They possessed a rarified collection of highly valued meteorites and were looking for someone to steward it, following the death of a previous caretaker. Kamen accepted the honor and was given several of the meteorites for safekeeping. In holding them each in turn in her palm to consider their origins and their fall to earth she felt inclined to isolate and placed their message on white sheets of Mylar®. Tracing their aura on the fluid surface, following the lines that her pencil sensed from the space broadcast by each fragment, she made a series of automatic drawings that gave form to the force within each meteorite. Recent dynamic works as *Doppelganger*, *Halo* and *Reverberate* would commemorate this exercise, now created essentially through recall.

Kamen came to understand that she was, in essence, mapping objects, and began to research alternative methods





above:  
INTERACTION WITH OTHERS, 2003  
Acrylic on mylar  
23 x 18 inches

left:  
ACROSS THE WAY, 2004  
Acrylic on mylar; steel wire  
25 x 50 x 6 inches

of mapping and documenting time and occurrence. Three-dimensional navigational maps for sailing across a flat sea, constructed of natural matter by South Pacific islanders, and ancient astrological or global charts turning the world of dimension into something flat became fodder for ideas that would enter Rebecca Kamen's work. And she too would slide back and forth between describing highly structural concepts on a flattened ground, or drawing deep architectural space—as she does currently with her wire pieces. In *Whisk* and *Network*, one experiences a complex, animated drawing charted in mid-air as the forms nimbly venture from the white ground and return again.

A stay in Italy led her to experiment with gravitational impact of draped materials in current pieces like *Wave* and *Piloting*. While sabbatical visits to Egypt, Cambodia, Laos, Burma furthered her interest in ancient places of cultural and spiritual significance and ambient magnetism, they also introduced Kamen to the methods of identifying and mapping sites based on sacred geometry. Several evocative free-standing pieces came out of this period specifically including

*Meditation I* and *II*. A printmaking residency at Pyramid Atlantic inspired by a Ming Dynasty astronomy treatise was pivotal in discharging Kamen's use of space. This is most evident in the later works when she abandons hard materials for more mutable ones that permitted the transfer of light.

Colleagues too introduced diverse resources, recognizing affinities in Kamen's work with other scientific phenomena that she was not aware of. *Quipus* (cryptic string and knot systems by which the Incas recorded their history and laws), and *String Theory* (a hypothetical model that attempts to unify rival physics such as atomic, electromagnetism and gravity to enable them cooperate simultaneously in our universe) are examples. The three wire sculptures, *Coded Sequence 1, 2 & 3* are direct descendents of these coinciding sources.

The Mylar® that Kamen experimented with originally, to translate the potency of the meteorites, eventually became a tremendously important substance to her work. Over time she learned to circumvent its rigid properties, working it into a facile malleability. As







*above:*

IMMORTAL, 2003

Steel wire

25 x 6 x 4 inches

*left:*

WHISK, 2003

Copper, steel wire

40 x 5 x 19 inches

energy is to Kamen's thesis, Mylar® is to her work's distinctive poetry. The translucent material provides an evanescence, a release realm, a scrim to separate spatial realities.

In the last decade, and especially in the last year that this exhibition has been on the drawing board, Kamen has experienced several encounters with loss through death, including that of her father and two close friends. She extrapolated from those events of deep grief a point of view or conviction in her work to offer a sense of countenance and continuity by understanding energy as metaphor, and metaphor as an ever active compass to renewal. *Blessing* is one of those works, *Across the Way* another.

It has been an inspiring delight knowing Rebecca Kamen for much of her period of development. The tremendous body of work presented here is principally made in the previous two years but exemplifying many before. She is a prolific artist, inspired by the hidden stream

of life that carries with it the profound and the mundane in the same clear, cool water. She is driven to interpret our world and through her work to offer evidence that our existence is interconnected and purposeful. She uses scientific principals but principally as credible, rational witnesses to something that thrives most optimally in the intuition, extending through time, making it now part of our long journey.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Northern Virginia Community College Educational Foundation for its generous patronage of this catalog, Barbara Simmons for her exquisite and sensitive design of it, the McLean Project for the Arts for providing the beautiful Emerson Gallery for the show's installation, and time, for all that is given to each of us in it.

Deborah McLeod  
*Exhibition curator*

## REBECCA KAMEN

### *Selected One-Person Exhibitions*

- 2005 McLean Project for the Arts, McLean, VA  
2003 Gallery 51, Philadelphia, PA  
2001 District Fine Arts, Washington, DC  
Carla Massoni Gallery, Chestertown, MD  
2000 Coincidence Gallery, Richmond, VA  
1996 The Ralls Collection, Washington, DC  
1994 Cortland Jessup Gallery, Provincetown, MA  
*A Bridge Between Cultures*, McLean Project for the Arts, McLean, VA  
1993 Cortland Jessup Gallery, Provincetown, MA

### *Selected Group Exhibitions*

- 2003 *Beyond the Image*, Carla Massoni Gallery, Chestertown, MD  
*Strictly Painting*, Juried Exhibition, McLean Project for the Arts  
2000 Washington Sculptor's Group: Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, NJ  
*Looking Back, Moving Forward*, Ellipse Arts Center, Arlington, VA  
*Small Scale Religious Sculpture 2000*, National Juried Exhibition, Catholic University, Washington, DC, **catalog, juror's award**  
1999 *Sculpture Now '99*, Gallery 505, Washington, DC  
Ambassadors Residence, Arms Control and Disarmament, Geneva, Switzerland (1999-2002 Arts in Embassy Program)  
1998 Ambassadors Residence, US Embassy, Cairo, Egypt (1998-2001 Arts in Embassy Program)  
1997 *Pyramids and Cones*, View Gallery, New York City  
1996 *New Look: Contemporary Women Sculptors*, Washington Square, Washington, DC  
*Confronting Cancer Through Art*, Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, **catalog**

Collaborative Exhibition, Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News, VA

- 1995 *Traces: Connecting Drawing and Sculpture*, Maryland Art Place, Baltimore  
Joel Kessler Fine Art, Miami Beach, Florida  
*Art Maryland '95*, Howard County Center for the Arts, Ellicott City, Maryland  
1994 *Across Borders/Sin Fronteras*, Art Museum of the Americas, Washington, DC, **catalog**  
*Tributaries*, Ellipse Art Center, Arlington, VA  
1993 *Seeing the Elephant: The Subject of the Civil War in Contemporary Art*, Traveling Exhibition, Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Newport News, VA, **catalog**  
Bentley-Tomlinson Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ

### *Selected Public Collections*

- Capital One, Tysons Corner, VA  
KPMG Peat Martwick Corporation, Tysons Corner, VA  
Institute for Defense Analysis, Alexandria, VA  
Beth El Synagogue, Boca Raton, FL  
First National Bank of Jackson, Tennessee  
Binion and Butler, Washington, DC  
Gannett Corporation, Rosslyn, Virginia  
IBM, Baltimore, Maryland  
Tower Construction Company, Bethesda, Maryland  
IBM, Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina  
Levy Organization, Chicago, Illinois

### *Selected Awards and Honors*

- 2001 Printmaking Artist Residency, Pyramid Atlantic, Awarded by NEA  
2000 Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Professional Fellowship  
New Jersey Council for Printmaking Residency  
1994 Arlington Commission for the Arts Project Grant

### *Publications: Newspapers and Magazines*

#### *Who's Who in American Art*

- Ramirez, Jenny O: "Abstract Ideas," *Style Weekly*, Richmond, VA, March 14, 2000 p. 27  
Reynolds, David: "Quest: Rebecca Kamen," *Elan*, Great Falls, VA, November, 1999, p. 27-30  
Lewis, Nicole: "For Their Ties, the Perfect Coat," *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1999, p. C-5  
Banks, Anne: "Must See, Rebecca Kamen, The Ralls Collection," *KOAN*, Bethesda, MD, October, 1996  
Annas, Teresa: "Reviews," *The Virginia Pilot*, June 23, 1996, p. E8  
McCoy, Mary: "On Common Ground, Art Takes Root," *The Washington Post*, May 27, 1995, p. C2  
Heller, Jules and Nancy: *Encyclopedia of 20th Century North American Woman Artists*, Garland Press, NYC, 1994  
McCoy, Mary: "Sowing the Seeds of Two Cultures," *The Washington Post*, April 30, 1994, p. G2  
Falk, Carole: "Rebecca Kamen: Garden Series," *Washington Review*, Dec-Jan. 1993, p. 20  
Wilson, Janet: "Oriented Towards the East," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 19, 1992, p. D2  
Gibson, Eric: "Garden Blends Indoors, Outside," *The Washington Times*, Sept. 17, 1992, p. M-6  
Mahoney, J.W.: "Rebecca Kamen," *The New Art Examiner*, April, 1991  
Welzenbach, Michael: "Rebecca Kamen at Jones Troyer Fitzpatrick," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 15, 1990, p. D2  
Parmelee, Terry: "Rebecca Kamen, Sculpture," *Eye Wash*, Sept., 1990  
Fleming, Lee: "Gardens of Stone," *Museum and Arts Washington*, Sept./Oct. 1990, p. 50-51  
Mahoney, J.W.: "The Washington Object," *Sculpture*, May/June 1990, p.75-79  
Mahoney, J.W.: "Washington, DC: Rebecca Kamen at Winston," *Art in America*, Sept. 1989, p. 217-218

King, Laura: "Abstract Sculptures Dominate Area Art Exhibition: Rebecca Kamen," *The Journal Newspapers*, June 16, 1989, p.B4

Welzenbach, Michael: "Rebecca Kamen at FOTA," *The Washington Post*, June 3, 1989, p.C2

McCoy, Mary: "Rebecca Kamen, Painting and Sculpture," *The Washington Review*, February/March 1989, p. 18

Watson Jones, Virginia: *Contemporary American Woman Sculptors*, Oryx Press, Phoenix, AZ, 1986

### *Teaching Experience*

1978 — Present: Professor of Art, Northern Virginia Community College, Alexandria, VA

### *Visiting Artist Lectures*

US Embassy, Cairo, Egypt

Gezira Art Center, Cairo, Egypt

Shanghai Oil Painting and Sculpture Research Institute, Shanghai, China

Central Institute of Fine Arts, Beijing, China

East China Normal University, Shanghai, China

Shanghai Academy of Social Science, Shanghai, China

Sichuan Urban Sculpture Planning Office, Chengdu, China

China Artist Association, Shanghai, China

Alaska Center for the Visual Arts, Anchorage, Alaska

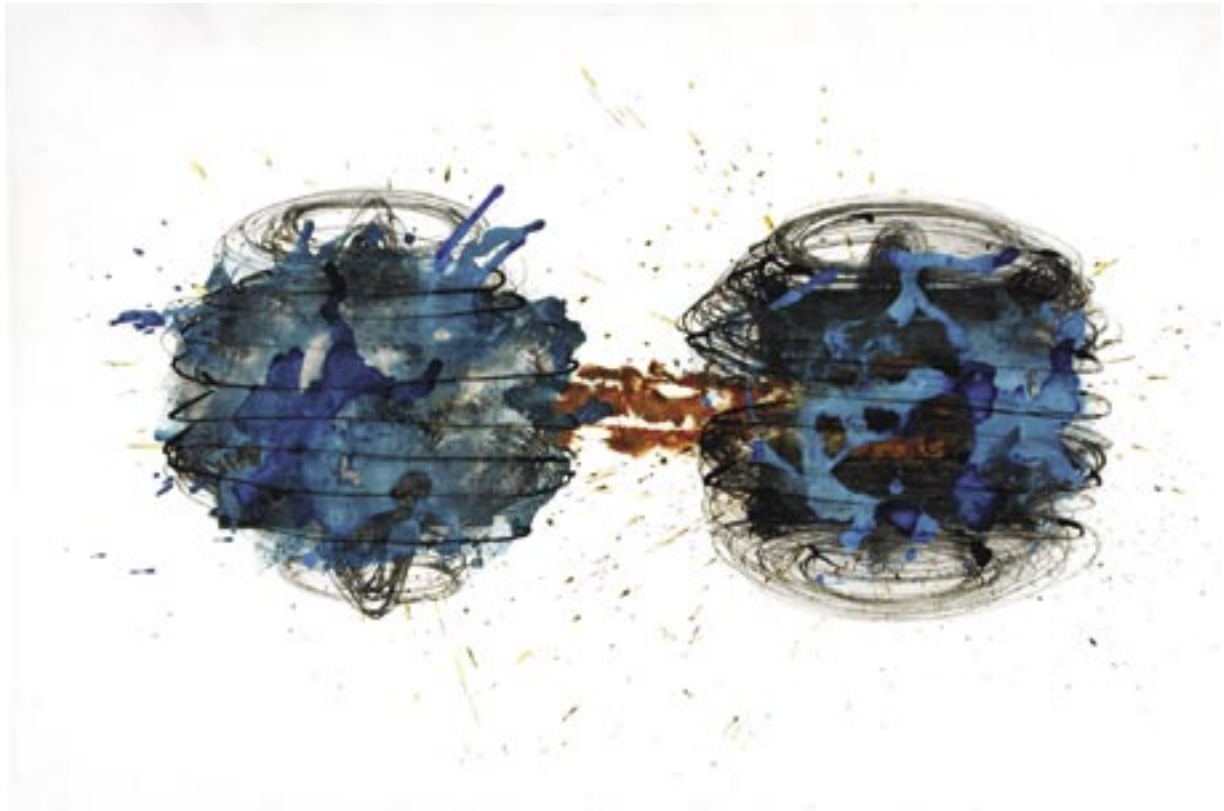
Hong Kong Sculptors Association, Ma Liu Shui, N.T., Hong Kong



**DRAWN OUT, 2003**

*Copper, steel wire*

*38 x 7 x 5 inches*



DERVISH, 2003  
*Acrylic on mylar*  
24 x 36 inches