

**A WALKED DRAWING, 'TWO FEET WALKING,' BY LINDA KARSHAN
IN COLLABORATION WITH FILMMAKER, ISHMAEL ANNOBIL
IN RESPONSE TO THE ARCHITECTURE OF MURRAY EDWARDS COLLEGE,
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

Followed by a panel talk on the theme of embodiment in art with Linda Karshan and Cerys Whiles (Arts Assistant, Cambridge University Hospitals), chaired by Gill Hedley (independent writer and curator).

Friday 8th April 2022, 5-7pm

*“Asked about his studio practice, Giacometti responded 'two feet walking'
That's what I see in the sketch,”* Linda Karshan

*“I couldn't shake the feeling of the tap shoes in space. It was with me all the time. It created an
energetic structure.”* Jill Silverman van Coenegrachts on Karshan's first walked drawing at
Saatchi Gallery for Draw London Art Fair 2019



Linda Karshan at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge 2021
©Nana Yaa Annobil

In the early evening of Friday 8th April in the Brutalist building of Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, Linda Karshan will perform *Two Feet Walking*, the latest iteration of her remarkable walked drawings. The performance is to be filmed by Ishmael Annobil. Starting in the Rosemary Murray Library, home to over 60,000 books and the scene of countless hours of reading, thinking and writing, Karshan will produce a different and complementary type of knowledge: one that uses the body and the senses to acquire a better understanding of the world.

Karshan's art evolves in a creative zone similar to the 'transitional space', described by British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott as being located between internal and external reality. She accesses it by following an internal rhythm 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8 (turn) to draw lines that are either walked in steps or made on paper. Sometimes she stops "to embellish a particular point with a few steps of dancelike footwork."¹

Lasting between fifteen and twenty minutes, the walked drawing at Murray Edwards College will be Karshan's longest to date. Together with the work of filmmaker and collaborator, Ishmael Annobil, it will also be the most technically complex – Karshan will wear a microphone, and cameras positioned throughout the library will capture the precision of the corners she makes as she turns. "The corners are crucial; they must be precise. At Skidmore College, I was admonished to 'cross those corners!' It's a Bauhaus thing. Whether I cross them or not, the decision is deliberate and clear." In her Dulwich studio the same impulse dictates 90° anticlockwise rotations of her paper after each drawn line.

Moving along corridors, up and down spiral staircases and into the circular Fountain Court, Karshan will adapt her rhythm and movements to accommodate the architecture's curves. Sometimes she will walk with arms outstretched for balance making a horizontal line that, like the bend of her waist and the strong vertical of her spine, is reflected in the lines of the grid motif that characterises her works on paper.² Like the design of the Murray Edwards College buildings, some of Karshan's works include circles. In others, sections of perpendicular lines are joined to form a series of 'marching triangles' or 'dashing corners'. Circles and triangles are closely associated in Karshan's work. Her 'turn and turn about' movement through 90° can be drawn as both a straight line and an arc.

After completing the Library section of the walk Karshan will pause briefly to exchange soft-soled brogues for tap shoes that will amplify her footfall, giving the work additional texture as her route continues along different floor surfaces. "As she moves through each space, Karshan's footsteps resound off the walls and floors in an interplay of echoes and rhythms to create auditory portraits," says Ishmael Annobil. "The artist herself becomes a living presence giving voice to the place itself." As with John Cage's 1952 composition *4' 33"* ambient noise from the audience or elsewhere will form part of the work. Only the fountain, outside in the Court, will be deliberately silenced to avoid drowning out Karshan's footsteps. Karshan hopes the audience will play an active role by listening as well as watching. "Sound is at the heart of the work," she says.

Breath is also at its heart – and not only Karshan's as she creates the work. In preparing for the work she has been particularly aware of the breathing and rhythms of her infant grandson and the sound of her graphite pencil moving across paper reminds her of the noise made by the breathing machine used by her father after he contracted polio in the 1951 pandemic. Covid-19 has brought a poignant new attention to the regularity of breathing and has further strengthened Karshan's ever-present resolve, 'I remain upright and alert because I am able. I am two feet walking because I must.'³

¹ Ishmael Annobil, film maker and collaborator.

² Tomas, Elizabeth, 'Linda Karshan: Inscribed Matter to Matter' in *Linda Karshan: Studio View, a book in three parts*, 2017, p.143.

³ [Linda Karshan – Covid-19 Conversation](#), directed by Ishmael Annobil Stonedog Productions, 2020.

At the conclusion of the walk the audience will move to the Dome Linda Karshan will participate in a Q&A chaired by Gill Hedley.

To mark this event Karshan will be donating a copy of the film of the 8th April *Two Feet Walking* to the New Hall Art Collection. In addition, and in homage to the golden pyramids in Anni Albers' silkscreen print *TRIII* (1970) in the Collection, she will be donating a new drawing, *Dashing Corners* (Autumn, 2021) "Their clear structure derives from the grid; they fall firmly within a Bauhaus aesthetic. Yet their sense of play is of today, and of my own making."

Dashing Corners will be accompanied by a text,

*Thinking of Murray Edwards and marching triangles.
And 'holy theatre' where, 'step by step', the performer extends his knowledge of himself.
'At the end of the day'-16 Jan.-. 'At the end of a long day.'
Happy Days, by Beckett*

This is one of Karshan's meditative jottings, 'brief writings – trials, perhaps – [that] track my movements in the studio and my thinking too, as I seek to understand what it could mean.'⁴

For further press information, please contact Sophie Money, smoney@moneyplusart.com or +44 (0)771 800 2453

The New Hall Art Collection

Karshan's route takes her past many artworks in the College's New Hall Art Collection, the largest collection of art by women in Europe. It includes 550 works by leading artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Paula Rego, Lubaina Humid, Faith Ringgold, Tracey Emin and Cindy Sherman. Founded in the early 1990s, the Collection challenges the underrepresentation of women artists in museums and galleries. The Collection is displayed throughout Murray Edwards College, an iconic Brutalist building designed by Chamberlin, Powell and Bon as a manifesto for women's education.



Linda Karshan at Murray Edwards College, 2021 ©Nana Yaa Annobil

⁴ Karshan, Linda. Forward. In *Linda Karshan: Studio View, a book in three parts*, 2017 p.7.

Notes to Editor

Filmmaker and poet, **Ishmael Annobil** is the collaborator with Linda Karshan on all her walked drawings. Of “Two Feet Walking” he says, “After reviewing our first recce in October, I realised we were missing a crucial element: Books. Linda's practice dwells within classical and contemporary bibliography. The obvious solution was to co-opt the Rosemary Edwards Library. It gave me the opportunity to develop a dichotomous scheme for the walk, reflecting the anthropological logic of "pantomime after high formality". Interestingly, this new scheme also presented two different acoustic environments, one soft and the other hard and resonant, which I decided to link with a poetic gesture: a chair for Linda to sit and change into her waiting tap shoes. Cinematography, too, will reflect the spatial contrast by juxtaposing angular shots with flowing shots - formal and informal. For extra fluidity, I decided to wedge open all doors, as opposed to an original idea of Linda opening doors herself to suggest questing.”

Linda Karshan, American, b. 1947 was educated at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY (1965-67); the Sorbonne, Paris (1967-68); and the Slade School of Fine Art, University College London (1969). In 1983, she earned a Masters in Humanistic Psychology from Antioch Centre for British Studies, London. Her MA thesis, entitled *Play, Creativity and the Birth of the Self*, focused on D.W. Winnicott's theories of transitional space and creativity, which are central to Karshan's artistic practice.

Solo museum exhibitions include: Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern, Germany (2013); Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK (2003); Sir John Soane's Museum, London, UK (2002); Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, Valencia, Spain (2002).

Group exhibitions include: The Courtauld, London, UK (2014, 2012), Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, UK (2013, 2010), Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, Germany (2013), British Museum, London, UK (2010), Graphische Sammlung, Munich, Germany (2009), and Folkwang Museum, Essen, Germany (2008).

She regularly exhibits with several galleries in Europe, and with ART 3 in Brooklyn, NY.

Linda Karshan's drawings, prints and artist's books are held in public and private collections, including, in the UK: The British Library, The British Museum, The Courtauld Institute of Art, Sir John Soane's Museum, Tate Modern, The Arts Council Collection, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA), Middlesbrough, England; in the US: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY. A suite of thirteen prints have been recently acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.