



# The Drawers - Headbones Gallery

*Contemporary Drawings and Works on Paper*

Margie Kelk

Situation, Positioning, Location

May 25 - June 24, 2006



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Artist Catalog, 'Margie Kelk - Headbones Gallery, The Drawers '  
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Essays for Margie kelk Systems - Auditory, Circulatory and Digestive  
Written by Julie Oakes

Rich Fog Micro Publishing, printed in Toronto, 2006  
Layout and Design, Richard Fogarty

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Director: Richard Fogarty  
[www.headbonesgallery.com](http://www.headbonesgallery.com)

# Margie Kelk

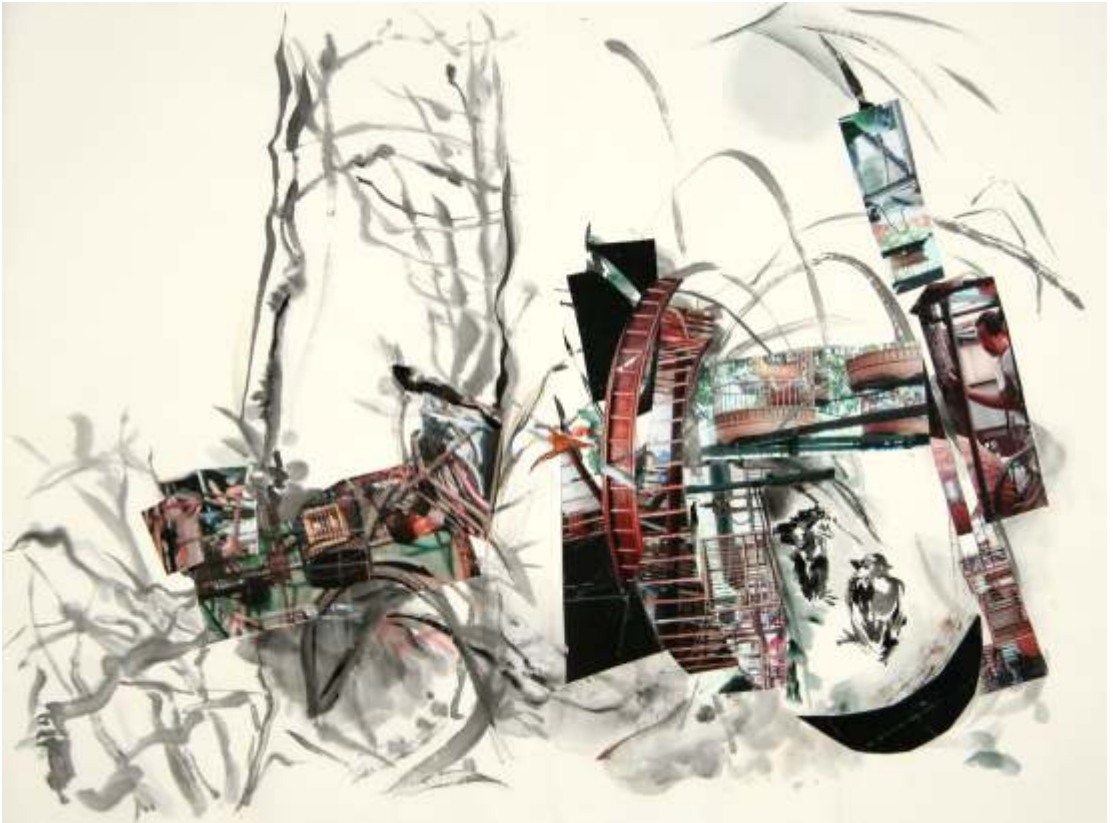
## Situation, Positioning, Location

Turning subtle Chinese brush work away from lovely depictions of flora and fauna to brave the unflinching realization of environmental pollution, Kelk takes a position and the situation is made clear - the world, lovely as it is, is ailing from its exposure to urbanization.

Three accordion books titled *Systems: Digestive, Circulatory, Auditory*, address the permutations of her relationship to China. Rich Fog Micro Publishing, *Headbones, The Drawers*' in-house printing and publishing company, worked in collaboration with Kelk in order to reformat the original books into a series that will eventually be a four part project with the involuntary systems of the body used as a metaphor to examine the health of the body of the planet. *Headbones, The Drawers* is presenting the first three - *Auditory, Circulatory* and *Digestive*.

A 'tidy-up' resulted when the books were regularized in size and framed by their embossed covers bearing the Chinese symbol of Margie Kelk's name. The inconsistent surfaces of collaged pages became consistent within the mechanical printing process. They 'stabilized' (to continue with the language of health) as they were now strong enough to receive a second treatment. This was an actual physical necessity for the first books, visual journals made in situ and hence beginning to fray from handling, were in dire need of revitalization if they were to survive. Hence, Kelk made a decision - to print in a limited edition and transcend the mortal nature of the materials by reproducing them and giving them a second or third chance to live.

Each printed book has been doctored. The reproduced visuals have been repainted by Kelk so that each book is, in turn, a new original. The ailment (the encroaching toxicity) was reexamined and an application made to revitalize the 'system'. In this second visit to the material, made from an objectified position, she has formulated a diagnosis. With extreme concern for the balance of the whole and the impact that her superimposition will have on her initial visual analysis, she has drawn and painted a new layer over the former impressions. Realizing that each new life must be utterly individual she has created, not twins, but siblings for the first fragile off-springs.



Systems - Auditory  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06

## Auditory

Deconstruction is a method used to break ideas down to their components, to take apart and examine concepts through a backwards journey in order to understand how to move forward. Deconstruction demands that the chatter of existence is stopped for long enough to be able to listen to the sounds of overall harmony. It is similar to Eastern philosophies where extremes are leveled by the gradual process of going inward. It is paralleled in a physical format in the fold out book from the orient and it is within this format that Margie Kelk has chosen to deconstruct her perception of industrialization - as she experienced it - in China.

A new sound has taken over. Birds on boughs are being displaced by intense urbanization. Margie Kelk balks at their squawks and notes the cacophonous chorus. She approaches with the soft breath of Chinese brush painting and introduces us to the eventual clatter through a quieter corridor.

The disturbance of the oriental balance and harmony is first hinted at with an initial bird's eye perception of the cage. We are guided from free bird to caged. The cage is a persistent metaphor. The cage grows large and takes over the landscape but when the cloud of clutter is parted the landscape itself is obliterated by urbanization where real estate and financial pressures create human cages. The shoulders of civilization jostle us out of the picture. People are too close and the sound of birds has been overtaken by the city.

Somewhere in the center, the wild whinny of a horse calls to a distant point of no return, seeking a sense of direction. But the present is more immediate and the quotidian round presses upon the picture plane where parrot mimics man in cheek by jowl proximity.

Julie Oakes



Systems - Auditory  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06



Systems - Auditory  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06





Systems - Auditory  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06

## Circulatory

It is within the urge to create and make order of deconstruction that the author reveals her identity. Margie Kelk reinforces the integrity of her statement by touching on her native land. There is no inclination to colonize and change the Chinese condition for it is similarly identified within the Canadian landscape when the artist comes home to process the images that had been quickened by a visceral pulse in a foreign culture. She develops the images in Canada where the leveling ground of Fine Art creates a commonality between the diverse cultures. This is the result of the deconstruction; not an analytical sum-up, a pat answer, but the humble grounding of earthly concerns. The landscape is clearer here. As the artist penetrates the soil with her fingers and plants new life or paints and pastes, she is making attempts to deal with the plight of the planet. Margie Kelk is an active environmentalist.

Unlike the original Chinese format, this art book is read from the left to the right for it is important that the occidental identifies with this sympathetic orientalism. This is a story of destruction and creation, from the end back to the beginning - a reconstructive understanding where the enduring beauty of Chinese brush painting helps to soften the blow of realization.

Julie Oakes



Systems - Circulatory  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06



Systems - Circulatory  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06



Systems - Circulatory  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06

## Digestive

With deconstructive resolve, Margie Kelk has ignored the foreigner's impetus to romanticize the exotic. As an outsider, her objectivity ruled over the seduction of beauty though she has couched her knowledge in the traditional methods of Chinese brush painting. She has an able hand with a chameleon's natural transmutation and her occidental identity is not immediately apparent. She introduces herself within an oriental genre and we could believe that we are about to participate in a rich harvest and taste the grains of knowledge from another culture. However, Margie Kelk is not out to nourish but to awaken. She cuts to the swath and then moves in, a gleaner, to gather up the discarded. She uses the gleaned to continue to live, the sustenance of knowing. She digests the remnants of the harvest and passes it through her system where it is filtered. But she also acknowledges the waste.

There is palpable pain in the process. The jarring juxtaposition of beauty translated through the Chinese brush work with the photographs, slashed rather than trimmed, is disturbing. It causes discomfort like a whiff of something unpleasant. The toxicity that we experience as we attempt to swallow, the reason that the material sits uneasily in our stomach and causes a nauseated expulsion of gas is the root cause of modernity and its discontent - urbanization without adequate consideration for the host, the earth, and all of its creatures.

The Chinese, burning coal, have blackened lungs and the birds are peeping with a croak in their throat. Margie Kelk's work recognizes the triad of monkeys (see no, hear no, speak no) that, bleary eyed, deaf and dumb, have come to appear dazed and confused.

Julie Oakes



Systems - Digestive  
Detail from accordion fold artist book  
Mixed media with hand painting, edition 4  
2005/06



Systems - Digestive  
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## Margie Kelk

### Solo Shows:

- 2006 Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts (Sept.)  
Toronto Public Library (Feb.)  
Gallery 1313, Toronto (Feb.)  
University of Guelph/Humber (Jan.)
- 2005 Bluffs Gallery, Scarborough (Sept.)  
Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts, Toronto (March)
- 2004 Praxis Gallery, Toronto (November)  
Neilson Park Creative Centre, Etobicoke (Sept.)  
*Layers & Secrets*, Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts (April)
- 2003 Gallery 1313, Toronto (December)
- 2002 Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts, Toronto
- 1992 Brock University
- 1991 Koffler Gallery, Toronto  
Cornwall Regional Art Gallery  
Mississauga Central Public Library Gallery
- 1990 Visual Arts Centre of Newcastle  
Hamilton Artists' Inc.  
Artcite, Windsor
- 1984 Solo Exhibition, North York Y

### **Group Exhibitions:**

- 2006 Headbones Gallery, Toronto, May - June
- 2005 Sketchy Business, A Space Gallery
- 2005 Havre de Grace International Juried Art Exhibition, Maryland, USA, curated by Stephen Bennett Phillips, Curator the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.
- 2005 Ninth Annual Uxbridge Juried Art Exhibition (prize awarded). Curated by Nicholas Metivier & David Aurandt, Director, Robert. McLaughlin Gallery
- 2005 Trap/door Artist-Run Centre, Lethbridge, Alberta
- 2004 The Abstract Show, Gallery 1313, Curated Show
- 2004 Praxis Gallery, Toronto, Juried Show
- 2003 Studio 1181, Toronto
- 2003 Praxis Gallery, Toronto, Juried Show
  - “Prospect”, Gallery 1313, Toronto, April 2 - 13
  - “Propelleristi”, Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts, Jan 22 - 31
- 2002 Studio 1181, Toronto
- 2001 Studio 1181, Toronto
- 2000 Created 3 Moose for City of Toronto (e.g. TTC Moose)
- 1990 Colour and Form Society, Juried Annual Exhibition
  - Arts Etobicoke, Tenth Annual Juried Show (prize awarded)
  - Art Gallery of Peel, Juried Show 1989
  - Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, Juried Show
  - "Grass is Greener" Art Auction, King City
  - “Springboard” Juried Show, Prints, Open Studio
  - Gallery St. Luke, Toronto, Group Show
- 1986 Colour and Form Society of Toronto, Juried Show

- 85-86 Toronto Watercolour Society, Juried Shows
- 82-83 Heintzman House, Juried Shows, Richmond Hill
- 1981 Newmarket Art Show

### **Education:**

- 83-87 Graduate Diploma, Toronto School of Art
- 80-82 Workshops with: Barbara Nechis, John Bennett, Pat Fairhead
- 1976 Ph.D. in Romance Languages, (Italian and French Literature),  
The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore
- 65-69 Honours B.A., Wellesley College, Massachusetts
- 68-69 Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France - studied under  
Roland Barthes, Jean-Louis Ferrier (art editor of L'Express),  
Jacques Derrida, Max Ernst, Sonia Delauney, Jean Dubuffet,  
Victor Vasarely

### **Career-Related Experience**

- 04-06 President, Propeller Centre for the Visual Arts
- 03-04 Chair, Selection Committee, Propeller Centre
- 93-95 Taught art classes to adults & children, 6 per week
- 92-93 Director, Print and Drawing Council of Canada
- 1990 Gave Workshops in Encaustic, Visual Arts Centre of Newcastle
- 84-85 Taught Painting at North York YMCA  
Taught Drawing and Painting, Owen School
- 73-76 Taught Italian and French Literature at Tufts University, Boston

RICH FOG



Micro Publishing  
Toronto Canada