



**ARTIST**

Robin Lasser;Kathryn Sylva

**TITLE**

Food Forks, from the series 'Binge'

**DATE**

2001

**DIMENSIONS**

40 in H x 28 in W

**MEDIUM**

Inkjet Prints

**IMAGE NOTES**

sheet 46 x 36.5"

**CATALOGUE NUMBER**

2001.044

**CURRENT LOCATION**

NA 04

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**ROBIN LASSER**

**GENDER**

Female

**CITIZENSHIP**

United States

**CULTURAL HERITAGE**

European-American

## LIGHT WORK RELATIONSHIP

Artist-in-Residence, 2000

## LIGHT WORK PUBLICATIONS

Contact Sheet 112

## BIOGRAPHY

For a more recent CV or bio please visit the artist's website, [robinlasser.com/index.html](http://robinlasser.com/index.html)

## ESSAYS

In the mid 1980s the media gave a great deal of attention to the eating disorders anorexia nervosa and bulimia. This was due in large part to pop singer Karen Carpenter who died of heart failure in 1983 at the age of 33 as a result of anorexia nervosa. A range of made-for-television movies, public service announcements, and educational programs in high schools and colleges quickly arose to address this newly perceived epidemic. However, just as quickly as the issue of eating disorders captured the public's attention, it receded into the background where it had existed years before Karen Carpenter made anorexia a household term. In a society where we are constantly provided with standards to which we are expected to measure up, women and men place a tremendous amount of physical and mental pressure on the attainment of their desired self-image. The actual number of individuals who suffer from some form of eating disorder cannot be measured since the majority of sufferers act in secret with harmful and sometimes fatal results. Recognizing a void in the visual representation of this condition that affects the lives of so many women, and men, artists Robin Lasser and Kathryn Sylva have made it their own personal crusade to expand the discourse surrounding this issue. In their ongoing collaboration *Eating Disorders in a Disordered Culture*, Lasser and Sylva focus on the personal rather than the clinical aspects of eating disorders to bring this issue to the forefront of public awareness. These artists do considerably more than just "talk the talk"; they are deeply intertwined with this subject as each artist has had her own personal experience with an eating disorder that has served as a catalyst for this project. Working in specific communities and in collaboration with museums and academic institutions Lasser and Sylva have produced a series of public art projects in the form of billboards, placards, and bus-stop advertisements. Using design strategies associated with commercial advertising, they are able to reach large audiences, encourage others to participate in this project, and foster greater awareness of these issues. The artists have also produced a number of elaborate installations in museums and galleries. While these exhibitions may reach smaller audiences than some of their public art projects, they create a more comprehensive and intimate experience for museum goers by incorporating their photographs with sophisticated mixed-media installations and audio samples provided by some of the family members and individuals whose lives have been affected by eating disorders. One of the most important components to this project is their extensive Web site. The *Eating Disorders in a Disordered Culture* Web site provides a sampling of previous projects, as well as a record of past and future projects. It also provides extensive informational resources, and its "Speaking Out" forum invites other individuals to add their stories to the project. Whether this work is presented on a billboard, in a museum, or on the Internet, the audience and the means of communication may change, but the message does not. By focusing on the emotional content and personal narratives they hope to create a more supportive climate for dialogue and participation, as the artists have stated, "one that would encourage people to turn towards the issue rather than dismissing it or turning it away." The participants who share their stories in this project are open and unashamed, while still preserving their anonymity. Acting as a conduit Lasser and Sylva create an intricate framework for this dialogue to take place and allow the participants to share their stories and experiences, and ultimately their work serves a greater purpose and becomes significantly more than a cathartic act. Gary Hesse 2001 Robin Lasser lives in Oakland, California, and Kathryn Sylva lives in Davis, California. They both participated in Light Work's Artist-in-Residence program in August 2000.