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**PIECES**  
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## Karen Blessen Bio

***Founder and Artistic Director of 29 Pieces, Executive Director of the Dallas LOVE Project***



Karen Blessen's innate creative mandate is to break through boundaries to incorporate art in new, thought provoking ways.

In 1989, her illustrative contributions to a Dallas Morning News team's investigative report about an airplane crash resulted in Karen being named the first graphic artist to win a Pulitzer Prize. Since the 1990's the DMN has published Karen's visual and written pieces about cancer, AIDS, luck, listening, confetti, a local murder, and mothers.

In 1994 Karen was given the distinct honor by NYC's Times Square Business Improvement District to create a signature look for the New Times Square. Her graphics on banners, buses, posters, billboards, print and the web, heralded every Times Square BID event into the Millennium.

In 2002 and again in 2003 Save the Children invited Karen to be the artist's voice of an HIV/AIDS exploratory committee traveling to Africa. Her mission was to chronicle her thoughts and visions about the African people who are living with AIDS. Excerpts from these illustrated journals were used by Save The Children to raise awareness and was published as Faces of a Plague — a multi-page article in The Dallas Morning News. That article was developed into a theatrical production titled Today Marks the Beginning, raising over \$40,000 to help support two villages in Malawi.

In 2004, Penguin Books chose Karen to illustrate the life vision of peace activist Jeremy Gilley. Two years of Karen's involvement resulted in the award winning book, Peace One Day, outlining Mr. Gilley's successful struggle to establish September 21 as The International Day of Peace. Karen's drawings and collages document Mr. Gilley's awesome efforts and the resulting accomplishment in terms that children can understand.

Compelled by her passion, Karen co-founded the non-profit organization, Today Marks the Beginning, which uses art to generate awareness of social issues. TMtB produced Truth Be Told, a provocative theatrical play about women in prison, art exhibits, and Stations 1 and 2, a traveling interactive sculpture project.

In 2008, Karen envisioned and became the project manager of the TMtB program, ***MasterPEACE: Young Artists Making a Kinder World***. In 14 project based lessons, MasterPEACE uses visual and performing art to give students tools for non-violence. Students also learn about Great Peacemakers and heroes of human rights. This innovative and long-needed program has been presented to thousands of students (2nd through 12th grade) in Dallas schools. In 2012, MasterPEACE was chosen by Participant Media as a Grand Prize winner in their International Marigold Ideas for Good Competition.

One of Karen's recent commitments was the commission to create sculpture, mosaics and an urban park design for a the Dallas Area Rapid Transit Station (Baylor/Deep Ellum), which opened in September 2009.

In November of 2010, Karen was chosen by the Dallas Observer as one of three MasterMinds of the Arts in Dallas, as part of the publication's first MasterMinds competition.

Karen has been working on 29 Pieces: Visions of the Mystics Made Manifest, since 2006. In March of 2010, 29 Pieces became a non-profit organization, and in May of 2011, 29 Pieces merged with Today Marks the Beginning, with a combined mission to create monumental art and monumental change. To find out more about 29 Pieces, please visit [www.29Pieces.org](http://www.29Pieces.org).