



ARTIST

Tatana Kellner

TITLE

B 11226 Fifty Years of Silence, Eugene Kellner's Story

DATE

1992

DIMENSIONS

3 in H x 14 in W x 23 in L

MEDIUM

Artists' Books

CATALOGUE NUMBER

1992.020

CURRENT LOCATION

3D-7

TATANA KELLNER

BORN

1950

BIRTHPLACE

Prague, Czechoslovakia

GENDER

Female

CITIZENSHIP

United States

CULTURAL HERITAGE

European-American

LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 1992

LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 75/76

Contact Sheet 97

ESSAYS

Tatana Kellner arranges single photographs to convey meaning through their graphic arrangement on the wall like a concrete poet arranges words to convey meaning through their graphic arrangement on the page. Over the past several years Kellner has composed photographic constructions into large fluid grids and irregular shapes. She often manipulates individual photographs within each construction by marking, painting and toning. While the starting point of her constructions vary from landscapes to self portraits, her techniques work to alter our linear reading of the images creating an atmosphere of recollection. In these constructions she has given memory a form, slightly obscured and partially clear, as if she has drawn them slowly in that moment before awakening. Just prior to her residency at Light Work in October 1992, Kellner finished two books that recount and interpret her parents' survival as prisoners of Nazi concentration camps. Kellner's approach to photography is informed by her experience of producing limited edition books, both for herself, and as a resource for other artists in her capacity as Artistic Director of the Women's Studio Workshop in Rosendale, New York. Kellner's parents met in Prague after they were released from the camps. Kellner began the project by asking them to tell her about their experiences in the camps. They agreed, but would only use written communication crafted in their native Czech language. These manuscripts are the basis for two books Kellner produced entitled '71125, Fifty Years of Silence' and 'B11226, Fifty Years of Silence.' One book is her mother Eva's story and the other her father Eugene's. At the center of each book is a paper cast made from each parents forearm bearing the tattoo of an ineradicable number. Each page in the books is die cut to fit around the paper casts with every turn of a page. Photographs from her parents' lives in Czechoslovakia and the U.S., following their emigration in 1968, are silk-screened on the velum pages. The original hand written text by Eva and Eugene is printed over the snapshots and Kellner's translation is mirrored on each facing page. The most excruciating and painful expression of Eva and Eugene's stories is their capacity to remember so many details. After fifty years of silence they have recalled their experience with unflinching resolve that characterizes a life spent holding on to every detail of horror and every measure of pain. In these remarkable books, Kellner has found a dignity in her parents story that compels us to understand completely the overwhelming power of the human spirit. Jeffrey Hoone (c)1993