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## New York

CRITICS' PICKS

Kay Rosen

## THE DRAWING CENTER

35 Wooster Street

September 21 - October 26

Collagists are by nature unable to choose between the picture and the word, and for Kay Rosen, the visual detonation of a verbal joke provides an artistic problem with endless variations. "Collages 1999-2002," a delicately scaled and fast-paced show in the Drawing Room annex of The Drawing Center, showcases Rosen's mode of communication as cool, distant, wry; her juxtapositions are sharp and spare, her puns deadpan. But, like "combinators" from Robert Rauschenberg to Martha Rosler, Rosen feeds off the jerky poetry of Pop Americana-to catch the flavor of Rosen's linguistic play and darting eye, the critic Mark van de Walle advises audiences to "imagine Gertrude Stein on a road trip." Against a map of the United States, scavenged, perhaps, from a restaurant place mat, identical fortune-cookie fortunes read "Romance points you in a new direction." One points north; the other south (or is it east and west?). A blue square splits the word "blush," as if the *i* in *bluish* were too shy to appear. An ad from a parallel universe offers the inventions of "Helmut Language." If only crackerjack rhetoricians and deconstructors were as plentiful as fancy clothes and fashionistas.

-Frances Richard



*No Free Reading,*  
2001.