

Summantic Equations: 84 = Cara-  
vaggio..., 1979, collage, ink and  
pencil on paper, 17 3/4" x 24 3/4".

Summantic Equations: 86 = Giotto =  
Vermeer..., 1979, collage, ink and  
pencil on paper, 17 3/4" x 24 3/4".

All works in this exhibition have  
been loaned by the artist unless  
otherwise noted.

Selected one-woman exhibitions:  
O.K. Harris Works of Art, NYC '75,  
(first); Franklin Furnace Archive,  
NYC '76, '78; Bertha Urdang Gal-  
lery, NYC '76, '79; Nassau County  
Museum of Fine Arts, Roslyn, NY  
'77; Dany Keller Galerie, Munich  
'78; 112 Greene St. Workshop, NYC  
'78; The Emily H. Davis Art Gal-  
lery, University of Akron '78;  
Forum Stadtpark, Graz, Austria  
'78; Marianne Deson Gallery, Chi-  
cago '79.

Selected group exhibitions:  
Sarah Lawrence College, Bronx-  
ville, NY Word, Image, Number '75;  
Centre for experimental art and  
communication, Kensington Arts  
Association, Toronto Language and  
Structure in North America '75;  
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chi-  
cago Words at Liberty '77; Draw-  
ings and Projects of the 70's,  
organized by Institute for Art and  
Urban Resources, travelled to Eu-  
rope and Middle East '77-'79; Art-  
words and Bookworks, Los Angeles,  
CA (travelled to Artist's Space,  
NYC, etc.) '78; The Ohio State  
University Gallery of Fine Art,  
Columbus Six Artists '78; Baxter  
Art Gallery, California Institute  
of Technology, Pasadena The Poetry  
of Systems '78; HERA, Women's Co-  
operative Gallery, Wakefield, RI  
Serial Drawing '78; New York De-  
partment of Transportation 10 Win-  
dows on 8th Ave. between 53rd and  
54th Streets '79.

Selected bibliography by Shaw:  
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Karen. "Manfred," The New York  
Times, Sunday Magazine (April 18,  
'76), p. 87.  
"Numerical Order," Central Hall  
Artists Newsletter/10 '76, p. 1.  
"Send Letters, Postcards, Draw-  
ings and Objects," Art Journal,  
vol. 36, no. 3 (Spring '77),  
p. 240.  
Market Research, The Emily H.  
Davis Gallery, University of Akron  
'78.  
Statement in Serial Drawings,  
HERA, Women's Cooperative Gallery  
(Wakefield, RI) '78, unpaginated.  
An Add, four page newsprint,  
New Urban Landscape Series, Insti-  
tute for Art and Urban Resources  
(New York) '79.

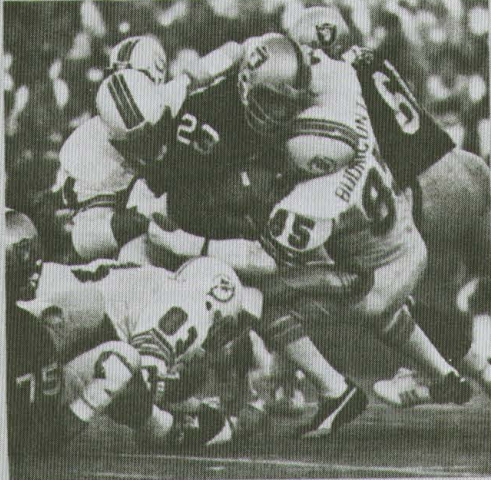
Selected bibliography about Shaw:  
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Frank, Peter. Additional Mean-  
ings, Bertha Urdang Gallery (New  
York) '76.  
Sondheim, Alan. "Karen Shaw,"  
Arts Magazine, vol. 51, no. 2  
(October '76), p. 10.  
Pincus-Witten, Robert. "En-  
tries," Arts Magazine, vol. 51,  
no. 2 (October '76), p. 20.  
Shirley, David. "A Puzzlelike  
Show for the Viewer to Solve,"  
The New York Times (Sunday, March  
6, '77), p. 22.  
Prokopoff, Stephen. Words at  
Liberty, Museum of Contemporary  
Art (Chicago) '77.  
Larsen, Dr. Susan C. The Poetry  
of Systems, California Institute of  
Technology (Pasadena) '78.  
Rubin, David S. "Poetry of  
Systems," Artweek, vol. 9, no. 11  
(March 18, '78), p. 1+.  
Rickie, Carrie. "Reviews: New  
York," Artforum, vol. 17, no. 8  
(February '79), p. 60.  
Malen, Lenore. "Karen Shaw:  
The Reckoner," Arts Magazine, vol.  
53, no. 8 (April '79), p. 126+.  
Cardozo, Judith Lopes. "Karen  
Shaw," Artforum, vol. 18, no. 1  
(September '79), p. 77+.  
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1979

Wadsworth Atheneum  
November 1979 through early  
January 1980

Karen Shaw  
MATRIX 53

Additional Meanings 327: Madness, wisdom..., 1976

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26



75	23	25	35	6	327
+ MADNESS	WISDOM	OH	CIRCULAR	GIFTS!	= 327
+ WOULD	PRAYER	END	PECULIAR	WARS?	= 327
+ DEPRAVED	YAHOO'S	MADE	DECEITFUL	CHARGES	= 327
+ FORSAKE	COWARDS	ODD	MOROSE	GUISE	= 327
+ EVERY	MORNIN'	IN	CREATION	VERGED	= 327

*(Handwritten notes and scribbles are visible in the bottom right corner of the page, including the word 'Lucky' and other illegible text.)*

MATRIX is supported in part  
by a grant from the National  
Endowment for the Arts, a  
Federal Agency.



Seven years ago Karen Shaw came up with a deceptively simple idea: to explore the equivalencies between words and numbers based on a system in which A=1, B=2, C=3...Z=26. In Shaw's Summantic Alphabet the word "CAR", for instance, would translate into the number 22 (that is, 3+1+18). This system is loosely inspired by the Hebraic Gematria, the cabalistic tradition of searching for essential meanings through numerical interpretation of ancient texts.

Shaw has long been interested in codes. She remembers being impressed as a young reader with the episode in Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace in which Pierre takes the number 666 (the number of the beast from the Apocalypse, ch. xiii, verse 18) and, using the Gematria, maneuvers both the name "L'Empereur Napoleon" and his own to equal this same sum.

Shaw's Summantic Alphabet, however, came directly out of her experiences as a computer coder for NBC. Participating in an "unbiased" study of the effects of television violence on children, Shaw was "amused and bemused, awed and enraged" by the process in which every manner of human response could be manipulated and coded. Says Shaw, "Soon I was able to code the entire universe and converse with colleagues in two digit numbers. We could register attitudes and information with the utmost economy while completely eliminating feeling and personality."

Initially Shaw used her Summantic Alphabet to reduce several literary masterpieces to a single final total (e.g. the Gospel According to St. Matthew = 1,116,071). These time-consuming Summations as she called them were elaborate parodies on the apparent zeal with which contemporary society leaves personal identities impoverished through its growing reliance on numbers. Shaw's Summations also took a good-natured swipe at reductivist art activity. Shaw's work blossomed when, in 1975, she reversed her working process. The new approach, in which found num-

bers were transcribed into words of the equivalent sum, was called Summantics (pun intended, to be sure). Using Summantics as a guide, the number 100 might equal "INTELLECT" or "USELESS" or "CULTURE" or "KAREN SHAW"! Summantics opened up a world of possibilities for Shaw.

This MATRIX exhibition offers a sampling of the range of Shaw's Summantic explorations. Also on display is Shaw's essential and unfinished reference work, Summantic Vocabulary Collection, 1-278, a ledger in which Shaw has so far collected approximately 20,000 words. While Shaw's Summations literally and figuratively "belittled" epic achievements from the past, her Summantic renderings are sunny and expansive affirmations of human creativity in the face of adverse trends. Summantics has enabled Shaw to translate the numerical flotsam which polutes our daily lives (e.g. grocery receipts, bakery checks, theatre tickets) into multiple poetic meanings.

In Shaw's more recent Summantic Equations she humorously weds art history with simple set theory. Context is important. These very beautiful collages draw amusing, revealing and unlikely correspondences between words and numbers, images and meaning.

What happens when an artist chooses to limit herself to the use of a specific system? The human mind is flexible and inventive. Artists with intentions as diverse as Georges Seurat and Sol LeWitt, John Cage and Hans Haacke have found systems to be an interesting and useful tool. As we can see, Shaw's simple code has enabled her to enhance our daily life with "additional meanings."

The intellectual clarity and simplicity of Shaw's approach is happily reflected in the art she makes. Stylistically her work is most often refined and chaste. At the same time it grows increasingly rich in aesthetic, literary and socio-political implications. Perhaps the most original aspect of her work is the ease and grace

with which she references back to ancient tradition in order to penetrate the turmoil of our modern age.

Karen Shaw was born in New York City in 1941 and received a BFA from Hunter College in 1965. In 1978 she was awarded a Visual Artist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. She lives in Baldwin, New York, has a studio in Long Island City and is represented by the Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York City.

Andrea Miller-Keller  
Curator of MATRIX

Works in MATRIX:  
Summantic Vocabulary Collection, 1-278, begun in 1974 and ongoing, ink and ledger book on wooden bookstand.

Additional Meanings: Forgive-ness = 139, 1976, altered supermarket circular with photograph, presstype and plastic lettering, 22 3/4" x 14 3/4".

Additional Meanings 154: Finish line, 1976, magazine photograph and ink on ledger paper, 11 1/4" x 8 3/4".

Additional Meanings 236: Planet's bad dreams..., 1976, photograph, crayon, pencil and plastic lettering on paper, 10 3/4" x 13 3/4".

Additional Meanings 327: Madness, wisdom..., 1976, magazine photograph, ink and pencil on graph paper, 11 1/4" x 8 3/4".

Additional Meanings 340: Fools feign..., 1976, posters, crayon and pencil on paper, 36" x 48".

Summantic Receipts 933: Fond art ornaments..., 1976, cash register receipt and ink on paper, 11 1/2" x 8 3/4".

Additional Meanings 257: Pragmatic leaders..., 1977, magazine photograph, pencil and plastic lettering on paper, 26" x 20 1/4".

Additional Meanings 267: Doom

flaccid life..., 1977, magazine photograph and pencil on graph paper, 11 1/4" x 8 3/4". Lent by the Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York City.

Summantic Receipts: Cicadas reach trees..., 1977, cash register receipts and ink on graph paper, 8 3/4" x 11 1/4".

Summantic Tickets: Less is More, 1977, tickets, ink and typescript on paper, 9 1/4" x 9 1/4". Lent by Stephan Shaw, Baldwin, New York.

Summantic Tickets 460: This is a simple sentence..., 1977, Saratoga racetrack tickets, pencil and plastic lettering on graph paper, 20 1/4" x 16 1/2".

Additional Meanings: Back To School, 1978, altered supermarket circular, presstype and plastic lettering, 22 3/4" x 29 1/4".

Investigations into the Inequality of Translation: Rex et Regina Mortui Sunt = 296, 1979, collage, pencil and plastic lettering on paper, 14 1/4" x 26 3/4".

Investigations into the Inequality of Translation: Je crois que vous avez tort = 326, 1979, collage, pencil and plastic lettering on ledger paper, 14 1/4" x 26 3/4".

Summantic Equations: 24 = X..., 1979, collage, crayon, ink and pencil on paper, 17 3/4" x 24 3/4".

Summantic Equations: 32 = Farbe, 1979, acrylic, ink and pencil on paper, 17 3/4" x 24 3/4".

Summantic Equations: 40 = Bleu..., 1979, acrylic, ink and pencil on paper, 17 3/4" x 24 3/4".

Summantic Equations: 72 = Ingres = Oragami..., 1979, collage, ink and pencil on paper, 17 3/4" x 24 3/4".

Summantic Equations: 77 = Smiles..., 1979, collage, crayon, ink and pencil on paper, 17 3/4" x 24 3/4". Lent by the Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York City.