

# Kenneth Kaplowitz







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## My Camera Is Always With Me

Professor Emeritus Kenneth Kaplowitz  
50-Year Retrospective Exhibition  
TCNJ Art Gallery  
September 12 - October 17, 2021



# INTRODUCTION

Ken is one of the most creative individuals I have ever met. The range and quality of his work and his productivity as an artist in photography, drawing, and sculpture is truly astonishing. His fertile imagination combined with his remarkable commitment to make art on a daily basis has resulted in an oeuvre that is probably unequaled in depth and scope among contemporary New Jersey artists. Every year or two over the past 40 years, Ken has produced a body of work that is fresh and original, different from other artists as well as a marked departure from his previous artwork. Many artists would be proud if just one of these series represented their lifetime achievement. To accomplish this remarkable feat, Ken has had to virtually reinvent himself every few years. He learned to do this through lifelong learning and periodic self-examination expressed in diaristic writings and poetry.

Gary Saretzky  
Associate Professor  
Photo Historian and Lecturer



Front cover: *Clematis Close-Up (Botanical Studies Series)*, 1985, Black and white silver gelatin print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz  
Title page: *Cat Car (Artificial Intelligence Series)*, 2014, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz  
This page: *Leaf Series #1*, 2013, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz



# POSSIBILITIES

What gifts can I bring you?  
Should I bring the dandelion seed  
the wind has blown to the distant  
corners of its domain?

Or the finest white conch shell  
cast onto the sandy bed  
of its fallen ancestors?

Perhaps the smallest seagull feather,  
plucked in the air during its gliding  
descent toward the ocean spray?

The marvelous fireworks captured and  
preserved in vast underground caverns  
with the remnants of ancient stalactites  
and frozen darkness?

Or should I bring you the gift of  
Possibility, locked in a silver box, held  
in the Hands of Time, waiting for the  
key to turn the lock and the invisible  
clock to chime?

– Kenneth Kaplowitz, 2001



*Adam Prays for Rain (Biblical Series)*, 2008, Inkjet  
print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of  
Kenneth Kaplowitz



*Paper Collage (Paper Collage Series)*  
1983, Black and white silver gelatin print, TCNJ  
Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz



*Art photography... will no longer draw much of its strength and context from a perception that it is inherently a comment on visible, verifiable realities, but will become more easily to be seen, like painting, as synthetic, the outcome of an act from the artist's imagination.*

- Fred Ritchin, "Into the Information Age." In *In Our Own Image: The Coming Revolution in Photography*, Fred Ritchin. (New York: Aperture Foundation Inc, 1990)

"I trust the creative process."  
- Ken Kaplowitz

Organizing a retrospective exhibition of Kenneth Kaplowitz's work was no small feat. Over the summer before the opening of the exhibition, the TCNJ Art Gallery filled with artwork: black and white gelatin silver prints, color photographs, collages, and inkjet prints depicting flora and fauna from natural and imaginary worlds. The work in this 50-year retrospective exhibition includes nine major series of work completed between 1975 and the present and reflects the boundless energy of an artist who not only trusted the creative process, but also pursued that process with dedication and enthusiasm.

The work included in ***My Camera is Always With Me*** reflects Kaplowitz's shifting approach to the technologies and techniques of photography and his playful approach to the medium. The exhibition includes examples of his early analogue photographic work, including pieces from the series *Mirror Images* (1975-78); *Photo Collages* (1981-83), *Water Reflections* (1984-87), *Botanical Studies* (1985) and *Tree Shadows* (1991). In recent years, Kaplowitz has explored the possibilities of digital photographic tools. These computer-based projects are represented by the series *Chinese Calligraphy* (1999), *Planet* (2013), *Artificial Intelligence* (2014), *Leaf* (2020-21), and *Face* (2020-21). Beginning in 2017, Kaplowitz began collecting his photographs in thematic series and publishing them via digital publishing services. Eighteen of these books are included in the retrospective. In addition, the exhibition includes examples of works made without a camera: works from the *Biblical Prints* (2006-11) and *Circus* (1998) series are digital drawings, created on a computer and printed with an inkjet printer.

Featuring works from more than 10 series (in addition to the series of works collected in the artist's books), ***My Camera is Always With Me*** is a wide-ranging introduction to Kaplowitz's practice. Through this diversity of images and techniques, the exhibition offers an opportunity to encounter Kaplowitz's artwork through the intersecting lenses of physical place, photographic technology, and visual imagination. The earliest photographs in the

exhibition, for example, are all analog photographs, made with a film camera and developed and printed in a dark room. The visual subjects—water, leaves, trees—are connected to a physical place, and any image manipulation occurs in the darkroom or through collage. In a particularly striking collaged image from 1983, Kaplowitz used images of wrinkled paper, tearing and reassembling the pieces into a flat abstraction that denies a sense of depth. This image plays with layers while evocatively suggesting that a photograph is but a mere surface with texture and edges. Kaplowitz's connection to place is also reflected in these early works. The nearly abstract images in the ***Water Reflections*** series, for example, reflect the specific places of their origin in their titles: *Neon Ripples*, *Flemington*, for example, or *Boats Docked*, *Jersey Shore*. Other works, such as *Mimosa* (1985) from the ***Botanical Studies*** series, for example, are carefully arranged compositions of the natural forms of plants the artist collected and brought back to the studio. This fascination with the natural world would continue in later works.

As Ken's practice shifted to include digital media (***Planet*** and ***Landscape*** series), it became possible to recombine and create imaginary landscapes (and figures, with the ***Artificial Intelligence*** series) from the thousands of digital images he collects. The digital revolution in photography impacted both how he takes photographs—with a compact, digital camera, Kaplowitz can take hundreds, if not thousands of photographs—and how he manipulates those images after he captures them. Some works are purely digital inventions: the works in the ***Planets*** series, for example, are what Kaplowitz calls "digital drawings," in which he explored Photoshop's full range of filters and effects to create a series of speculative new planets.

Other digital works are collaged assemblages created from Ken's vast stores of saved image files. The bodies of the robot-like figures in the ***Artificial Intelligence*** series, for example, consist of often series recognizable details of everyday materials: hubcaps, metal conduits, golf balls, gears, and chains. Though ingenious and playful, the photographs in the ***Artificial Intelligence*** can hint at a darker side of contemporary life. The robot figures are often depicted in uninhabited landscapes, silhouetted against empty skies. The skull-headed *Balloon Man* is constructed from metal electrical towers and holds a bouquet of balloon "planets." Five butterflies surround him, their brightly colored wings striking a stark contrast with the metal-and-bone armature of the figure.

Though Kaplowitz is known to always carry a camera, several of the series in the exhibition were produced without the use of a camera, with either traditional drawing materials (pen and ink) or digital tools (like the Photoshop tools he used to create the fantastical ***Planets*** series). The small, finely detailed, and expressive images in the ***Biblical Prints*** and ***Circus*** series, for example, began as drawings on paper, which were then scanned and printed on an inkjet printer.

As evidenced by the work in this exhibition, Kaplowitz has embraced a spectrum of traditional and digital technologies throughout his career—black-and-white film cameras, digital point-and-shoots, Photoshop filters and effects—and made those technologies an inherent part of his creative process. For TCNJ students, faculty and staff and the wider New Jersey community, ***My Camera is Always With Me*** offers a chance to witness the 50-year arc of Kaplowitz's always evolving and relentlessly engaging visual imagination.

-Anita Allyn, Coordinator of Fine Arts and Photography & Video



*Stream, Flemington*  
(*Water Reflections Series*)  
1984-1987, Black and white  
silver gelatin print, TCNJ  
Art Gallery Collection, Gift of  
Kenneth Kaplowitz

*Paper Universe*  
(*Photo Collage Series*)  
1984-1987, Black and white  
silver gelatin print, TCNJ  
Art Gallery Collection, Gift of  
Kenneth Kaplowitz







*Garden with a Heart*  
c1997, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art Gallery  
Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz





*God's Kiss (Biblical Series)*  
2006, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art  
Gallery Collection, Gift of  
Kenneth Kaplowitz



*Eve Goes to Work (Biblical Series)*  
2006, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art  
Gallery Collection, Gift of  
Kenneth Kaplowitz





Top: *Balloon Man (Artificial Intelligence Series)*, 2014, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz

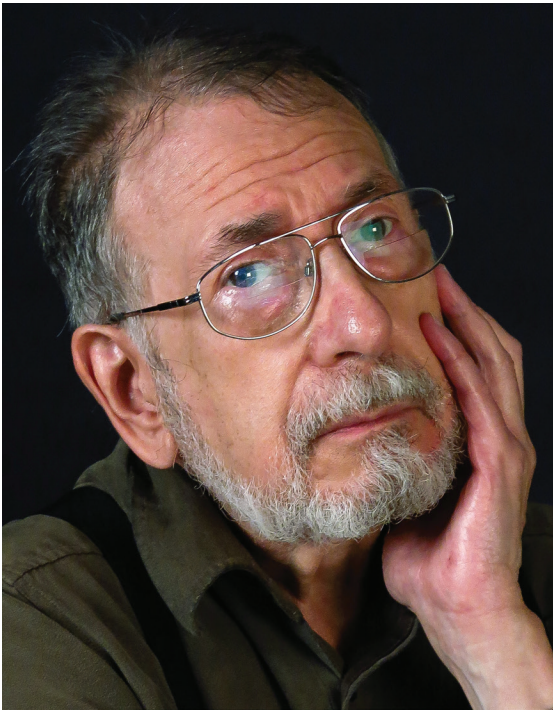
Left: *Planet B9-1.6 (Planet Series)*, 2013, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz

Right: *Rock Reflection (Landscape Series)*, 2013, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz









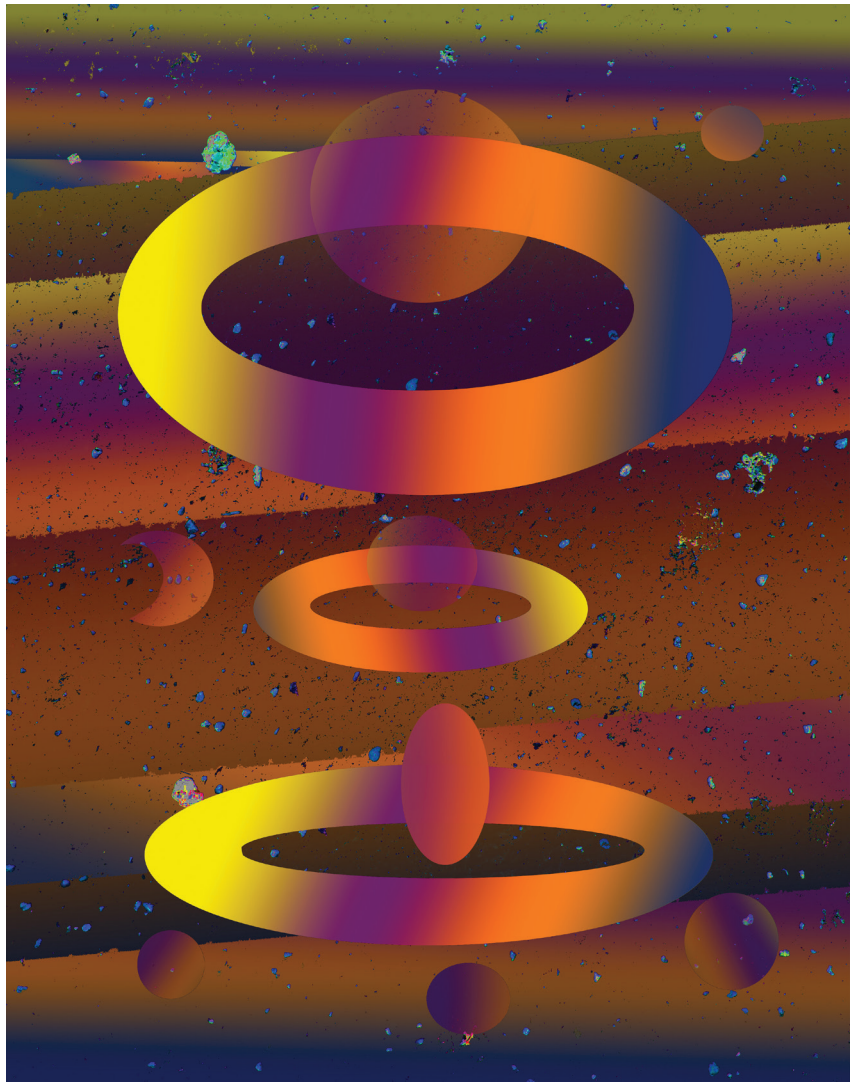
## BIOGRAPHY

A draftsman, photographer, and teacher, Kenneth (Ken) Kaplowitz was born in 1941 in Newark, New Jersey, and now lives and works in Pennington, New Jersey. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Art Education from Montclair State College in 1963, a Master's degree in Communications from New York University in 1968, and his Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture from Rutgers University in 1970. He began teaching at Trenton State College (now TCNJ) in 1970 and held various roles, including coordinator of Media Services, professor in Television and Film Production, and department chair of Media Communications Science. When he was transferred to the Art Department, Ken coordinated the Photography and

Film Track for 14 years. In the Art Department, he rebuilt the darkroom, allowing larger classes to develop and print black and white and color, and transformed an adjoining classroom into a professional lighting studio. He retired in his 49th year of teaching at the College and is now professor emeritus of Art at TCNJ.

Since 1978 he has shown his work nationally and internationally in over 30 solo exhibitions (including Johnson and Johnson World Headquarters, AT&T, Merrill Lynch, New Jersey State Museum, Princeton University, Hunterdon Art Museum, and Montclair University) and 70 group exhibitions at various galleries, art centers, and museums. His work is in numerous public, private, and corporate collections and has been published in The New York Times, The Trenton Times, and The Newark Star-Ledger. Notably, Ken has self-published 25 monographs of his work, his new passion, and is in the process of completing six books of poetry that spans 27 years.

As a photographer, Ken has worked with numerous organizations including The New Jersey State Museum, Princeton University, The Hopewell Museum, The New Jersey Library Association, and The New Jersey Governor's Office, among others. He has served as juror for Mercer County Artists Exhibition, Philip Mills Photo Competition, Princeton Photo Club, Princeton University, Pennsylvania State Photo Competition, and the Hunterdon County Art Competition. He was the coordinator for The Mercer County Photography Exhibition for six years.



Thanks to the TCNJ  
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This page: Kenneth Kaplowitz, *Loops (Planet Series)*, 2013, Inkjet print, TCNJ Art Gallery  
Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz  
Back cover: Kenneth Kaplowitz, *Mimosa (Botanical Studies Series)*, 1985, Black and white  
silver gelatin print, TCNJ Art Gallery Collection, Gift of Kenneth Kaplowitz







