



*Marseille Sailors* 1966  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper

Cover: *Geometry of Time, Cuba* 2009  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper



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## Peter Karuna: All in Good Time

June 9 to September 25, 2011 | Curated by Melissa Bennett

### Acknowledgements:

For one who has depended so much on the kindness of strangers, I have become wary of being too specific in my acknowledgements. None of my work would have been possible without all the nurturing and supportive people who have surrounded me my entire life: my family, friends and students; arts communities in Canada and abroad; the dedicated curators and staff in galleries, festivals and other venues with whom I've worked—including the AGH; the encouragement of the general public; and the funding agencies, including the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, who have made much of my work, and this exhibition, possible.

~ Peter Karuna

The Art Gallery of Hamilton would like to thank Peter Karuna for this opportunity to present his exceptional photographs, and for his time and commitment to this exhibition. The AGH acknowledges the support of the City of Hamilton, the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, and Members and Friends of the Gallery.



ATELIER

## Peter Karuna: All in Good Time





*Global Economics* from the series *Borrowed Time* 2006  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper



*Capture, Cuba* 2009  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper

# Peter Karuna

## All in Good Time

Melissa Bennett  
Curator of Contemporary Art

Peter Karuna is a Hamilton-based artist working with photography, video, sculpture and installation. Born in Cyprus, he lived in several places in the United Kingdom before moving to Hamilton. This exhibition of photographs shows the range of his interests over the last forty-five years.

Karuna acquired his first camera when he was fifteen, and shortly thereafter he was offered a job as a photojournalist in London's famous Fleet Street district, the newspaper hub of the UK. He was assigned to the "social gossip" department, and found himself documenting debutante balls, lavish private parties and V.I.P. funerals. The exhibition begins with Karuna's street photography from that period. These candid shots, with their punchy imagery and dynamic compositions, lay the foundation for his style.

In the mid-1970s Karuna moved to Hamilton, and his quick, "from-the-hip" approach to image making became more pointed through his growing advocacy for ecological issues. *Suburban Fog* and *Stranded House* are great examples of his commitment to documenting the over-development of rural lands in Ontario. *Endangered Species*, taken in 2005, looks with wry

humour at the effects of a city's attempt to manage "nature." Yet Karuna does not take environmental issues lightly—he protested local developments such as the Red Hill Valley Parkway and maintains a critical stance on land use.

Several striking photographs from the past ten years show Karuna's tender approach to photographing his family and friends. *Iris in Flight* is a stunning image of his daughter during ballet practice and *The Water Bearer* has a strong resemblance to Larry Towell's warm images of home life. Karuna notes that *The Water Bearer* is also an "ironic commentary on the difficulties of obtaining fresh water amidst the Great Lakes."<sup>1</sup> *Global Economics* shows a woman shielding herself from the sun with the *Globe and Mail* business section. "This is a candid shot and another ironic commentary on the effects of global commerce on the environment."<sup>2</sup> Some photographs are from a recent artists' exchange trip to Cuba, including a few quick shots alongside contemplative scenes.

Speaking with Karuna about his practice is a sheer pleasure, and the time goes by quickly. It's easy to become absorbed along with him in his stories and philosophical reflections, which are spoken from a stream of consciousness. Time itself seems to be a reigning theme in his life and in his work—he becomes lost in time, which is a ruling force. Karuna claims to be a documentary photographer, but his poetic sensibility leads the work in another direction as well. It's true that many of his images record rare moments in time, but they are often lyrical moments when things ironic or exquisite align—just like magic—within his camera's frame.

<sup>1</sup> Email to the author, 22 March 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



*Iris in Flight* 2004  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper



*The Water Bearer* from the series *Borrowed Time* 2000  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper

Peter Karuna is a teacher at the Dundas Valley School of Art, where he has been teaching for more than twenty years. He has a Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art and Sociology from the University of Guelph and a teaching degree from Brock University. He has participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions, screenings and festivals across Canada, as well as in Cuba, Scotland, the USA and Hungary. He has been a resident and visiting artist at educational institutions and galleries in Ontario and California. He is a recipient of a number of production grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. His work can be found in the collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the Organization of Saskatchewan Art Councils, the Alberta College of Art and Design, Queen's University, the Mendel Art Gallery and Trinity Square Video, as well as in private collections.



*Endangered Species* from the series *Borrowed Time* 2005  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper

*Stranded House* from the series *Dream Homes* 1985  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper

*Psychiatry Kills* 1970  
pigment inkjet print on cotton rag paper

