

# Karen Cordero Reiman

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Dear Matriarchive,

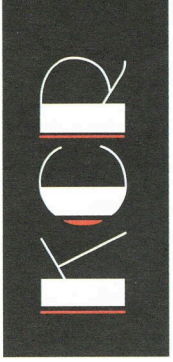
These lines of Keith's letter to Josefina resonate with me particularly:

*"I am already finding that I can't fit today's news [...] onto the theoretical framework that I thought I had developed..... What the fuck is happening?"*

Much of what I have lived, thought, and done as a feminist, art historian, and writer since the 1980s seems to respond precisely to the "disjointed" perspective reflected in these lines, but in a positive way. The disjunction between realities, experience, and the framework my education and life provided for me has been the point of departure and motivation for rethinking my work and searching for other theoretical models and creative and investigative processes, that tend to break down existing models and explore new ones. Most often this has been in collaboration, breaking down as well the myth of the isolated creator.

Some of the first experiences I associate with this feeling are from the time of my first visit as an exchange student to Spain in the late 1970s. The fury at the objectification of my body by men who felt the right to comment on my body on the street—with their apparent "piropos" (purported compliments)—provoked a fury that led me to elaborate on its sources in feminist consciousness raising and reading groups. At the same time, the critical vision of the U.S. shared by Puerto Rican and Cuban colleagues in the group of exchange students, gave me a new perspective on the country where I had grown up, its power dynamics, the blind spots in the education I had received, and a new understanding of its unspoken ideological underpinnings.

One of the things I find fascinating about Josefina's archive is the constant presence of collaborative work as the source for transdisciplinary and revolutionary creation. In our present context where idealism is difficult to sustain and tacit cynicism often reigns, these words sound



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strange, and perhaps provoke nostalgia. But I also see that the myth of individualism is breaking down all around us, like a statue of a “hero” that cracks and crumbles to reveal its empty center.

Currently, having removed myself from the restrictions of academia—although I still remain to some degree in dialogue with it—I am exploring ever more intensely the possibilities of working in groups, with collective authorship, to “depatriarchalize” archives and the readings of them. For me this means reading between the lines, moving beyond the conventional use of archives as “evidence” to an acceptance of their partial and subjective quality. Weaving affective and speculative ties between fragments and inserting my own subjectivity as “reader” as well. Pushing beyond my own limits with the help of others and sharing with them my knowledge, experience, and new collective discoveries.

The results of these processes open up new personal and creative possibilities, and allow me to observe the limits that have structured my previous work more clearly. Not that this invalidates the previous work: rather, it allows me to see how the context in which it was conceived participates in its construction—something which is perhaps inevitable—and also how it contributes to the reproduction of the system within which it was spawned. A reflexive process that allows me to conceive and produce other, more open-ended, links between art and life.

Thank you for creating this platform for dialogue and imagination.

Con cariño,

Karen