

MATRIART

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Spirituality

Women And Spirituality

Feminism will come in time to shatter a picture of reality which came out of a patriarchal world. We find ourselves spiritually in a novel situation... The coming of age of women as feminists in theology consists in women beginning to undertake the process of naming for themselves. That, after four thousand years, constitutes a revolution.
(Daphne Hampson, Theology and Feminism)

Women and spirituality. Women's spirituality. Words signalling re/interpretations of patriarchal religious structures, re/readings of old texts, re/visionings of identities and connections. Situated in that context, this issue of Matriart foregrounds a diversity of forms and practices in which women writers and artists are exploring spirituality in relation to their work, lives and communities.

Some contributors, such as Catherine Rathbun and Jean Shinoda Bolen, take up and challenge patriarchal religious and thought structures. For Rathbun, a teacher of the spiritual path in Buddhism, the aim is to help people out of suffering. Bolen echoes a dimension of this practice when she writes, "there is a whole other layer of changing the world that involves compassionate action as well as outrage in action."

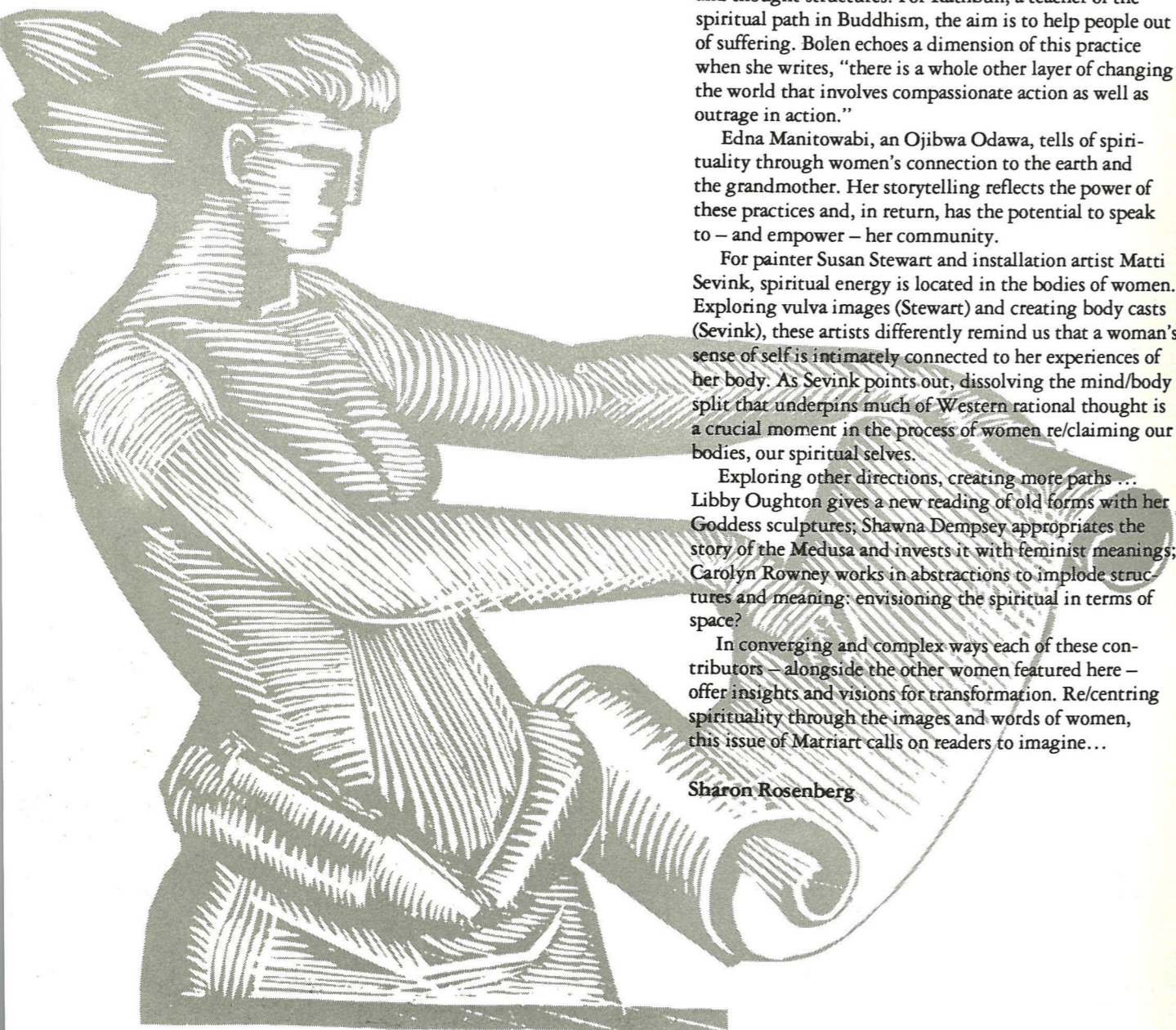
Edna Manitowabi, an Ojibwa Odawa, tells of spirituality through women's connection to the earth and the grandmother. Her storytelling reflects the power of these practices and, in return, has the potential to speak to — and empower — her community.

For painter Susan Stewart and installation artist Matti Sevink, spiritual energy is located in the bodies of women. Exploring vulva images (Stewart) and creating body casts (Sevink), these artists differently remind us that a woman's sense of self is intimately connected to her experiences of her body. As Sevink points out, dissolving the mind/body split that underpins much of Western rational thought is a crucial moment in the process of women re/claiming our bodies, our spiritual selves.

Exploring other directions, creating more paths... Libby Oughton gives a new reading of old forms with her Goddess sculptures; Shawna Dempsey appropriates the story of the Medusa and invests it with feminist meanings; Carolyn Rowney works in abstractions to implode structures and meaning: envisioning the spiritual in terms of space?

In converging and complex ways each of these contributors — alongside the other women featured here — offer insights and visions for transformation. Re/centring spirituality through the images and words of women, this issue of Matriart calls on readers to imagine...

Sharon Rosenberg



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MATRIART welcomes contributions to future issues. Our deadline date for the Women, Art and Age Issue is April 30, 1992. Future themes of MATRIART are, Women in Prison, Differently-abled Women, Systemic Oppression, Body Image, Arts, Crafts and Hierarchy. Please contact WARC for information. We encourage response from our readers; your opinions, criticisms and concerns are welcome. Views expressed in MATRIART are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of WARC. We reserve the right to edit submissions for brevity and clarity.

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Cover Artwork: Carol Barbour, "Diary of a Statue," oil on canvas, 1992.

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Susan N. Stewart, *This is Not a Religious Painting*, 1991, mixed media

By Susan N. Stewart

SACRED IN PLACES ART MAKING

As a daughter of the patriarchy, I once believed that there was only mind and body. I thought that if one was rational, analytical and goal-oriented, planning one's life step by step and carefully following through, then one would be happy. Wrong. It has been a long road from M.B.A. to artist.

It has been a struggle to get out of my head and into my body, both in my art-making and in my life in general. I'm now aware of the difference between the conditioned impulse to control everything, and allowing myself to be led by a different kind of wisdom. Instead of always living out of a hard, pushing place that "makes things happen," I can try to act out of a part of me that is tender and raw and vulnerable, yet ultimately stronger. To me that is what spirituality is about.

Art-making has been an important part of learning to hear and respect my feelings and energies. Symbols are no longer "just my imagination," but a description of the essence of my being.

I had studied art at university, but deep down I interpreted my artistic temperament as "flaky". I felt I was too emotional. In an attempt to be more rational and linear-minded I pursued a Masters of Business Administration.

During this time I was on the career path to success as a Management Consultant. My professional work, combined with evening studies of accounting, finance etc., was crippling me emotionally, spiritually and creatively. I didn't even know that I was unhappy. I was numb. Quitting would have been a sign of weakness. Painting was a frivolous luxury of the past.

Below:
Susan N. Stewart,
Excerpt from
"Portrait of Sophia,"
1991, oil on canvas.



Susan N. Stewart,
Pagan Breath,
1991, mixed media.

I thought I had developed a daydreaming problem and punished myself for laziness and lack of discipline.

But the psyche knows when one is on the wrong path and can respond by cutting off one's life energy. I soon shut down and was forced to look inward. I remember asking myself, "What does spiritual mean?" but it took years before I had the courage to pick up the paint brush again.

I started exploring my emotions by doing "inner work" (Jungian Dream Analysis). At the same time I was also doing "body work," through yoga, bringing consciousness to the body where the deeper feelings reside.

As I look back I am awed at the importance of the reoccurring images that literally forced themselves into my work despite my best intentions to keep them out. I didn't intend to paint images of vulvas and threw out the first abstract paintings where that form emerged. The father's daughter – rather than respecting her own feelings and images, worried about what other people would think. Was I being rude? Provocative? An exhibitionist? Still the vulva images persisted.

In a dream, a woman placed seven long stemmed flowers coming

out from a vulva shaped indentation in the middle of a bed. I marvelled at the resemblance to one of my paintings and acknowledged that it all came from the same place, a place inside myself that I was only just discovering. Marion Woodman (a Toronto Jungian Analyst) calls it "soul making." Exploring the unknown territory of our inner world and bringing it into consciousness. You can't love yourself without knowing yourself, which requires delving into your inner landscape.

A friend read my tarot cards and I drew "Kali" – an ancient Hindu Goddess, full of vitality and rage. I felt so enchanted by her that I knew I wanted to discover her within myself. I stumbled across a book about her – synchronicity perhaps? There was the shape of my reoccurring image. It was named "Yoni," a symbol of primal feminine energy. Often there was vegetation sprouting out of it, or a circle around it, just like my paintings and my dream. I wasn't rude after all. I was expressing an archetypal energy – the joyous impulse of feeling alive and passionate and in one's body; the body which had been so badly ignored, the inner voice forsaken.

Images that I painted of swelling fruit felt familiar, as if I was seeing myself. They then became round, full shapes – my yearning for wholeness? – eventually simplifying into splashés of red with a bold, black ink circle around it. In a book on sacred calligraphy, I discovered these same beautiful circles. Eastern philosophies describe these circles as

representing the feminine, the void, the sacred place that we go to when we meditate.

Despair as well as joy expressed itself in my work. Black holes and doorways appeared. Some doors were closed and for-

bidding like the part of me that at times felt cut off and abandoned. Some became arched entranceways into sacred places. Again the "Yoni."

Art-making was teaching me of the connection between my body and my psyche and the importance of the images that emerge. The "Yoni" taught me that sexuality and spirituality are one. I had been drawn to images that mirrored a part of my inner world that needed to be explored in order for myself to become whole. I discovered that the unconscious drama of our psyche is projected onto the outer world so that we can see it and know ourselves better.

Without consciously realizing it, I was trying to describe "me" over and over again. I was trying to find the deeper part of my being that would help me to connect with life, instead of being directed by the lonely jangle in my head.

I still don't like to use the word spiritual. It sounds too other worldly, when really it is something quite ordinary, quite in my body. It is about accepting my self, not perfect, but complete. **M**

LIVING IN A LIMINAL TIME

Gail Hanlon: How would you describe the work you are currently doing?

Jean Shinoda Bolen: My work is in three parts these days: my clinical practice as a Jungian analyst, my writing, and the lectures and workshops that I present. All of them have to do with empowering or inspiring people to determine for themselves what matters to

them; they learn not to give that power over to somebody else, whether it be the family or the patriarchal culture. When I first entered the profession of psychiatry, we really didn't have a notion of patriar-

chy. The whole notion that we were defined and limited by stereotypes came with the Women's Movement. And then by bridging the worlds of the Women's Movement and Jungian psychology, I could see that women, since I was at that point in my writing focusing on women, were greatly shaped by the archetypes inside of us as well as the stereotypes outside of us. Consciousness raising required that we be aware of both. Then women who were reading *Goddesses in Everywoman* began to use it as a text on women's spirituality, although it had started out as a psychology of women.

Gail: Do you think that under ideal circumstances clinical psychology could be considered a form of spiritual practice?

Jean: Yes. First of all my work comes out of a strong heart and a sense that each of us has a strong spiritual center. One needs to remember that the word for psychology, *psyche* in Greek, means "soul" or "butterfly." Thus, it really is about soul growth and transformation. I think that most clinical psychologists at their best are responding to a wish to heal their patients, and that each school of thought has its own focus as to what is the cause of the suffering or the wounding that leads to the symptoms, and that each provides a different method to help. But most of them leave out the soul or the spiritual dimension, except in Jungian psychology and transpersonal psychology. We also have the twelve-step programs, which really could be considered a psychology, and which were from the very beginning influenced by Jung and carried as their charge the idea that the healing will come as the individual with the addiction gets in touch with the Self.

Gail: What do you see happening in the women's spirituality movement?

Jean: I see women's spirituality as a quiet, gradual movement all over this country and in other countries as well. When the concepts are introduced, women respond because words are being given to something that they intrinsically seem to know. I feel that it is



Jean Shinoda Bolen, M.D., is a psychiatrist and Jungian analyst in private practice. She is the author of *Goddesses in Everywoman*, *Gods in Everyman*, *The Tao of Psychology*, and *Ring of Power* (to be published in May 1992); a clinical professor of Psychiatry at the University of California at San Francisco; and a former member of the Ms. Foundation for Women Board. Jean's grandparents on both sides came to the United States from Japan after being converted to Christianity. "Metaphors such as 'straddling two worlds' or 'having binocular vision,'" Jean says, "describe the perspective from which my perceptions come. It is a way of seeing and being in the world that grows out of being 'other' and yet 'accepted' in my many worlds. This is the way it is for many women of color."

Interviewed by
Gail Hanlon

being ignored by the greater culture because it doesn't claim any turf. It is not competitive for the power that exists in the outer world. It is an interior, empowering movement that was being ignored until the concept of the Goddess became more widespread. In recent years the media has begun to write features on the Goddess movement. But what they seem to be drawn to is just the tip of the iceberg. Although women's spirituality is about the Goddess, many women wouldn't even say it is so, because "the Goddess" has many different, individual forms of expression.

I think that women's spirituality has to do with recognizing that there is a sacred dimension to the feminine, which therefore has an enormous number of definitions. But when a woman feels that there is

The most effective warriors need to be in touch with the archetypal Self so that there is compassion as well as anger. There is a whole other level of changing the world that involves compassionate action as well as outrage in action.

something sacred in her life, in herself, which is related to the feminine aspect of herself and the embodiment of a divine quality in the Earth, in nature, in other human beings, it is a quiet spirituality. It doesn't require institutions; it doesn't require dogma. This interior knowing is what always interests me in my work, giving individuals a sense that they are the authority in their own lives and that they should not give to others the power to label, or define, what is significant and deeply human to them. I think all of this work is saying much the same thing, that we are basically on a spiritual path, and that the choices we make in life matter. Those choices are based on consciousness and following what only we can know is deeply meaningful and it is based on love.

Gail: *Can you talk about those individual choices, about how unifying those things within yourself transforms culture as a whole?*

Jean: Well, it begins with an individual's quest for truth and freedom. It begins in the simple form with which the Women's Movement first began, which was the circle, within which one told the truth of one's own life. That was empowering, not only for the woman who spoke her truth but also for the women who heard it and were then inspired or empowered to do the same. In good psychotherapy that also happens: there is a safe place. I call it and others do too, but I specifically refer to it as — a *temenos*,¹ which is Greek for sanctuary. Within that sanctuary, it is understood that one will not be exploited or judged. Whatever is said about what one has done, what one feels, or what one aspires to is received as if in a sanctuary. Then whatever is said gradually becomes more true.

The latest movement in psychology has to do with the awareness that twelve-step programs have brought to us and out of that comes the notion that the great majority of us come from dysfunctional families. The number is very large because we live in a dysfunctional society. If you're in a dysfunctional society — that is, a patriarchy within which power is the ruling principle — then truth suffers because telling the truth is not always safe. Consequently, in order to keep yourself safe, you repress what you know to be true because it is dangerous to speak it. And gradually you become inarticulate, and then perhaps numb to what it is you fear and what it is you know to be true, until you find yourself in a safe place, or *temenos*, where you can gradually acknowledge what is true.

So, whether it be a women's group, or a twelve-step group, or a safe psychotherapy relationship, or, where often as happens among women, in friendships that have extended over years, there has to be a safe place where we can tell the truth if we are to remember, perceive, feel, and know what is true. The authenticity that results is a challenge to the established order, which is hierarchical and patriarchal and based on power. So as individuals first know the truth and then speak it, the greatest potential lies in the transformation that happens within individual relationships, where one person starts telling the truth and it affects the system. This process may begin with a couple, a family, or an institution. If people were in circles of truth, then it would be certainly a different kind of culture, where people wouldn't put on a persona or a false face and would be willing to be vulnerable and to tell the truth. Of course women are better at that than men, so we will do it first.

Gail: *Do you think that healing is taking place on a mythic level in the sense that cultural stereotypes are being transformed by the Women's Movement?*

Jean: I think that we are in the midst of a transformative myth right now, one having to do with the emergence of the Goddess into individual psyches and the return of the Goddess into the culture. In a culture that is patriarchal in its religion, everything that is feminine and of women is degraded, held to be inferior, and not of divinity. We have a Judeo-Christian tradition that says that men are created in the image of God and are here to have dominion over everything, especially over that which is considered of the feminine. The whole point of the hierarchy is that everything closest to God is always represented as male. Also, patriarchal culture defines some things as masculine and others as feminine and considers the latter inferior. So these qualities, while in truth are in everyone regardless of gender, are repressed or devalued in everyone.

When divinity carries a feminine face, and when there is reverence for that divinity, the mythic underpinning of culture as we know it shifts greatly, because then we no longer have a dominator culture that has power over an inferior culture. If the culture has a return of the experience of the feminine as divinity, the Earth as having a sacred dimension, and if women are considered to be in the image of the Goddess, that is, carriers of life who bring through their bodies the miracle of birth, then those very things that are considered animalistic by masculine spiritual standards become holy. And you treat that which is holy differently. So if the Goddess is coming back, as I truly feel She is, as an archetypal underpinning for healing experiences, there would be a major shift in how the Earth and women and the feminine are treated. That would be a major revolution. Actually I think of it more as an evolution.

Gail: *What do you think remains to be done if this evolution of the Goddess is to take place?*

Jean: Enough individuals have to evolve, however many it takes to become a critical mass, until what was once unthinkable becomes the norm. For example, for about twenty years after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, everybody to some extent was aware that the potential to destroy the Earth existed. Because of the Cold War and the developing stockpiles of these weapons, it was assumed that there was nothing we could do about the inevitability of it. We felt powerless.

But somewhere along the line, individuals started to break through that numbing. An empowering myth

that helped to sustain people who toiled at what others thought of as an impossible task was the story of the Hundredth Monkey, which was tied into the notion of the morphic field, introduced by Rupert Sheldrake, a theoretical biologist. He theorized that when a critical number is reached, the behavior or thinking of that entire species shifts. The Hundredth Monkey story is based on the idea that for society to change, someone has to be the first monkey, and someone has to be the fourteenth, and someone has to be the seventy-ninth, for there to be "a hundredth monkey" — whoever it is that tips the scales and, by so doing, changes the thinking of humanity.

I think that is what happened in the nuclear situation. And although we still have nuclear weapons capabilities, something has shifted in the behavior of the major powers and in consciousness in general, and nuclear war is no longer considered an inevitability.

Each of us who perceives the feminine aspect of divinity, Mother God, the Goddess, however it is that we experience divinity as female, or as also female, is contributing to the resacralization of the Earth and women, and at the same time is influencing a morphic field that has to do with the return of the Goddess into the culture. Major cultural shifts can happen within a couple of hundred years. We now know that there once was a matriarchal culture; we certainly know that it was replaced by a patriarchal culture. As we move out of this second millennium into the third millennium we are, archetypally, entering into a critical passage time, when change can happen. We're approaching that critical transition now. It is what I call a liminal time, a time between worlds, between old and new; "liminal" refers to the threshold or doorway of a place as well as a time of transition. The integration of the sacred dimension of the feminine is a major element in this transition.

Yet every transition is fraught with the potential for transformation and the potential for destruction. There can be resistance to change because forces of repression can be activated. Look at what happened in China to the students in Tiananmen Square for whom the Goddess of Democracy was a major symbol, or at efforts to reverse the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision.

Gail: *With respect to moving beyond patriarchal or Graeco-Roman archetypes, do you think that everything is there at that archetypal level, or do you think that it is also possible that those things have been lost or forgotten?*

Jean: We have within us the potential to access the patterns that have preceded us, just as in our bodies there are remnants of the evolution that we've made. So we have gills in our necks that are literally covered

over, but sometimes they're not covered over completely so that there are cysts in the neck that come from the gill space. Just as the body has recollections of the evolution, so does the psyche. We share a collective unconscious, which means that we have access to the thought patterns of life that preceded us, but we also have the potential to evolve new patterns.

That whole notion of morphic fields that I mentioned earlier provides the theory that would explain how archetypes can also come into being and evolve in us. I definitely do not believe that all we have is what we used to have and forgot. Life itself has transformational potential built into it, why should this be different? Why should we be limited in our minds so that all we can tap into is what has gone on before?

Gail: What do you envision for feminism in the nineties?

Jean: I think that the spiritual dimension is the last and the most significant wave of the Women's Movement, and that once the model of divinity having a feminine face is brought into the culture, the culture can change. It seems to me that that is in process. I see us generating new archetypes and cultural myths, with the image of Earth from outer space perhaps the most significant new symbol. The Earth is Mother, Gaia, matter, an icon that evokes emotion and imagination. As boundaries and borders diminish and disappear, significance is taken away from artificial, tangible barriers like the Berlin Wall or ideological ones like the Iron Curtain. They lose archetypal significance, and the power of the collective to uphold them as walls lessens until they come down. The image of Earth from outer space also evokes an enlargement of the archetype of Home, which in turn enlarges the notion of hearthkeeping and caretaking. Children of the Earth are growing into maturity and taking on responsibilities. Divinity is increasingly perceived as both Mother and Father. I'm encouraged by all of this, as I think it points in the direction of evolutionary change.

Gail: What do you envision for women of color in the nineties?

Jean: There is a connection between the oppression, exploitation, and devaluation of women and people of color, the ecological rape of the Earth, and the absence of a Earth Mother spirituality. With the return of the Goddess in her many and varied aspects, psychological values will shift, and this will have enormous positive consequences for the Earth and for women – especially women of color. When god is disembodied – thought of as powerful, white, male, sky god – the person most “other” is female, of color, and in her body. When there are female images of divinity, there is diversity and

particularity. This was characteristic of Goddess spirituality in past historical times as it is now in the emerging Goddess movement. There are dark – and light – skinned images of the Goddess, and maiden, mother, or crone figures, European, Asian, or African features.

When any female child anywhere can find qualities in herself mirrored back to her by an image of the Goddess, then her positive sense of herself is enhanced, and when others see the Goddess in her as well, it will affect how she is treated and valued. So it is with the Earth, if it is related to as Gaia or Mother Earth or Home, then it – She – will be cared for.

The spiritual dimension is the last and the most significant wave of the women's movement, and once the model of divinity having a feminine face is brought into the culture, the culture can change.

What has been lacking in the mythology of western civilization is a loving and powerful mother. All the mythologies are about powerless women. But when you grow up in a family where your mother is a strong and competent human being, you get a different experience of what the feminine is. All children should have a direct experience of having strong, competent women for mothers.

The values of western civilization whose roots are Greek and Judeo-Christian have set the standards for the rest of the world which the West colonized and made into a market for its products and ideas. That which is “earthy” or dark in color, female, instinctual, natural, or physical in expression is repressed, considered inferior, dangerous, and in need of control or punishment – making it “all right” to be abusive toward people so perceived. Women of color then become the recipient of “dark” projections – forbidden yearnings for earthy experience, for fulfillment of dependency needs. Intelligence is not ascribed to people who are darker or female in the Third World when the so-called First World makes this an attribute of individuals who are white and male.

The power to define, name, and have dominion over others is exercised by patriarchy, with devastating consequences to those who become labelled inferior and are treated as such, as well as to the Earth and all life upon it. In a desecralized, soulless, Goddessless world, everything that exists is exploited rather than cared for, because there is no spiritual reason to treat the material world with respect, love, or stewardship. “Matter,” “material,” and “matrix” have the same linguistic roots as “mother” and “maternal”; when humanity experiences the material world as partaking in the immanent divinity of the feminine, there will be a paradigm shift that changes perception and behavior.

Gail: How does your work as a Jungian analyst relate to this?

Jean: In the dreams that I hear in my office and that are shared with me as I travel and lecture, Goddess figures frequently appear or speak to the dreamer. These dreams stand out because they are usually numinous – meaning that there is a felt quality of awe and significance in the encounter. The dream figure makes a profound impression; in the telling it is as if “she” is a capitalized “She.” Often she is a large dark-skinned woman and there is a Goddess quality about her presence. Marion Woodman's comments in an interview first made me aware that what I was hearing was a transpersonal phenomenon. “For some time now,” she said, “I have been hearing dreams – hundreds of dreams from both sexes – about big dark women. These women are a redeeming symbol because they have contact with the body and a love for it.”² In order for there to be the emergence of a major new archetype or the return of a repressed one into the culture, I would expect that image to appear in the dreams and art of individuals, and this is happening.

A large, dark woman is the very opposite of the standard of beauty and femininity that we see reflected all around us, where already-slender Caucasian models have their curves airbrushed out. When such images are the standard, the inability to look like this is a source of self-hatred for women who are darker and have fuller figures and ethnic features. Powerful dream experiences are real events in that they do impact upon the psyche of the dreamer and can change the attitude of the dreamer. To encounter an awesome Goddess figure in a dream is a personal and authentic experience; awakening and seeing other women or oneself as a reflection of this figure has an effect as a positive revaluation on what had been previously devalued.

We can draw our own conclusions when we have such an experience, not just in dreams but in life or even through television. For example, to see Barbara Jordan during the televised Watergate hearings was to

experience beauty and intelligence and presence in a large Black woman. I wonder how many young Black women gained a role model as a result and thus became empowered with the realization that it would be wonderful to grow up to look or be like her?

Goddess spirituality has an enormous potential to affect individual psychology as well as cultural values. In this time of transition, individuals are changing – and each of us who does change brings the possibility of a shift in a cultural paradigm closer.

Gail: Was there anything else you wanted to say about this theme?

Jean: I would like us to link at the archetypal level with all women at the same time that we feel the uniqueness and richness of our particular ethnicity, appearance, or traditions. One of the things I see in women's spirituality is a connection that many women have to their own cultural archetypes. For example, the chief divinity in Japanese culture is the Goddess Amaterasu. In every culture that I know of, the embodiment of the wisdom that was repressed is considered feminine. I think it is possible to hold within our psyches an awareness of having a feminine identity that is both universal and unique at the same time. By being born female and inhabiting a woman's body, we share an experience with all women throughout time and throughout the world; and because of the particulars of skin color, social class, family, country and historical time, we are also in distinct and separate groups.

I know that if there is a return of the Goddess she will have many names, many faces, and manifestations, and individual women will feel her presence within themselves. In my mind's eye, I see a circle of women of many races, of all ages and situations, each having a sense of herself as an extension of the Goddess, and each thus having the expectation that she will be treated with respect. By acting from this premise, these women – my sisters – can change the world. It is fitting that we say “Namaste” to one another in turn, by which we mean, “the Goddess in me beholds and honors the Goddess in you.”

Gail: Do you think that therapy and spirituality can be considered as forms of consciousness raising for women?

Jean: I think that they can be tremendously empowering. When I was on the board of the Ms. Foundation for Women, one of the things I could see was that if women's centers attended to a spiritual source, they would nurture women, inspire them, and help them to endure. It is very difficult to stand on the front lines with only outrage to sustain us. In order to sustain ourselves on the front lines, I think we really have to tap

into something that truly nurtures us. Part of what nurtures us is working in the company of other women, which is clearly one of the major nurturing presences. But beyond that, there is a deeper need to be in touch with what could be called the archetype of the Self. In order to have a sense that at some really deep level this is sacred work, we need to feel the empowerment of the archetype itself as we do the work. So I think the most effective warriors need to be in touch with the archetypal Self so that there is compassion as well as anger. There is a whole other level of changing the world that involves compassionate action as well as outrage in action. Outrage may begin it; but somewhere along the line, if the shift can be made to sustain that forward movement through the spiritual dimension, it will be greatly enriched.

Gail: *What is the source of your spirit or your energy? What empowers you personally?*

Jean: When I was a teenager, I had a direct sense of God so that I did not end up questioning that there is a soul element. And then as my life progressed, that spiritual dimension continued to be a part of my life but it took different forms. I had a sense that women share a truly sacred dimension by being able to carry a new life into this world, through direct expression and experience. It was actually in childbirth, during labor and delivery, that I joined the Women's Movement. Before then I somehow didn't see the issues as particularly mine, but that particular experience made me aware not only of the sacred dimension of what we experience being in a woman's body, it also gave me tremendous respect for and a sense of connection with every woman who has ever given birth.

And thank goodness for all the women who wrote all the feminist anthologies in the seventies. When I gave birth to my first child, all that information was available to me along with the perspective that I had gained from working with women patients. It was a combination of all of this that brought me into the Women's Movement. I also felt more like Artemis than any of the other Goddesses. Archetypally, Artemis is the sister, the woman who has a woman-to-herself quality, so that, too, was part of the archetypal and spiritual underpinnings that contributed to my entering the Women's Movement.

And then there was my own evolution through pilgrimages to sacred places on the Earth. It is said that pilgrims go on pilgrimage to "quicken the divinity," and experience something that they couldn't experience by staying at home. I could feel in my body the energy of places that had been sacred to the Goddess, the druids, and the Christians, and that was a turning point for me. It changed me and the changes were effected on

other than a cognitive, abstract, verbal level. This experience told me something about my connection on a sacred level with the Earth, that my body and the Earth were in communion at some level.

It is empowering to have the experience of knowing something deeply, regardless of whether you can explain it to anyone else. Most people have had such an experience, and many of them don't place value on it, and therefore it doesn't instruct their lives. What a mistake this is! All my work really has to do with helping people to remember and reconnect with their own sources of union with divinity and meaning, because I know firsthand that creativity, authenticity, and depth grow out of this. **M**

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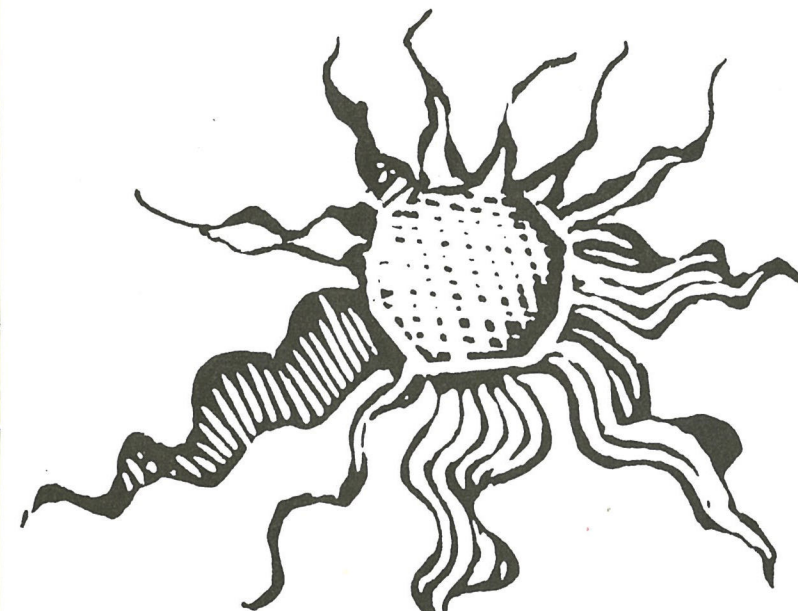
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NOTES

1. *Temenos* is described more fully in *Ring of Power*, by Jean Shinoda Bolen, to be published by Harper Collins, May 1992.

2. See Marion Woodman, *The Tarrytown Letter*, published by the Tarrytown Group, No. 54, December 1985/January 1986.



RITUALS AND RITUAL OBJECTS

An Exhibition/Exploration
of Personal Rituals in
Our Work/Lives

By **MARTHA COLE**

RITUALS AND RITUAL OBJECTS
Co-ordinator & Participant

RITUALS AND RITUAL OBJECTS was an exhibition/process sponsored by the Saskatchewan Craft Council (SCC). Open to any craftsman who was a member of the SCC, the only criteria for participation was a commitment to explore personal rituals through a series of meetings/workshops to be held over a period of two years prior to mounting the exhibition.

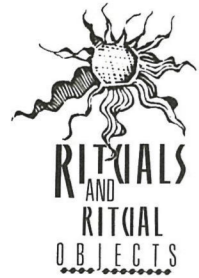
RITUALS AND RITUAL OBJECTS was based on a number of concepts and assumptions about group process, which are not common to most exhibitions. Some of the most important among these were: individual competence and responsibility, "woman-process", empowerment, and acceptance of diversity. As the group both individually and collectively continued to discuss ritual and to place it in a personal context, the importance of these underlying concepts became more and more apparent.

We held our first meeting in June, 1988. Each of us showed slides of our work and talked about what we do and what we thought this project was about. Discussions took place in both large and small groups with everyone participating and reporting back. The group, as a whole, assumed responsibility for its own structure — creating a lateral process. Decisions, when needed, were arrived at by a process of consensus: circling around the issues until all concerns raised were addressed. Attention was paid to the emotional needs of group members to come to know each other as integral to the process of mounting the exhibit. A substantial part of each meeting was devoted to getting (re)acquainted and (re)connected.

The open-endedness of the project, in conjunction with the personal affirmation each woman received as part of our process, encouraged us to experiment in our works. The mutual trust we developed made it possible for us to bring tentative ideas and works-in-progress to the meetings and to ask for feedback: knowing that if it was critical it would be given in a caring and constructive manner. Each of us, through this process, tentatively, in her own way and in her own time, integrated the ideas and issues from the discussions into her life and into her work. By examining our processes and our work in the context of ritual we gave significance and respect to ourselves, our activities, the results of our activities, and to our lives generally. The resulting exhibition — **Rituals and Ritual Objects** — opened in December, 1989. It toured the province for the next year and was installed in eleven different venues.

Artist Statement

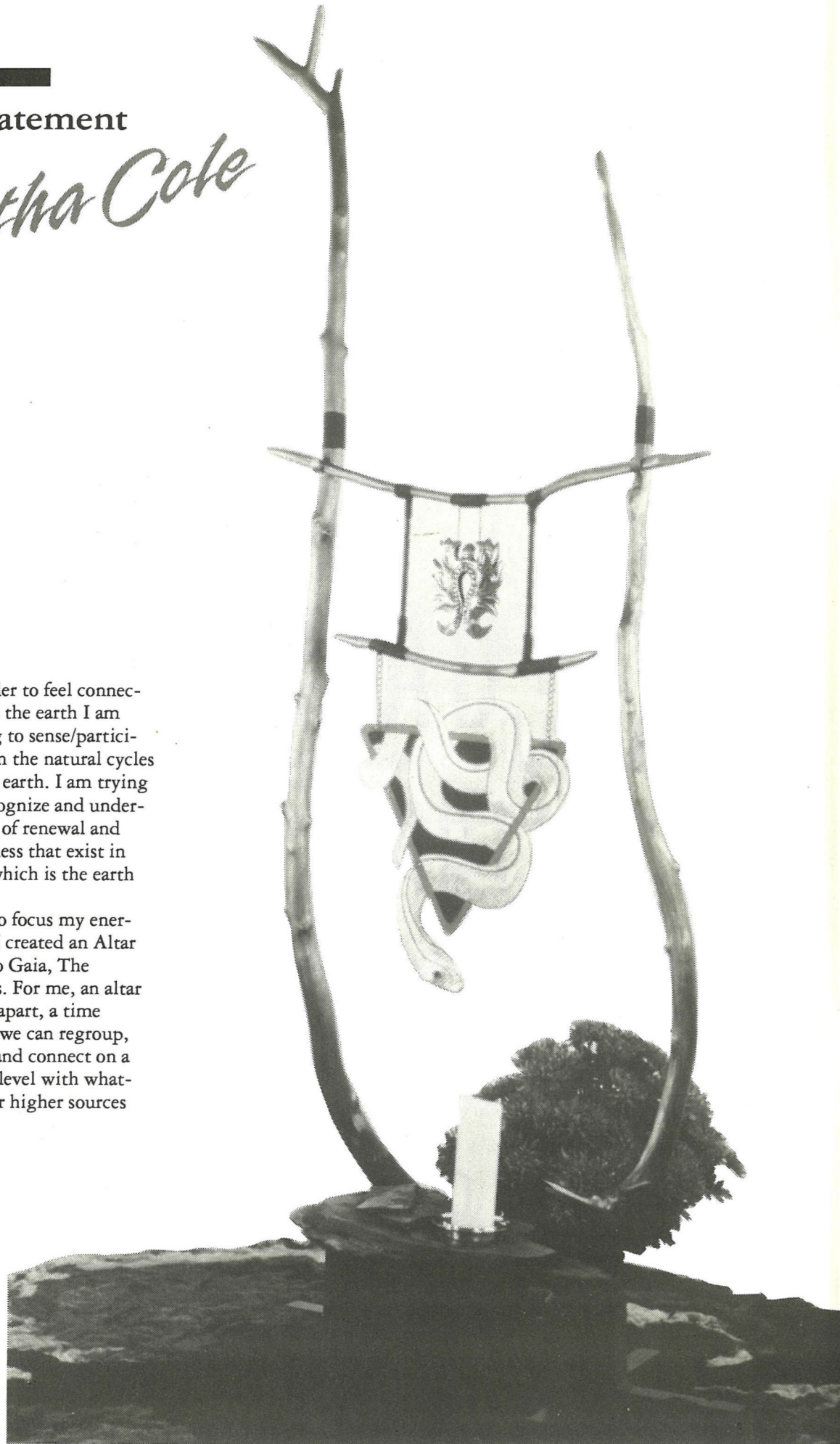
Martha Cole



In order to feel connected to the earth I am trying to sense/participate in the natural cycles of the earth. I am trying to recognize and understand the cycles of renewal and interconnectedness that exist in the biosphere, which is the earth organism.

To help me to focus my energies upon this, I created an Altar to the Earth – to Gaia, The Mother Goddess. For me, an altar creates “a space apart, a time apart” in which we can regroup, heal, celebrate, and connect on a deeper personal level with whatever inner and/or higher sources we believe in.

*Martha Cole,
Alter to the Earth*



Artist Statement

Jane Coombe



Several years ago I began to realize the importance of ritual and divination as a clearing space for personal focussing. I was inspired by Starhawk's

writings which link ritual and understanding of Goddess mythology to personal and political action. I explored the use of multi-media images to reflect more critically upon my own learning process.

The entire process of collecting and creating ritual objects and working with a group of women artists has been very empowering. I have followed my heart's desire in creating and being in touch with the power to merge what comes from within.

*Jane Coombe,
Life Spinner,
Mask and
Medicine Shield*





The Stations of the Cross

Ingrid MacDonald

Ingrid MacDonald, a Toronto writer, is also the author of Catherine, Catherine, a collection of lesbian short stories published by the Women's Press, 1991.

December 25, 1991. It is late in the night and we are in bed. Talking for hours. Visionary one: you say our deaths will be gifts, one to the other, whoever goes first. I try to accept this idea of yours: death as a gift. It's hard to reconcile with my idea: death as a loss. There are so few women who love the way we do. Who can we tell our lives to? How can I imagine the world without you? Alice B. Toklas had to imagine the world without her Gertrude Stein for twenty years, after Gertrude Stein gave her the gift of her death. Alice's autobiography, which Gertrude Stein had elected to write, was left unfinished. It's enough of a book, I suppose, looking at it on the shelf at our public library, without the last decades. During those years Alice walked their big white poodle, its nails clacking on the village cobblestone, and she wrote a cookbook of European delicacies, often calling for the yolks of eight eggs. She still longed for her Gertrude Stein, and is said to have converted to Catholicism, so she might find her again, in the afterlife.

Mountain: In the Home Country, Grossmutti pulls two pair of socks onto strong legs. Red kerchief over strictly combed hair. Butterbread in pocket. Stick peeled smooth by bone handled knife. Grossmutti, butterbreaded, red kerchiefed, taps the path up the mountain every day with her dog and a small herd of brown and white cows. Work becomes the life of any woman and Carrier of Stick Walker Up Mountain keeps twelve cows each named after the apostles with a Matthias, of course, instead of Judas. In summer the Alm is higher up, in fall, not so far. Twelve cows beget milk, which begets buttermilk and chocolate. In the woods, bells on their leather collars clang the sound of cuckoos. Tomorrow, wearing her second best dress, a smock with buttons that dot her girth like flies on a bedsheet, she'll enter the hospital. The white part of her eyes is milky yellow, a few long hairs grow from her drooping goitre chin. She is sixty seven years old and this is her first time in surgery.



December 26, 1991. For the past month I have carried a box of tissues wherever I go. Not much is happening, but there's so much to cry about. I cry at the dentist, on the subway, in the grocery store. Like stones found at the bottom of a lake, I am excavating years of pain. I pull them up and put words or tears to them. One after another these memories come, flying out of the pocket of my childhood, tied together like the bright coloured silks of a magician's handkerchief. After making love, I cry in your arms for half an hour. I did this last night, I am doing it tonight and will likely do it again tomorrow. Encompassed by this feeling, this being loved, I cry for the years and years of feeling no love at all. I smell your warm skin dampened by my tears. I say I can't imagine being with anyone after you. You say, there is no such thing, 'after you'.

Hospital: Grossmutti has been admitted, her flowerprint dress exchanged for a hospital gown. In the hallway a very old man in a wheelchair, straight backed, tongue lolling, says *Schlagen mich nicht*, over and over, his eyes fixed elsewhere. He begs someone not to hit him. Grossmutti folds her stockings carefully and then the nurse gives her an enema, which inflates her belly until her bowel exhales, gushing tepid water and shredded shit into a silver pan. A sedative is brought in a paper cup. The curtain is drawn around the bed, but it's soft and pale, like wind. Sound seeps underneath it. The very old man weeping. Soft shoes on green linoleum. A tree outside. The sound from childhood of her own mother coughing in a kitchen where she sits and sews.



December 27, 1991. At breakfast we resume the discussion. Coffee, soft boiled eggs, cornbread toast, and the problem of death. I relate the story of Rosa Bonheur, from an obscure reference in an art history textbook, a French female painter who refused to dress like a woman. The Empress Josephine heard of Rosa's reputation and asked her to court, but the grandeur of the occasion unnerved Rosa. She changed out of her trousers and tie and, wearing a dress, disappointed Josephine. Rosa had a love, a woman who died. Their love endured but they were separated by two worlds: this world where Rosa wandered room to room with dry paint brushes, and the next. Into this great hole in Rosa's life came Anna Klumpke. A devoted younger woman with a clubfoot and considerable artistic merit. Anna went on a trip to the New World, taking the train to the west, hanging off the back of it, grabbing what she could to bring back home. See? Unfolding a skirt full of wheat grass and brown eyed susans in front of Rosa. This is the New World. I went there and came back. Rosa instructed the masons to carve their initials above the doorway of their painting studio: RdB, AK, intertwined. In Anna's portrait of Rosa, Rosa is smiling and vibrant.

Death: Grossmutti can't remember where she left her walking stick. This is what bothers her as she is wheeled into the operating room. The mask of anaesthetic covers her nose, turns her face to warm stone, blots to silence the knives and needles on the other side of the cloth screen. The room is lit only in the middle, and there is an intimacy to it, as if the glow comes from Grossmutti's opened abdomen and there is gold in there, shining. A nurse checks the monitors, We're starting to lose her, she says, her voice plain but alarmed. Grossmutti's body is there, warm and sleeping like the barn in winter with its middle door opened, but her vital signs grow faint on the screens.



December 28, 1991. If you were to die, where would you go? Would I still be able to feel you near me? When P. died, I denied it. He was an artist. He couldn't have died, he wasn't finished his career yet. But a deeper part of me knew he was dead even before anyone phoned to say so. I was in front of the mirror putting on a pair of earrings, and my whole body succumbed to a sadness. P. is dying, I said, steadying myself on the dressing table, my hands on the polished wood. I quickly put the feeling away, guilty I wasn't helping him live longer, sending positive visualizations: P. gaining weight, P.'s white blood cells multiplying, P.'s blood thick and warm. Since his death I've wanted to give him something: a coat, a butterbread, some mittens. I imagine it's cold there, where death is, a house made of ice with reindeer and Lapps living nearby. But death is even farther than the Lapps. Traditionally, when a Lapp died, a reindeer was killed on the grave, so the soul would have an animal to take them across the snow.

Moon: The surgeon calls for intervention. His voice barks in the quiet room, the sound of a dog in an empty street. But Grossmutti is not coming back to her body. A moon come unstuck from its orbit, she whirls away into space, away from the planet of her body. Another doctor, drying his hands with a white towel, hurries in to the room. Pumps urge a rhythm and then the intermittent beeping of the monitor changes to a single sustained note. The second doctor still dries his hands on the towel.



December 29, 1991. I have made a plan: What I Will Do If You Die First. I will stay with your body, watching the animating force of you slip away. I will cry. Then, when you are so far away that you are small enough to be breathed in the air with the dust, I will make my way, still crying, to a barber and have all my hair shaved off. My hair is nearly down to my waist and I cannot tell you how much better I feel since I've made this decision, to cut it all off. Like a nun who renounces the world when she takes her final vow, in great dignity, I'll give you my hair. I see you in your coffin, my beloved, with my hair crossed over your heart. In the Haida tradition, the women cut their hair when they mourn their dead. They take a stone for a pillow and blacken their faces with pitch. They give gifts to the dead soul who must travel to a new world and marry a new husband or a new wife. I can't imagine that, that you would go to another world and take another lover. I see you waiting for me, carrying my hair towards me, which I take from you and wear like a life.

Earth: Grossmutti is grandmother to a girl named Olive who lives far from the Home Country in the New World. They have never met. When news comes, of Grossmutti dying like that, going into the anaesthetic and never waking up, her son, who is Olive's father, is glad she didn't feel pain. This is important to him, that she didn't suffer. Knowing that God would welcome her into His Kingdom, is also important to him, even though he himself does not believe. He has no use for religion and gives his cows secular names: Gurt, Hilde, Buster, Fritz. But he looks at Olive, who is seven. What will become of her without any God? He has the problem of death too. Where will he go when he dies? Into the ground? Just into the earth like a beast? He looks at the ground outside the window. It looks hard and cold.



December 30, 1991. We want to have enough time to properly die, and I suppose when I say that, I mean enough time to properly live. Some nights I feel sadness just letting you go as we fall to sleep, drifting off after our bedtime prayer: *We give thanks for this day, for all its sorrow and its joy. We ask the great spirit within to surround us with sleep, bring peace to our bodies and bless the sacredness of our bed. We call our dreams into our hearts that we may live them in our lives. May the love that is between us touch others in the world.* A life seems like so much and so little at the same time. Once, when I was thinking of the rest of our lives in terms of years it seemed like so little. So I calculated it in days, hoping it would feel like more, but I was still disappointed. Here, you said, give me the calculator. 50 times 365 equals. Only 18,250? Is that all? you said. See why I'm sad?

Fountain: Sunday afternoon the father and mother take Olive into town, to a modern church built in the shape of a triangle, out of slabs of rough grey stone. Olive in sidesaddle shoes stands on tiptoe over a deep stone fountain. Water and oil is poured onto her forehead by a priest. She can only see the black wool of her father's suit and the white frill of a baby's gown, who is also here to be baptised. Olive feels her life sundered as the priest wipes his hands on a cloth held by an altar boy. He speaks quietly, his hands passing over her, but Olive knows the operation didn't work. The priest was supposed to take away her sins, but as Olive raises her head from the deep stone bowl she can tell something has gone wrong. For the first time in her life she has the urge to steal something or break a window.



December 31, 1991. That other side of life, which we get to by dying, has its place in our love but I'm not sure how. Is it part of what makes our love so tender? St. Teresa of Avila loved God so intensely, she floated off the ground. The Convent Superior gave instruction to the younger nuns, to watch Teresa and grab her by the skirt, should she start. Morning bells chiming, church doors opening, Sister Superior did not want the local women with their hardworked eyes and blacklace collars seeing a nun that way, floating above the altar. Teresa didn't like floating either. She was humble and it drew too much attention to herself. Though she was his servant, she asked God to make it stop. Though she felt spiritually wretched, she courted God like a beloved and filled her wretchedness with his light. She saw him standing before her, a figure in a darkened room. When I'm away from you I try to imagine your face, your features. Though I have looked into your face for hours, for weeks, for years, it is remarkably difficult to imagine you precisely or in all your parts. I retain this: the sound of your voice; the feel of your cheek against mine; the warmth of the bed as you sleep beside me; the image of you walking towards me, with light of the sun behind you, drawing you in outline. These memories amount to a kind of wretchedness, a poverty of remnants, when I compare them to the real you.

Grave: Olive, now called Mary because Olive is not a Christian name, finds a dead bird in the yard. A speckled hedge bird, her brown body soft and limp, like a bean bag with a hole in the seam. Olive carries the bird carefully about the yard, then gouges out its eyes and buries it, so she may return to the Great Mother of All Birds. When her mother comes out, Olive shows her the birdgrave and tells her about the Great Mother Bird who is represented by a stone on the tiny mound. Never to say such nonsense again, her mother says, leading Olive into the house for a vigorous hand-wash. When Olive goes to bed, her mother softens and brings a glass of warm milk and a picture of a man with bleeding hands. From now on, there is no Great Mother of All Birds, there is only Jesus. In the morning Olive gets a spanking, because she gouged the picture, poking Jesus' eyes out with a pencil.



VIII
January 1, 1992. In the forest, a hunt is underway. I can hear the hooves and the barking of dogs. I am walking with you, my lover, when we meet an old woman. I wish we could leave the forest without her, this woman in coarse brown wool, but once I've looked into her eyes, it's inevitable. She will be with us. We take her to our house and I make a bed for her, as I would for a cat, putting pillows and blankets on the floor, in the corner. She sleeps there and surprises me at first by carefully bathing everyday. I ask if she would like me to help her with the cows, but she points out the window and says no, you need more flowers. Plant seeds instead. By the end of the week she prefers to sleep with us and climbs into our big bed. We lie, the three of us in a row, the old woman of the forest in her woollens, lightly resting one of her hands on my belly.

Fatherland: The kitchen radio plays the Sunday sermon of a local preacher. Olive's father argues back at the radio, wags his finger at it, turns it off in disgust. Such socialist mish-mash. Olive's father takes it upon himself to educate her. Olive's job is to hold the bible open so her father can use his hands while he preaches. He really doesn't know much about the Bible but he is determined, since Grossmutti died, to instill Olive with values. His real passion is for the Fatherland, and so he preaches of God as if God were the Fatherland and their family were the obedient subjects of God's country. A Christian girl does what she is told. The Bible grows heavier by the hour. A Christian girl obeys her Mother and Father. Sometimes her father leans his elbows there, on the Bible, as if she were a lectern. In moments of oratorical passion he grips the edges of her with his big thumbs.



IX
January 2, 1992. At night a burnt-sugar smell wakes me. Have we left a pot on the stove? Drowsy, I make my way downstairs. From the kitchen I hear the sound of water being poured into a hot dry pot. A brilliant light comes from the kitchen, and I'm astonished to see the kitchen is filled with people, men and women in their best dark clothes, drinking strong coffee from cups and saucers. They've gone to my funeral and this is my wake. I'm terrified. I've accidentally entered another existence. The coffee drinkers turn and look, as if they've been waiting for me. I'm too afraid to approach. What if I can't return to you, my lover? When Buddhist Master Takkan was dying, his disciples asked that he write a death poem. He resisted, but they prevailed. He drew his poem with a single character, a Yume, which means Dream. Did he mean that life is but a dream? Or death. Is death but a dream? There was no time to ask him. He had already died.

Stones: How much damage can a thumb do? A sensitive teacher notices something strange when Olive, whom she has to remind herself to call Mary now, volunteers to stay after school and clean the blackboards. She cleans the boards and then stays in her seat for a long time, looking out the window. Actually the teacher noticed something strange earlier, when she saw Olive outside by herself, throwing stones at a pigeon. She mentions it discretely to the librarian, not the business about the pigeon, but that the girl is not herself. The librarian Miss Fitzgerald is engaged to be married soon. Keep an eye out, she says from behind recipe cards organized in the dewey decimal system. If it gets worse, something might have to be done. What are you seeing anyways? Hard to say. Looks like. Thumbmarks.



X
January 3, 1992. At the museum with A. who is seven years old. Passing a statue of Buddha, his huge belly a ball of dark metal shining. Is that the God you guys are always talking about? she asks. Well, he's one of them. Buddhists see death as a culmination. In "Practical Instructions for Dying," the dying person is advised not to take treatments which numb pain at the expense of consciousness. I think love should matter as much as consciousness, as in the Psalms, where it says, what you love, you bring forward, if you did not love something, you would not bring it forth. So much courage is needed to love consciously. Buddhist Master Fugai asked one of the monks to dig a deep pit. Fugai, who felt death coming towards him on its wheel, climbed down into the pit. Into the earth's womb. Lovingly, he instructed the monk to cover him with earth.

Pool: Their friends, the Muhldorfs, own a motel in town, and they have a pool. In summer, Olive and her parents drive in for a swim and social. The Muhldorfs have two kids, and the father comes from the Fatherland too, but Olive thinks all fathers come from there, and mothers, in a much less talked about way, from a Motherland. The parents drink drinks in pink and green swirled see-through plastic tumblers with ice that clatters down when the glass is emptied. A woman who is staying at the motel sits by the edge of the pool, sunning herself and reading. Olive and the Muhldorf boys have swim races, which Olive wins. The woman gathers her towel and sun oils, and puts on a short terry-cloth robe, readying herself before going back to her room. She says hello and what's your name? Olive, says Olive. You swim so well Olive, the woman says. She crouches by the edge of the pool with her towel over her arm. Olive touches the ledge, her body in water. The woman touches one of Olive's fingers, sweetly, she says, look you're wrinkled like a prune.



XI
January 4, 1992. All things have the ability to be sacred if we choose sacredness for them, and give them a place to be. In the morning, you light a candle on the altar and we sit on the floor for a few moments. Our altar is a simple table in front of the window with our sacred things on it: candles; stones and shells; a large shell filled with dry green lentils for burning incense; sweetgrass; a tibetan prayer wheel; three feathers, of a magpie, a bluejay and an eagle; a piece of purple silk; a hand painted glass bottle from India; cards we have given each other; an Amish inspired 'plain and simple' journal which we keep together, each writing in it when we have something to say; and a few crystals. I blow out the candle and we begin our day's work. I read a Christian letter from our friend J. who is staying at a monastery in Saskatchewan where she's writing a play. After some days she approaches one of the ancient monks. To us she writes: So I said, Brother Gregory, what's it all about? And he said, just love yourself. God is Love.

Reflection: Olive's father says, Mary, come here right away. Olive presents herself, dripping. What did the woman say to you? Nothing. Her father's chest hairs show through the opened hawaiian-style shirt he wears. He shakes his head. I don't want you talking to her, do you hear me? Olive pats the sand under her big toe. She was just being nice. Her father snorts. That's just a put on. She's trying to get information out of you by being nice. Olive folds her arms. We didn't talk about anything. He looks at Olive through his mirrored aviator glasses and very carefully says, there is a certain kind of people in the world who don't like us, and she's one of them. But why, Dad? Because I'm telling you. Olive looks at the woman who is unlatching the gate to leave. The woman has dark hair, brown eyes, and fair skin. Everything about her looks pleasant and ordinary. She doesn't look like a certain kind of person at all. Olive puts her fists into a tight ball. She hits her father's arm and screams, I hate you Daddy.



XVII
 January 5, 1992. A. suggests we go to Sunday service at the gay community church. I'm not sure I want to go. I'm sceptical of what organized religion can do for me, as we arrive and take the last few seats available. The church is packed, more men than women, and precious winter light streams through yellow windows. A. has been here before with her mother. A. likes church. She writes a story in her notebook during the readings and sermons, drawing a picture of our rented summer cottage. At communion I walk uncertainly to the front. I watch the man in front of me, the minister gives him the host and whispers in his ear, her head bowed. I imagine she must know him, the way he smiles, the way she talks to him. But when I get there she puts the host in my mouth and then her arms on my shoulders. My arms are raised up to her. My sister, she says, remember your gifts, fill yourself with blessings here and take them with you, into the world. When I get back to the pew, A. wants to know what the woman said to make me cry.

Key: What did you say? Her father goes from a drowsy recline to his full six feet in less than a second. There is a shed off the pool, decorated in faux cabana motifs, filled with pool hardware, hoses, pumps, lost and found bathing suits, Mr. Muhldorf's chlorine tester kit and his bottle of schnapps. Olive's father grab's her arm and pushes her into the dark cabin, into its hot musty chlorine smell, and closes the door behind them. He isn't a violent man, so he doesn't have anything in mind when he pushes her in the hut but the objects all around him inspire him. He picks up a plastic diving flipper that is on a shelf near his hand and hits her across the face with the back of it. A Christian girl never speaks back to her father. Then he turns to leave her in the shed, thinking she can cool down in there, when he sees the key hanging on a hook. You'll stay in here young lady until you can prove you're willing to listen to your father. He locks the door. The brightness of the day hurts his eyes. When he hears the ruckus that Olive makes in the shed, throwing cans and hoses onto the floor, he takes the key and throws it into the pool.



XVIII
 January 6, 1992. Epiphany, a day for gifts. The day the Magi arrived at the stable and saw a king glowing inside the body of a wee little baby. That kind of glow makes you tremble. I'm trembling a bit right now in the face of your great gift to me. Relaxing in your arms, looking in your face, I see the beautiful face of a loving mother, there inside your normal face. It glows and then diminishes like a star at dawn. Then we get up, normal as anything, prepare toast and eggs for the morning. The cat is hungry. The newspaper comes, the mail comes. I'm humming a Christmas song as the coffeemaker burbles. *Do you see what I see? A star. A star. Way up in the sky with a voice as big as us all.* I've come to a place inside myself where it's enough to live only to dream. Where to dream is to live. Before now I had thought of dreaming as a gate with only one side, a gate which I passed through, alone, in a direction away from the world, for reasons of self-enhancement. Last night I found an opening on other side, and a great big wind whooshing. Doors banged on their hinges and the curtains were sucked against the windows. That's when I saw God. She had big hair and huge breasts swaddled in a loud outfit. She's a good shopper, God is, and she wore a nice, if bright green, set of clothes. She wasn't very happy with the size of the gate. She had to jam her shopping bag in front of her, and really push to squeeze her big and glorious hips through that narrow, difficult space.

Tomb: At this point, the experience of the compassionate spectator is all that is left of this story. The child Olive is not here. Do what you must now, go back to your work, or hurry home to your dinners. It's no longer early and the cold comes on suddenly, often bringing snow. Button up well, don't get caught in the cold. The child is no longer here. Go home now. Later we will learn that her spirit lives, that a life miraculously survives inside her body. The women who come to do the washing see it early that Sunday morning. They find the stone has been moved away from the tomb. They run to you, leaving their things on the ground, shouting to you, they've seen her again and alive. **M**

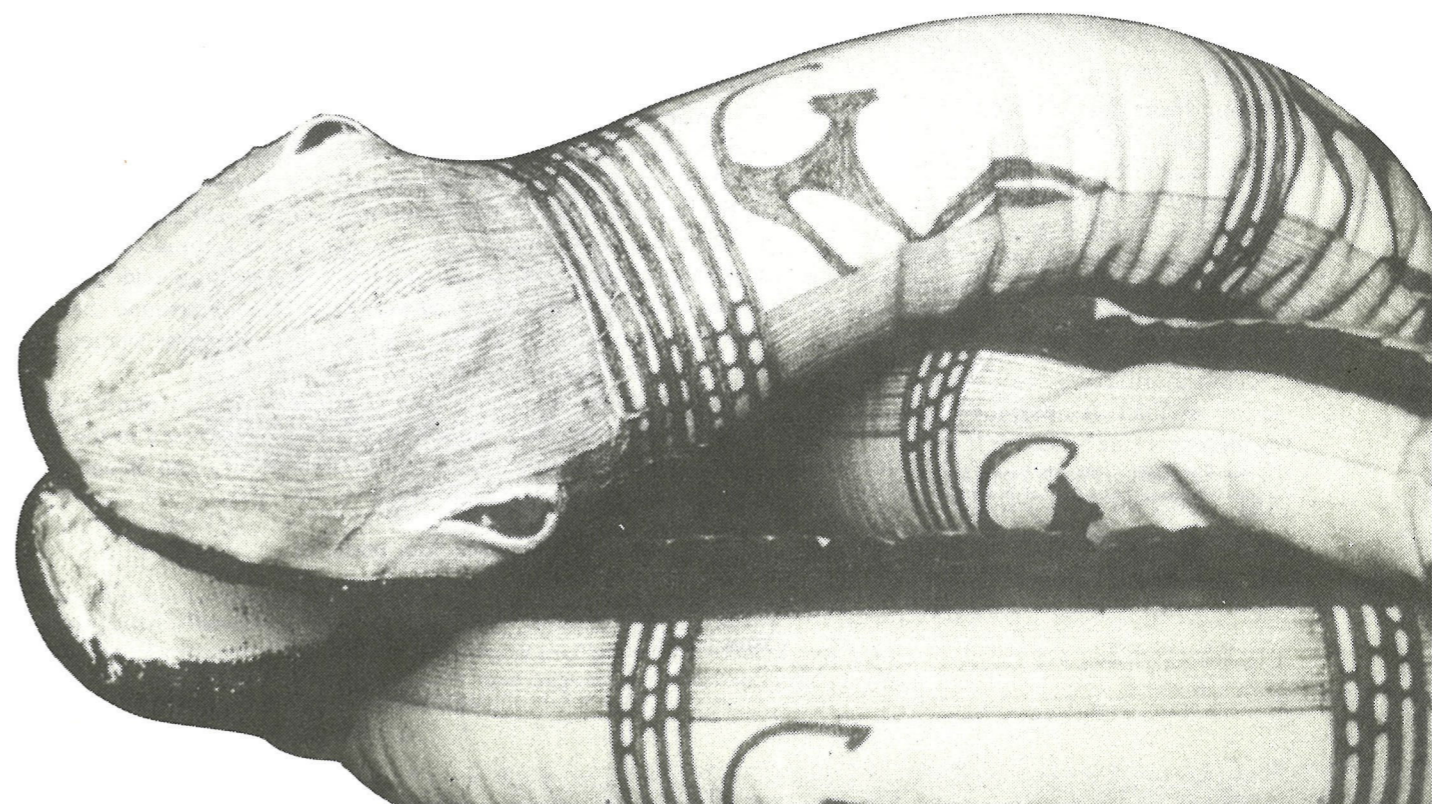


THE Last Temptation OF EVE

BY
MATTI SEVINK

I preface this article by telling you that my background is European. I was born in Holland and cast anchor here at eight months of age. My parents were Roman Catholic but they chose to raise my sister and I without any formal religious training. And so, I went through a major part of my life believing that I escaped indoctrination into "Western" religious tradition.

A while ago I began to research weight prejudice. (I had grown quite fat and was encountering some really unpleasant reactions from people around me regarding my body. *My body.*) It became apparent to me that this bigotry was yet another form of misogyny. What I found in the process was a Europe with matrilineal cultures that had thrived for at least 35,000 years.



Matti Sevink, *Last Temptation of Eve*, 1991, installation (detail).

“Take back your body”

Part of the methodology required in changing belief systems is the redefinition or co-optation of symbols and sacred objects. Positive symbols of the old system become negative symbols in the new system. An example of this redefinition is the myth of Adam and Eve in which the Great Snake Goddess is cast as the *evil* serpent in the Tree of Knowledge. (She is also known for her roles as Medusa and Lilith, Adam's first wife.)¹

In an attempt to rehabilitate the healing symbols that the snake represented in pre-patriarchal times, I have painted or embroidered the snake skins in motifs from European matrilineal cultures. One skin is painted in the howling dog motif which was an example of Cucuteni B culture, early 4th millennium b.c.e.² The howling dog was a powerful symbol of “becoming” because it was thought to stimulate plant growth and the lunar and menstrual cycles.

Another skin pattern is from the Karanovo culture of the lower Danube, c. 5000 b.c.e.³ This is a winding snake design which was used on columns built around tree trunks. The snake with its ability to shed its skin was regarded as a symbol of renewal, rebirth, and regeneration.

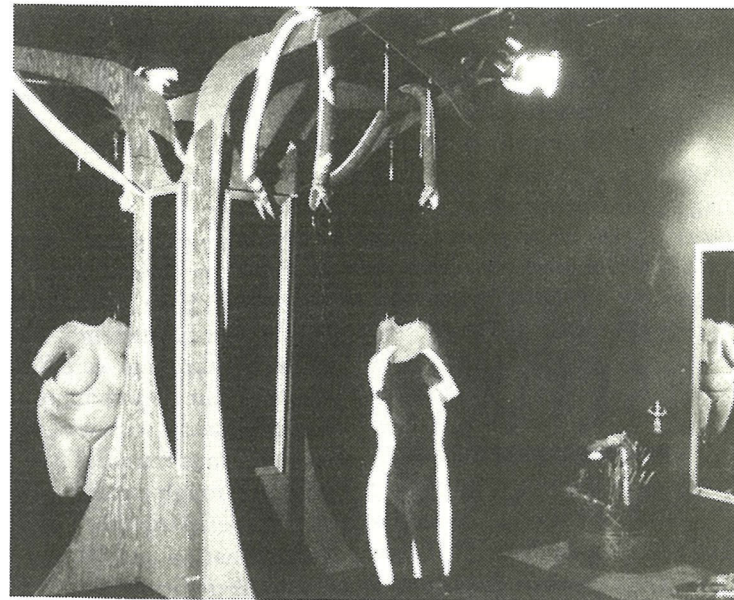
FOOTNOTES

1. Barbara Black Koltuv, PhD., *The Book of Lilith*.
2. Marija Gimbutas, *The Language of the Goddess*.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent*.

Ever since Eve ate the apple (around 900 b.c.e.)⁴, women have been disassociating from their bodies, first to escape guilt and finally to feel safe.

Here is a tour of my installation

THE LAST TEMPTATION OF EVE



Matti Sevink, *Last Temptation of Eve*, 1991, installation

You have entered the garden and before you stands the Tree of Knowledge. The trunk of the tree is encased in mirrors. Body masks of women's bodies in various shapes, sizes and skin tones are suspended from the branches of the tree, each one facing the mirrors.

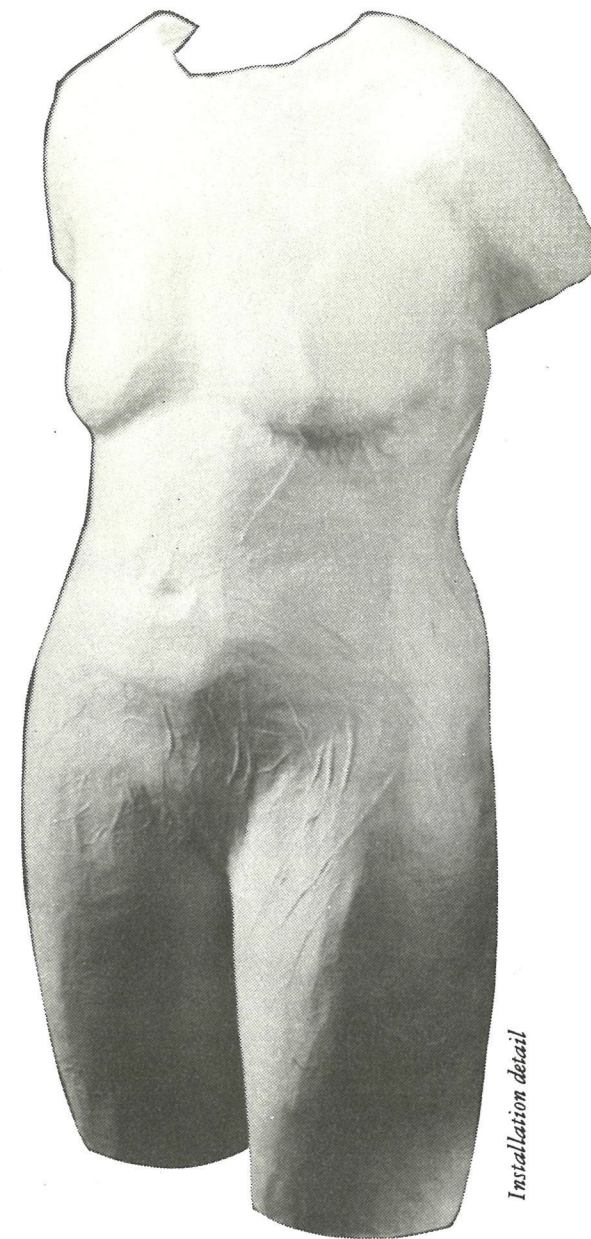
You step up to a body mask, put it on and look in the mirror. In the branch, over your head, you notice a snake. It is holding a set of headphones in its mouth. You take the headphones from the snake and put them on. What you hear is a recording made by the model whose body you are now wearing. You move around the tree trying on each of the bodies and you listen to these women tell you their stories. Each one is very different.

At last you come to a mirror with no body mask. Around your feet are baskets of bread and wheat. You look at yourself in the mirror. The snake offers you the headphones. Put them on and listen to her whispering song;

Take back your body.

Take back your voice,
your soul,
your power.

Take the fruit.



Installation detail

In the old matricentric religions, the symbols almost always represented the ideas of connectedness and cycles – of all things through time. Spirituality was a somatic striving to maintain this connectedness. You stayed connected to your body and everything and everybody else since you are all parts of one whole thing. In unity, you were the power of life, greater than the sum of its parts. This meant that achieving unity with all things *was* the spiritual experience.

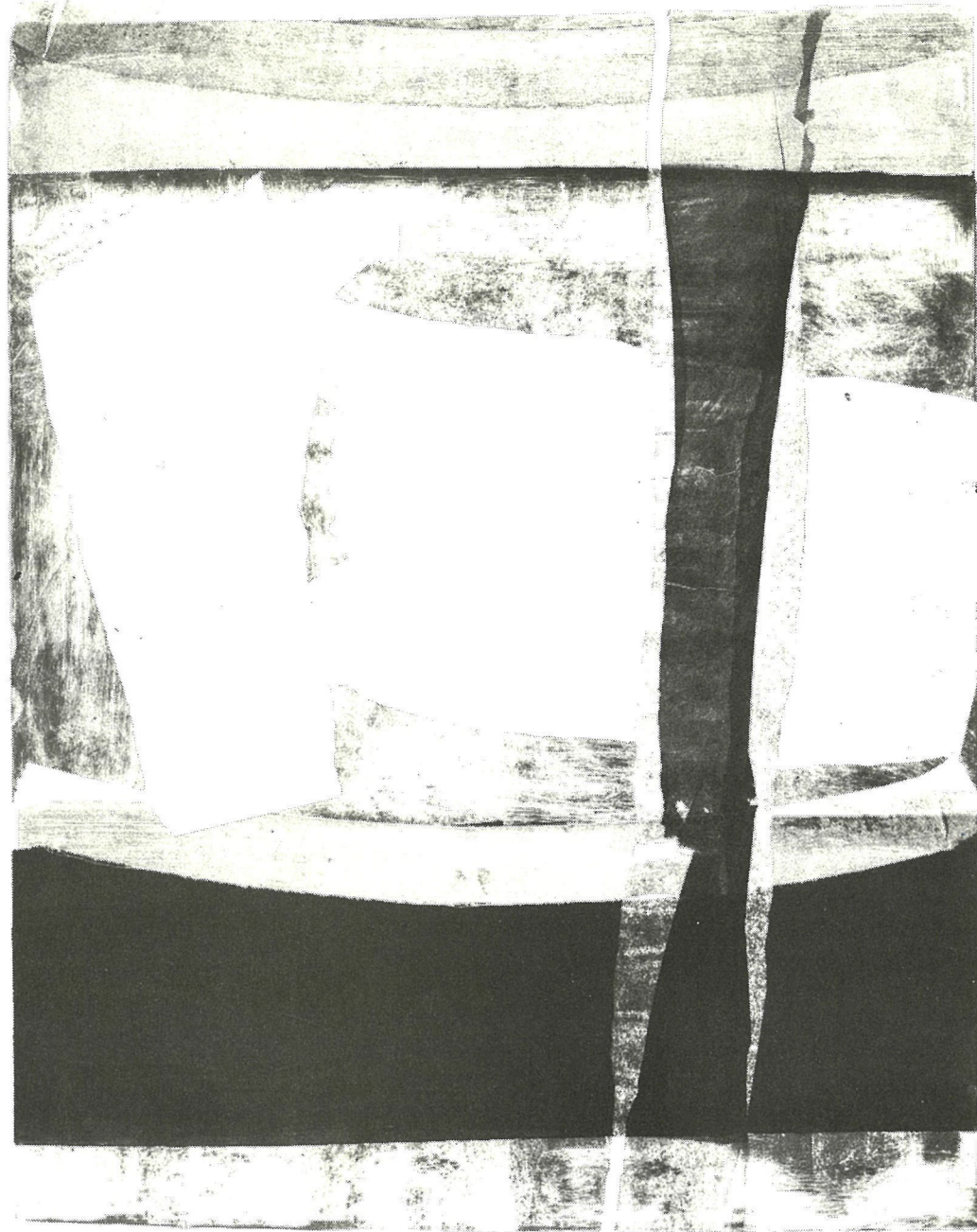
Patriarchy, on the other hand, is a system of domination which is dependent of disunity. Dualism replaces a holistic system, us/them replaces we, heaven/hell replaces the cosmos and absolute good and evil are introduced. Our bodies, now part of nature – the bottom of the hierarchy, must be controlled. Our minds which separate us from nature, are the closest thing to God – even more so if you are a man.

This mind/body split has had a profound effect on women. We are made to look at our bodies as parts that need to be constantly fixed and controlled – kept within limits defined for us by others. It's the ultimate practice of “divide and conquer.”

It is time to do away with pyramids. We need to resurrect nature. It is through the re-appropriation of our bodies, our voices, our spirits and our planet that we will rehabilitate a sense of connectedness that is so important if we are to survive. We need to give up the idea of heaven and come back down to earth. We need consciousness-lowering on a grand scale.

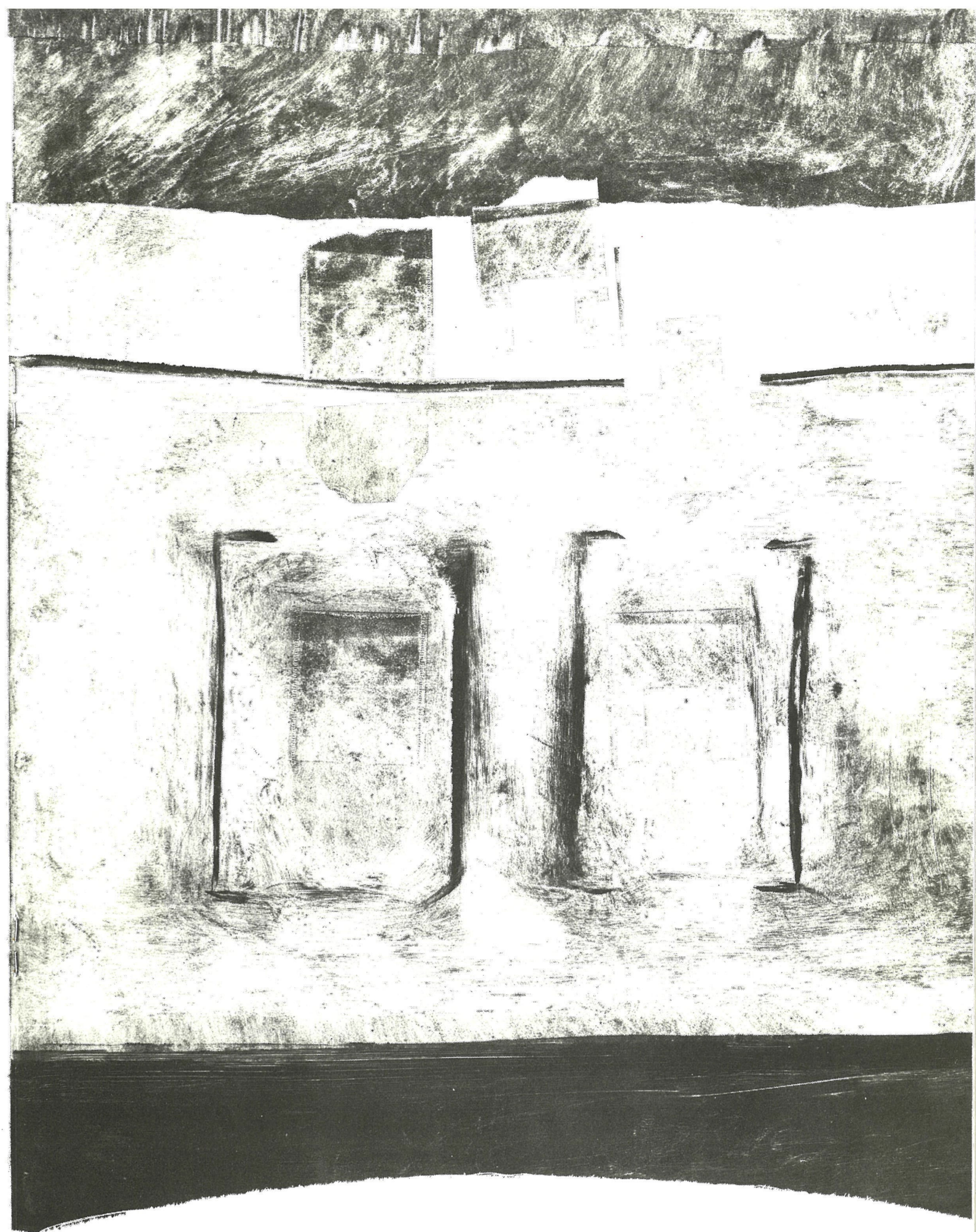
Matti Sevink is a Toronto artist and filmmaker. She is currently in production on her feature documentary “The Fat Lady Sings” about the politics of beauty. “The Last Temptation of Eve” will be on display at the National Film Board from May 28 - 31st. Music for “Last Temptation” was composed and performed by the women's a cappella group “By Any Other Name.”

CAROLYN ROWNEY



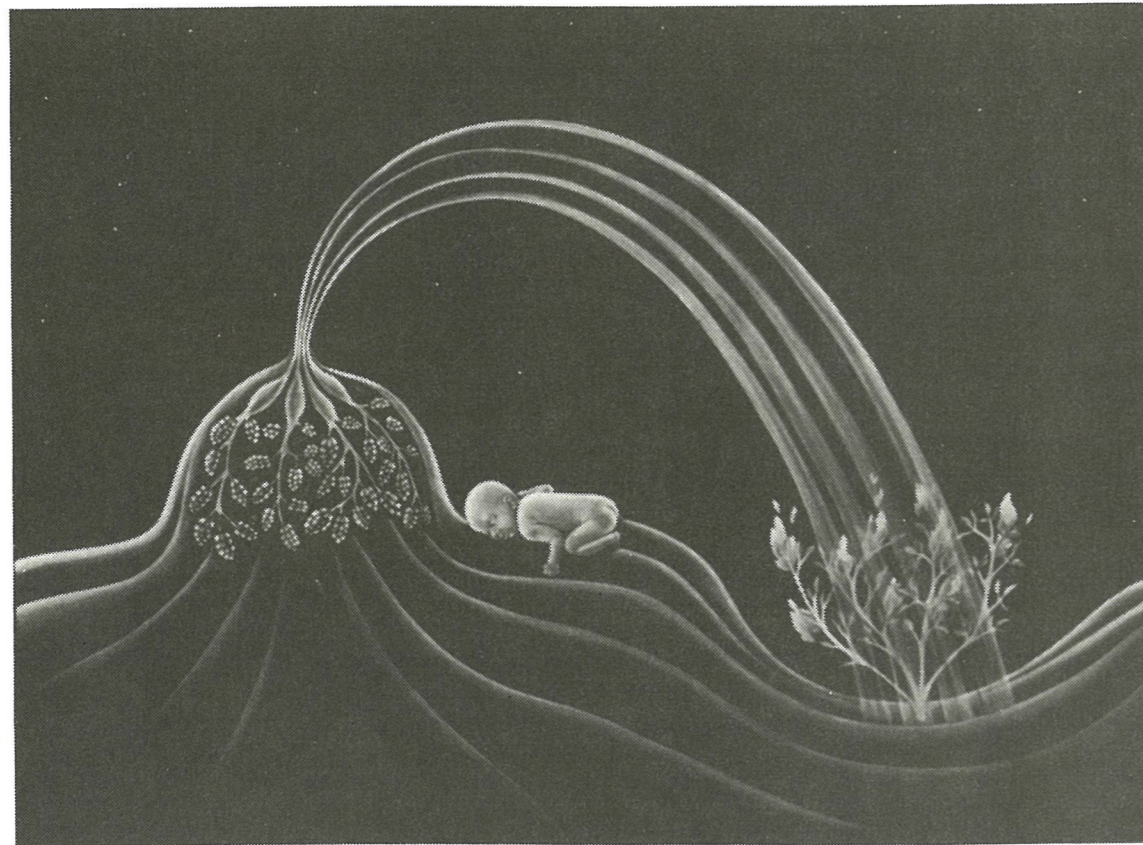
Carolyn is an artist who works primarily in painting. She recently has returned to Toronto after graduating from Parsons School of Design in New York City and Paris. Working in abstraction as a form of representation, she tries to transgress boundaries created by the media and is concerned with

feminist issues dealing with the body. Autobiography is an important element in her abstract paintings and prints. Currently she is working on an erotic video, in which the images and content will be from a lesbian point of view.



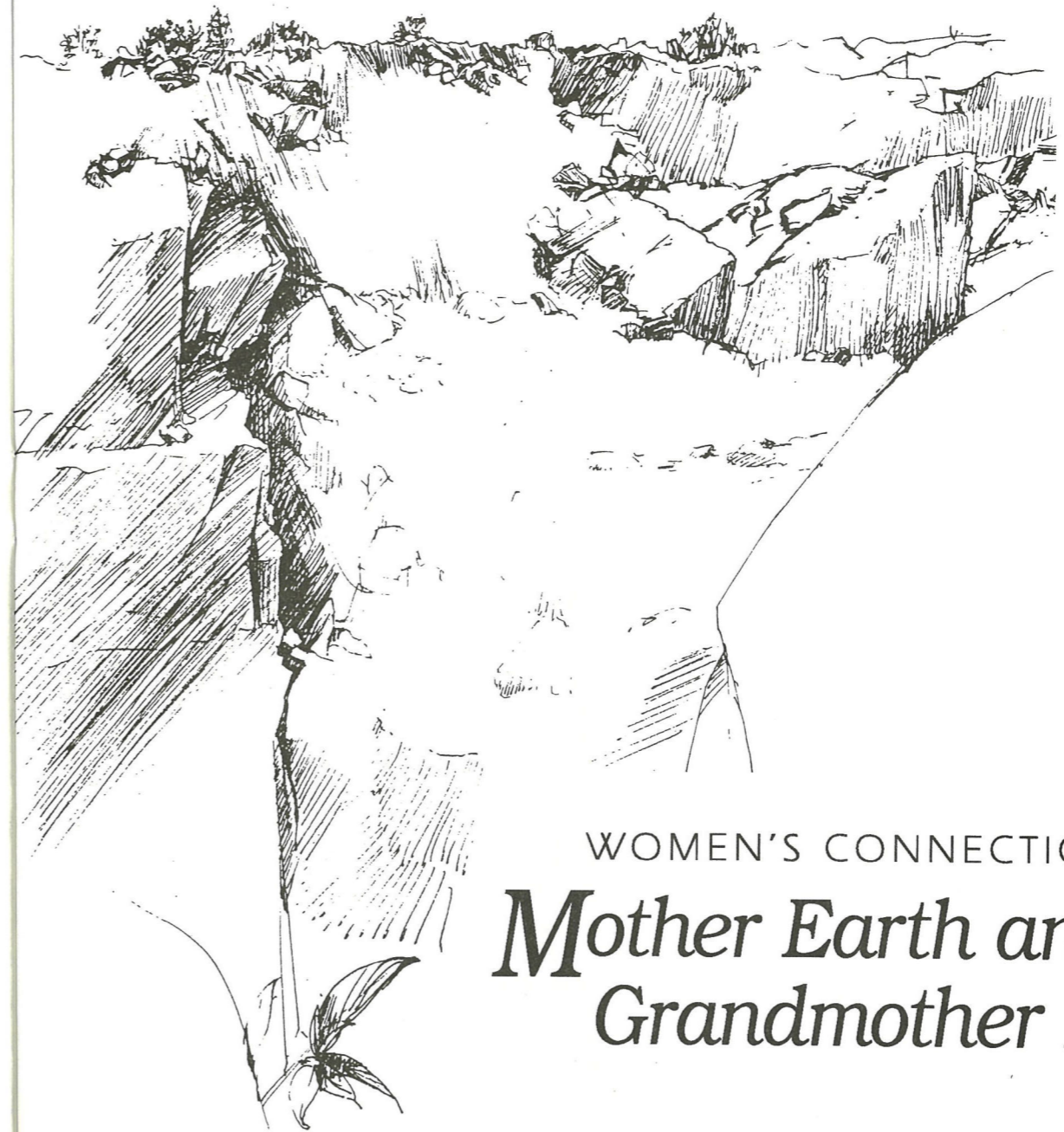
Marsha Kennedy

The earth and the body become one in this work. When I produced this piece I was searching deep inside myself for some image that echoed the quality of feelings related to giving life/birth. I was searching for the primal and essential elements of connecting to humanity and other life



Marsha Kennedy, *Untitled*, 1990, mixed media

forces. My mind and body became like an archeological site. I felt as if I was crawling into the earth looking for fragmented images. Insight into the past and self are hidden under layers of earth, layers of time, layers of flesh or in some fold of the brain.



Illustrations by Diane Pugen

WOMEN'S CONNECTION TO *Mother Earth and Grandmother Moon*

It really wasn't until I began my journey to look for my womanhood, my identity and my roots which was when I was coming into my late 20s, that I had a very profound dream. I've always referred to it as "the awakening." My spirit was wanting so much to express life.

At that point in my life I had been institutionalized (residential school etc.). I had been conditioned to think in a certain way, to behave in a certain way. I found myself caught between two different worlds. I didn't know where I belonged, where I was going. I didn't have a direction. I seemed to

be in darkness. I was always wanting to end my life. There didn't seem to be a purpose or a reason. It was kind of like I was playing with death.

So in this dream I did die. I died and looked at my body in the coffin. I was hovering above my body and it took me to another realm where it seemed so incredibly beautiful. I can't describe it other than to say that the light that I saw drew me. The light was joy, was love, was tranquillity. It was an inner peace that I had never experienced before. The sounds that I heard were beautiful sounds. Everything was magnified and

Edna Manitowabi

the colours were just so beautiful. I thought, so this is what it's like. I was going towards this beautiful light and I started to hurry because it filled me with a fullness, a peacefulness, an incredible beauty that I had never experienced.

Then I heard a voice from where I had just come. A woman's voice crying out ... Bi pska been, Bi na da moshin. Come back and help me please! You have to come back and help me. I didn't want to come back, but the woman's cry was so excruciatingly painful and so pitiful that I had to go back. She sounded as though nobody could help her. I had to go back and help her. The minute that I knew that I had to go back and help her, I woke up and I was the one that was crying pitifully. I had to go back and help Edna.

I have hung onto that dream because on that realm, that level that I went to, I started to ask myself, who am I, what's my purpose, and where am I going? What's my vision?

I felt very strongly that in order for me to know where I am going, I needed to know where I came from. I needed to know who Edna was.

I never really questioned those things. I was just existing I guess. I wasn't really connected to my spirit. Somewhere along the way in my childhood, my adolescence, I had become disconnected. I had a strong feeling it had happened at residential school when my hair was cut off. I felt very strongly that when my hair was cut off something was severed. Something very sacred was severed and I became disconnected. I became confused and lost.

That's the way my life was up until that dream. After that I sought out the old women and the old men because I felt that within them was something that would help me; those ones that still hung on to the teachings, to the stories. I needed so much to find out about my womanhood. To find out what womanhood means. The connection to my spirit. I began my journey. I sought out the grandmothers, the elders. Grandmothers were very strong. I had to go to those old ones. Some of them had fallen asleep because there was no one to pass their knowledge on to. They were waiting for someone to come and ask, what about this? I found those old

women and they began to talk. It was like I was a little girl going to grandma.

Grandmother, talk to me about this life. I need to know about life. And in their sharing of their knowledge, I began to feel life. Their words nurtured and nourished my spirit. They fed me. They talked about that water, the sacredness of water and the old men talked about that fire. The old women talked about giving birth. About life. They told me about carrying that water. I didn't understand at first because I didn't have any of those teachings when I was growing up. You didn't talk about those things. Your first moon and where that was coming from. It happened and it was like it was hidden. I knew somehow that it had to do with being a woman but I didn't know how to ask questions. Nobody shared any of that information. So what the grandmothers were encouraging me to do was to connect with the grandmother moon, the spirit of the water and to connect with the spirit of the earth. To get to know my real mother and to get to know my grandmother.

At first I thought they meant a person. They said go home to your mother, your real mother. I thought, how can I do that. My mother has passed on. But I thought about it. I began to feel things that I had never felt before, to sense things I had never sensed before, to see things I had never seen before. It wasn't your physical eye, it was a different kind of seeing. I began to get in touch with feelings.

I connected with the earth. I began to experience what she was going through, to feel her. The incredible thing about it was that I began to feel her rape, her desecration, the way she is being abused. I saw how she was being scarred. And the feeling was that I was being raped. It was a horrendous pain. It tore at me. Like your womb was being torn to pieces. Like your dress was being stripped from you, your hair pulled, your inner core pierced through. I didn't know how to deal with that. I wanted to cover myself, to try to shield myself, to protect myself. One of the ways I began to heal was to look at things that were good and beautiful. To look at things that gave you a sense of happy, a good feeling. That was my connection to the earth. Because of that pain I felt I wanted to

go and be with her. Then I understood what they meant. Go home to your mother.

So I started preparing myself to go and sit on her lap. For me it was connecting with my mother, the spirit of the earth and beginning to see her and feel her as my real mother and understanding what those old people were telling me. They talked about her and her children. Get to know your family, your relations, the tree life, the plant life, the animal life, the swimmers, the crawlers, the flyers, the four legged. I began doing that.

Later on, the old women talked about knowing who your grandmother is. I thought it was my mother's mother, my dad's mother; I began to see it and take it beyond that. I began to see other older women. They shared with me in teachings about the grandmother moon and things coming in dreams.

Hearing a teaching for the first time, that says woman is sacred and holy, it was so beautiful the way it was given, that I began to feel again from that realm where I had been taken, that woman was given blood to create. To look after this creation. She was given that responsibility. You are the creator now. You look after this creation. The grandmother is your teacher. She comes to visit you every month. It is a time of great blessings when she comes to visit you. Take that time because you are in a very blessed time. I don't like to talk about it as power, but it's a strong time. Power, like sharing, has been abused. For me I see it as medicine, that women's time, that moon time, a spiritual time. One of the things that they stress is that it's a time of meditation, a time of going in and being in a meditative and sacred time.

I didn't realize how strong until my daughter came into her first moon time. It was stressed to me that the first one is very strong. A long time ago, they had ceremonies. A dance and celebration. The young woman would be isolated. Nobody would look on her face. Men couldn't look at her except for the grandmothers and the aunties who came and gave her the teachings. For the duration of her cycle she would be isolated. Then, when she finishes that, she goes into a year long fast. I'm not saying she goes without food and water, but to fast for life because she is in a very sacred time. Then she can connect to that blessing and meditate and pray for those things she's fast-

ing for. She doesn't touch the newborn because she is fasting for that life. Certain foods she didn't eat. Male food – wild meat, she didn't eat, because she is fasting for the man too. Certain things she wasn't to do.

So she's fasting for a whole year and she goes out and picks the fruit of the earth so that the earth can bring forth life. She's fasting for her mother too. She's fasting for that woman spirit.

At the end of that fast there's a big celebration and the old women come and she's covered up. Nobody sees her yet. They dance her around and when she is unveiled you see a beautiful woman. Now she has blossomed. She is beautiful. They celebrate that womanhood. It's a new woman who has come into the community, into the lodge and it is about celebrating that womanhood.

I had to do that for my daughter. It wasn't done for me. I had to go find out how it was done. So with my daughters, they have a strong connection with their grandmother. And I encouraged them to communicate with their grandmother. With me, I didn't really fully understand until I went through the menopause.

Again it was the old women who pointed things out to me. What's happening with me? I dream about giving birth and yet I'm an old woman. I couldn't for the life of me understand why I was having a baby at this age. So I tried to fight it, and hold it back, but this life was coming and wanted to be born and no matter how hard I tried to push back and pull back, it just came, was born.

I took that dream to my grandmother who said "What is it my daughter?" As soon as she said that, I was like a little girl and I went and sat with her and I told her the dream. She said, "Oh, you're being made ready for a great blessing."

One of the things they always told us in those teachings is that woman is doubly blessed. One is that water, that blood, because she is the only doorway that a spirit life can flow, come through into this realm, this earth plane. Man comes through that doorway. She carries that life for nine months. It's that water she carries for nine months and the first thing that issues forth when that life is ready to come through is that water. Then that life comes.

Before the cord is even cut, it's long enough that we're told to put the child to your breast. And already mother has given the first teaching about kindness, about sharing, about being honest. She is being honest when she puts her child to her breast. She is nurturing. She is giving life to that child. She is giving strength.

So that is something that we've stopped doing. We have stopped using our breast.

We stopped doing our responsibility. We stopped paying attention to that water, to that blood. We stopped listening to our grandmother.

When I took that dream to her and she said "Your getting ready." I used to wonder why I used to cry for no reason at all. I was wondering why emotions would do a great number on me. Up and down, up and down. It took me a while. Grandmother started to move away from me. She used to come every month. Now she doesn't come. I started to miss her, that connection. And it's kind of like that. Your grandmother is leaving you. She's moving away, she's withdrawing. Next month she comes for a short visit and it's like that for awhile, until eventually she hasn't been around for a whole year. Now you're the grandmother, the spirit has new life. That is what they talk about when they say woman is doubly blessed.

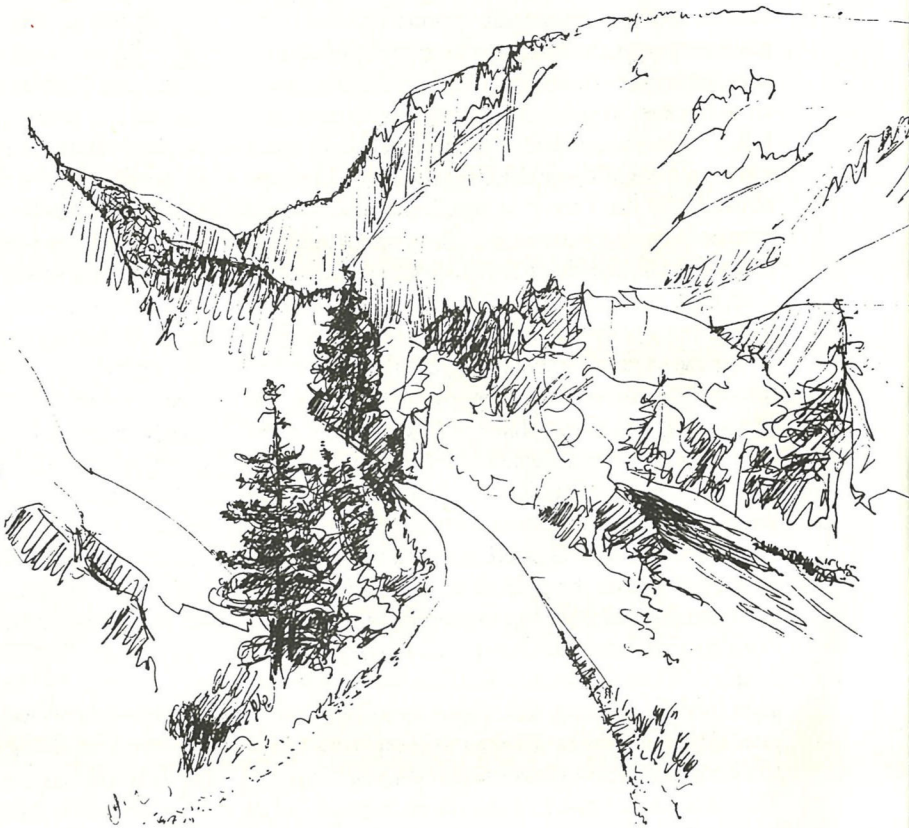
That is another great, powerful time, a great blessing. Big changes, big transformation and again a blossoming. It's like you're new again. You're a new woman again. It's a little girl spirit that begins to blossom. And that's what the grandmother said to me. She said, "You'll feel like a little girl. You'll feel like a new woman. You'll feel new life. You'll experience new life."

She said, "Let that spirit come through." It's that connecting with the grandmother. I've gone through my menopause and there's a new life. Coming into that purpose. What we come into the world to do, begins to unfold at that time. After no more blood, no more cycle, you're a grandmother. You have the spirit of that grandmother. You are whole, you are complete. That's not to say

you weren't before, but it's that connection. Connecting and knowing that woman is whole, is complete. Connecting to that spirit of the grandmother. The grandmother for us is the moon, is that cycle, is that blood.

So we must be able to retrace our steps and go back and find those teachings and begin to do that to celebrate womanhood, to celebrate the sacredness of woman, to celebrate the earth, to celebrate the moon, our mother, our grandmother, to celebrate, people call them the goddesses. For us they are the old women, the grandmothers because they are the wise ones, they are full of knowledge. They have so much to give, so much to teach us. It's connecting to that old woman, the grandmother within all women.

Some women will say, "But I'm not a grandmother. I haven't had any children." You are a grandmother. Because you have your period you are a woman. Women connect to that spirit. So that's how much I'd like to share today. **M**



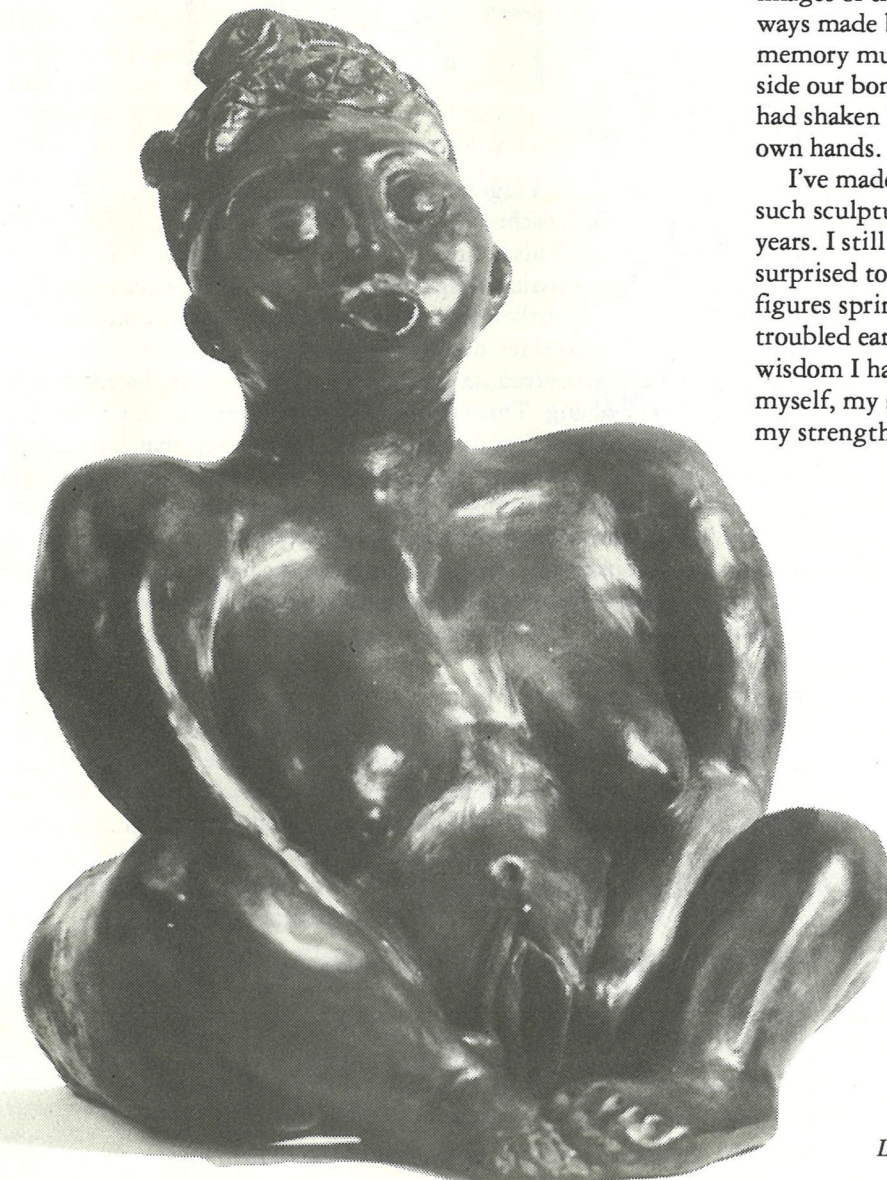
LIBBY

There are uncanny similarities between my work in clay and artifacts from ancient women's cultures. A friend pointed this out to me upon viewing my work. She also told me that when life celebrated women, the sacred

OUGHTON

images of the goddess were always made by women. This memory must still be locked inside our bones; maybe something had shaken it loose through my own hands.

I've made over two hundred such sculptures in the past three years. I still feel honoured and surprised to help these goddess figures spring forth into this troubled earth. Through their wisdom I have slowly reclaimed myself, my spirit as a woman, my strength and my power.



Libby Oughton, Dionysia/Goddess Ecstasy

Teaching
And
Learning

The Spiritual Path

Catherine
Rathburn



A legend says that Buddha was approached by a delegation of women, headed by his aunt and stepmother, requesting admission to the Buddhist Order. They had cut their hair, donned robes and walked up to three hundred miles. They arrived dust-covered, crying, their feet swollen and bleeding. Three times he refused them, but his

closest disciple, Ananda, interceded three times: asking that the women gain enlightenment. The Buddha acknowledged that they could. Yet he predicted that Buddhism would then decline in five hundred rather than one thousand years, and he set rules to stem the degeneration. Rules determining the behaviour of women in Buddhism certainly continue to curb women's participation in the practice. But many, especially in the West, have risen to the challenge.

Now, over one thousand years later, the predicted degeneration has not occurred. Women may, in fact, be helping to revitalize Buddhist practice in the West. Catherine Rathburn, a teacher of the spiritual path here in Toronto, is just such a force. Seekers come to her door for direction and guidance towards spiritual enlightenment. Her years of meditation, travel, family life, dance and theatre experience, all blend in an impassioned woman of great strength, intelligence and joy.

Pam Patterson: *Can you tell me something about the main features of Buddhism?*

Catherine Rathburn: The Theravadans [the oldest movement within Buddhism] hold that you have to awaken yourself completely before you can help another being. Mahayana Buddhism, however, teaches that the seat of the mind is in the heart. They say, "No, you must continue to keep working to help other

beings, while you are helping yourself. It's the very action of helping other beings that loosens the grip of your 'self' orientation and your 'self' feeling, like, 'Me, I, Number One, discrete individual human being', enabling you to see that you are bound inextricably with other beings and that you are working with an ongoing dynamic with other beings."

The archetype of *Chrenrezig*, also known as *Avalokiteshvara*, *Kannon*, *KuanYin* in various Oriental countries, is all the same and that is basically the archetype of the Christ principle, the force of love active in the world. Mahayana Buddhism teaches that, without that principle, it doesn't matter how much knowledge you have, how intelligent you are, or how powerful you are, without the seat of the mind in the heart, the knowledge is quite narrow and dry and ultimately of no use for the 'growing to grace'.

Pam: *What has drawn you to Buddhism?*

Catherine: [My] studies have taken me all over the world, to many different faces of Buddhism. I've also taken some training in Sufi and in Christian mystic practices. I like Buddhism because of its scientific approach. As a Westerner, that fits with me. I like a system that's investigating the nature of suffering, and the nature of the world. We have a tradition in North America of individualism. I think that's why North Americans have become so intensely interested on this type of work.

I'm not a very traditional Buddhist. I'm a woman, I'm married, I have not left my family. I like being a woman, I like wearing earrings. For some traditional Buddhists, that is anathema. The tradition is that, if a woman wanted to do this work, she left her family as Gautama Buddha did. But he was a prince. And he left a family behind him that was well looked after. I saw more suffering for my children than less, at the time the decision came to me, so I couldn't justify taking that type of action. And so I made a deliberate choice to stay within the family dynamic and to do the work from there.

Interview by
Pam Patterson

Pam: *So when you came to Buddhism, you had already established a family?*

Catherine: Yes. I've never done the study without having children with me. I've packed them on my back. My eldest, when he was ten months old, went with me to Greece, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Turkey in order [to enable me] to study with a master. I've dragged them through India. I had two babies in diapers camping in Africa. They are now both in university and doing extremely well, both adventurers in their own ways. One climbs mountains in his spare time, the other is training for the stage.

Pam: *Can you talk about women in Buddhism?*

Catherine: Well, I think that's the change Buddhism in North America is undergoing. The Buddha predicted that [women's inclusion in Buddhism] would cause [its rapid] decline. The fact that it has spread worldwide, I think, raises the very important issue that "awakening" is not being perfect. "Awakening" is having an illuminated state of consciousness capable of doing and seeing many things, but still human, which the Buddha always said he was and therefore [he was] capable of making a mistake... Beings have to live in the world, otherwise their awakening isn't relevant for that age and for that time. So for this age and this time, women awakening is relevant. Not only is it relevant, but it's necessary for Buddhism, therefore, to acknowledge its tradition of change and undergo this change in order to be open to the very particular, unique dynamics that women can bring into the teaching. It is a path of living. The Buddha said, "I come to teach but two things: suffering, and the way out of suffering." If that is what the teaching is at its very heart, then for the children there must be less suffering. The load of suffering must not be increased and therefore the traditional method of simply abandoning the children must change. They should not be shunted to one side or not acknowledged as part of the Path.

Pam: *How has Buddhism fulfilled your needs as a woman?*

Catherine: As I've said, I like Buddhism for its scientific approach. I like being involved in a practice that lets me investigate the nature of reality and give credibility to my own understanding. Victory is through one's own efforts and reason. The last thing the Buddha said before he popped off was, "Strive on, strive on with diligence for your own liberation." So, as an independent Westerner living in this age, that appeals to me. It is a pathway that is difficult, but I have not, in my lifetime, been afraid of difficult things. "Difficult" isn't an impediment to me, it's a challenge. It's a tremendous training of the mind to be clear, to come to a point. It's a tremendous teaching of the Mahayana work, the unfolding of love and the healing of all the pains that one carries from birth on. I've had some buff and rub, particularly when studying in the Theravadan tradition. [They] maintain that women can't really awaken, they can get to a very high level, but in order to truly awaken, they'd have to be reborn as men. But the Tibetan tradition does not hold that.

There are still very few female examples. But there are more and more now. My own teacher has sometimes been accused of being very patriarchal. But, actually, he's produced more women teachers than men teachers. So sometimes resistance is a challenge, and I think for women in this century, that's what has happened to all of us, whatever field we're working in. There's been resistance to changing the fabric of society and there are many female warriors, if you like, because we're having to bring about change.

Pam: *Can you talk a bit about your teaching?*

Catherine: The majority of people studying Buddhism in North America are women. In my own classes, I started out teaching

mostly women, but now they're about 50/50. You teach through your own experience. So early on, I taught through the Dharma, the law of the gentle, loving, mothering, because that's what I was doing. Now, as my children grow, and as I feel a little more freedom to study more and learn more about the different aspects, I also teach [with the] sword. These are the two modalities of teaching: there's the rose, or the lotus, and the sword, or the stick.

They're symbolized in the Tibetan work by the dorje [a short metal rod with a dome at each end] and the bell. The dorje — that's the masculine divine principle, the direct light of insight, the tranquillity aspect.

And those are the two parts of teaching. Some students need more tranquillity in order to develop insight, and some need insight to penetrate the muck they're in, in order to develop tranquillity. So the way I'm trained is that the system should fit the student, not the student the system. That's why I have a very broad, eclectic way of training. So I use dance, I use mantra and breathing work, all sorts of different techniques to try to help them to do what they need to do in life.

But the responsibility is theirs to do it; it's not mine. There is a cultural tradition that has developed in other lands of great worship for the teacher: in some of the systems of training from ancient times, instant obedience to anything a teacher said was demanded.

When that work moved here, into the West, and met up with the very wide-open moral tone of North America, sometimes beings fell into error. In my opinion that tradition has been misused terribly. A great deal of damage has been done to beings who are walking innocently into that teaching situation. The error is not just in the teachers, it's not just in the students; it's a combination of a cultural tradition meeting up with another cultural tradition. So I think as we mature in



our use of Eastern religions, we have to learn to be on guard for that.

So, as a teacher, I personally acknowledged that right away. I found it easy to do that because I am a woman. Because as a woman with children, it's always seemed to me to be totally ridiculous to take the posture that what I said was the absolute total truth, and people could either like it or lump it. It seemed equally fatuous for me to demand total obedience from my students. I was having enough trouble occasionally demanding obedience from my children! So right away, as I began to teach, I realized that the integrity principle was terribly important in what I was setting out to do, and that whatever else I was going to do or not to do, and however successful or unsuccessful I might be, that I must be sure that I worked from my own experience, and that I worked with honesty, and that I always engendered in people an understanding that I was only one, as the story says, pointing to the moon. The student must walk to the moon him/herself. I was not carrying him or her there.

While I was, and am, a repository of a great deal of work from a great many incredible humans who I have been fortunate enough to study with, and the product of my own minutes and hours of work, I can always be in error, and I always have something more to learn. I count on my family, my friends and my students to make sure I stay that way. So my relationship with my students is more like the older meaning of "lama" which is "friend". We're walking on the path together, and the only aim is to help beings come out of suffering.

Pam: *What kind of impact have women had on Buddhism, on Tibetan Buddhism for example? It seems to be a Buddhism that incorporates female figures.*

Catherine: The Tibetan culture is very patriarchal. Most of the aid that's going into the Tibetan communities in India is still focused on developing the male monastic centres. It's hard to be considered even as a candidate for deeper teaching because you're a female.

But [images of women] are there — they are more built into the Tibetan system than, say, the Theravadan system, which frankly excludes women from the highest levels of enlightenment, but because Buddhism carries this wonderful motif of change, it

doesn't have to stay that way. In Christian teaching, women got buried along with the mystic training and we got buried at a certain time in history — the burning times. That type of consciousness moving across Europe at the time simply buried women. It robbed them of their land power, it robbed them of their healing capacities. At the same time as doing that, the mystics were also buried. Meister Eckhardt was a fully awakened human being. He was a colossus, and he ended his life in despair and in prison. That happened to many of the other mystics. There was a female Christian mystic, Julian of Norwich, who talked about God the Father and God the Mother. She gave teachings and lived, it appears, to a ripe old age as an anchoress connected to an abbey, talking to people through her window. I don't know how she gave out that teaching and didn't get clobbered. Perhaps she was well connected as a member of the aristocracy.

So the women have been there, but we carry a cultural tradition of not making a fuss. We have stepped back, allowing others to move forward. We have been busy trying to engender self-esteem and self-respect and good skill levels in children. That motif is a tremendous teaching. It teaches you humility and sensitivity. It's not very well thought of at the moment as women try to get power. As women try to enter the male-dominated society, they tend to almost denigrate those things in order to get into positions of power. Now I think we have to pick up the idea that the traditionally womanly motifs carry tremendous wisdom, and incorporate that along with the power. That way, society could revolutionize and become an incredible, compassionate society where all beings are fed, all beings are nurtured, every child is wanted like a jewel... Imagine!

Pam: *How would you now speak of yourself?*

Catherine: I'm a teacher of path... a seeker of truth wherever you can find it. You find it in the garden, and in the roadway, building your building, everywhere, not just in the meditation seat. **M**

MARY MEDUSA

An excerpt from a
performance by
Shawna Dempsey
with the collaboration
of Lorri Millan.

Is a woman without power in fact a woman?
Without power, does a woman in fact exist?
I know, from experience, that a powerful woman
Makes people nervousssssss.
A powerful woman
stops people dead
In their tracks.
So take it all back, ssssssisterssssssss.



*Shawna Dempsey is currently
Artist In Residence at Centre
for Art Tapes, Halifax, and will
be performing there. She is also being
presented by Ace Art at the Winnipeg Art
Gallery in July '92 and the Edinburgh
Festival in August.*

Interview with the Pope

M^{r. Pope} do you masturbate
in the privacy of power,
the Vatican big and drafty

do you invite boys to come and play
or leave that your priests prey

with your goldringed fingers
gilded priceless Basilicas
did you know Michelangelo
was a fag

Oh you threw a huge bonfire party
all the Witches came
couldn't resist such heartfelt invitations
barbecued courtesy skinny fags

I was a virgin once
Mr. Pope
till I discovered the nun's secret
habit,
clitoris for morning prayers

I invoked her name then
Goddess Gaia
her swelling breasts/large thighs
lips full and hips wide on
ancient french cave walls

What's behind door #3
MATRICIDE,
50 points for Patriarchy

MACHO
you send the message
safe in God's authority
women's screams cover the earth,
from macho you preach as divine

Mr. Pope
your fly is down,
erecting penis armies
to rape and spoil

She already has six children
NO ABORTION
her womb is raw and bloody,
penetrated nightly/her wifely duty

Pope in the Vatican
sitting on people's early graves
women and children living in streets
men who defy the Adam syndrome,
titles hush your conscience

ORDER/ORDER,
in your court of plenty
Mr. Pope
does the Queen like her eggs over easy
or scrambled

She's anorexic St. Joan
has visions of grandeur,
speaks her mind – wins at your games,
BURN HER.....
then make her a Saint – it's good P.R.

what's the going rate,
to bless lies, silence and death,
do you like Mae West or is
Madonna your dream gal

can we lobotomize you
Mr. Pope,
dissect your brain in halves
to find particles of Bush, Mulroney, Yeltsin
swathed in religious compliance

Would you give those same orders today,
BURN – BITCH – BURN
a witches inferno

love all mankind equally,
do not destroy thy neighbour,
have a nice day come back soon

Mr. Pope Mr. pope?

Hello this is the Vatican
no one is here to take your call but if you leave
your name, address, sexuality, religious affiliation,
race, income level, age, personal assets and political beliefs
some one might get back to you

By Stephanie Keleman

Anyone who drops by the WARC office will find the place buzzing with activity. Our membership continues to grow as we reach out to the many diverse communities we wish to serve.

Matriart is also enjoying a rapid rate of growth and we encourage women artists to participate in this exciting period. New editors, writers and artists are always welcome. Please call WARC if you are interested in contributing in any way. Be sure to join us at Sneaky Dee's for the launch of this current issue, *Spirituality*. The launch takes place on Thursday, April 23. Entertainment TBA.

February was African History Month and WARC celebrated by holding workshops with two active Black women artists. Winsom gave a hands on textile workshop, teaching a West African dying method. Ayanna Black facilitated a discussion on Black women in the arts. In March, Janice Andreae presented an informative workshop on *Curating Feminist Art Work*.

We will continue to co-sponsor events with other organizations in the community and encourage participation from our membership and other women interested in the issues and ideas.

We look forward to our Spring and Summer programs: Saturday, April 4, from 1pm to 4pm is *Documenting Your Art*, with Alison Binder Oueltte. This will take the form of a lecture and a hands on demonstration. Saturday, May 2, from 11am to 3pm, Eva Ennist will conduct a *Paper Making and Ecology Workshop*. This will include a slide show

featuring artists from around the world who work with paper in both two and three dimensional formats. In July WARC will co-sponsor a workshop with Canadian Artists Network; Black Artists in Action [CAN:BAIA]. New York artist, Terri Jenoure will conduct a workshop called: *Using Your Voice for Creative Expression*. The artist will explore the use of vocal improvisation, storytelling and songwriting as a vehicle for creative expression. This dynamic event will take place at Harbourfront during the International Black Arts Festival. We look forward to your support of these events.

Lastly, our Coordinating Committee, which is the main decision making body at WARC, meets on the third Wednesday of every month. Anyone interested in becoming an active member at WARC is invited to attend these meetings. We welcome your involvement.

Daria Essop

Susan Cunningham

Before the imposition of Judaic, Christian, Islamic and other male-centred religions, there was a world-wide circle of myths that held that a great mother created the world. People saw that women gave forth and nurtured life: it was a logical extension to believe in a female deity. As a result women held leadership roles in both the family and the community and were respected in a way they haven't been since the patriarchal religions took over.

Many diverse societies believed that the creator-goddess concocted the world and all life in it from a kind of cosmic cauldron in the heavens. The cauldron came to symbolize the life giving powers of the goddess.

Later, the cauldron became more famous as a symbol of witchcraft.

Witches, actually naturopaths and mid-wives, operating on the periphery of society, were villified by the church and perceived as a threat.

The Chalice was, also, originally a feminine (and pagan) object, symbolizing the vessel of life giving blood. The church, in an attempt to absorb female/pagan spiritual practices into the mainstream, usurped that symbol. It became the goblet of wine, the representation of Christ's blood, to be forever drunk "in the memory of him."

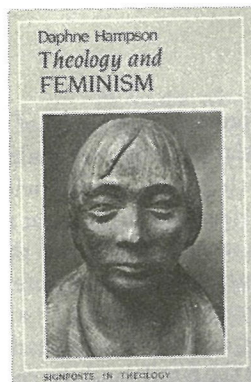
It was this startling review of history that inspired me to develop a work conceptually and visually linking the chalice and the cauldron to the womb as symbols of the creativity and power of women.



Susan Cunningham,
Cauldron/Chalice/Womb

FOCUS ON
WARC
 BOOK REVIEW

Theology and Feminism
 Daphne Hampson
 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990,
 reprinted 1991)



Daphne Hampson is a feminist theologian who describes herself as a "post-Christian," as Mary Daly has done. She no longer "belongs" to the Anglican church, in which for many years she struggled to have accepted the ordination of women. *Theology and Feminism*, serves as a clearly argued text for the irreconcilability of Christian belief

and feminist values but it is more: Hampson is seeking a redefinition of God consistent with feminism. She wants to lay the groundwork for a feminist theology.

Hampson's arguments for the incompatibility of Christianity and feminism are based on its truth value and its morality. The historic insistence on Jesus Christ as a special case, as divine and the continuance of Western religious tradition based on belief in that divinity, she finds patently unacceptable. As the foundation of a dominant tradition in Western religious consciousness, she considers Christianity no longer tenable. Furthermore, it is fundamentally immoral for the way it distorts human relationships, for its incapacity to promote equality among people, and, specifically, for promoting the subordination of women.

She remains, despite her uncontested categorization of Christianity as immoral on the issue of women's (indeed, of human, equality), atheist, and the latter portion of her book is an attempt to come to terms with something called "God" in a culture that remains dominated by Judaeo-Christian mythology and institutions. She is a believer who wants to "reconceive what the term "God" connotes", whether we use the name "God" or "Goddess" or refer to it as Mother or She or It (Father being problematic given

the patriarchal traditions of our Western religious tradition).

Hampson refers to and assesses the growing literature of feminist theology and spirituality in her search, and *Theology and Feminism*, is worth reading for this alone: as a guide to the writings of a spectrum of religious thinkers, from conservative Christians, liberal theologians, and feminists on issues as diverse as women in the bible, the notions of sin, salvation, creation, and angst and their relevance for women.

She takes as given that, "feminism has in many ways been a deeply spiritual matrix," in its attention to the values of caring for one another, for women's development, for the planet and its future. Her consideration of the contributions of a number of notable feminist writers on women's spirituality and religion towards reshaping the notion of "god" true to feminist values leads her ultimately to fall back on her own experience.

In attempting to reshape the concept of "god," Daphne Hampson takes on the especially thorny problem described by Sharon Welch¹: "the problem of the reality of faith's referent remains unresolved." Hampson insists on not referring to an entity, or a unity, or an anthropomorphized being, or even necessarily to anything that exists separate from humankind. Central to her struggle is the obstacle of language: symbols and referents so steeped in the patriarchal conceptualizations of the Christian tradition that new terms are inevitably tainted.

Now liberated from Christianity, yet still a believer in something called "god", she feels free to conceptualize "god" as she will, and finds in her conceptualization the features of politics, social justice and feminist morality. Yet, the word "god" remains a stumbling block. She is firm in her belief that the word "god" refers, that it is more than just a word. Here she differs markedly from Heide Gottner-Abendroth², who insists that the very notion of a "god" as deity or principle is purely a part of the patriarchal invention of organized religion.

In her search for a way of looking at belief and spirituality that is relevant for women's experience and for feminist visions, she draws on women's fiction, particularly on Alice Walker's, *The Color Purple*. Her exploration of women's concepts of god and spirituality in this portion of the book comes closest to dealing with the problems surrounding notions of god, and I wanted it to be longer. I wanted to see a deeper exploration of women's fiction and poetry describing and confronting their religious experience and doubts. There is surely a book here, focusing on women's particular struggles with language and creativity to comprehend the spiritual dimension of our lives.

Hampson's sphere is particular: she acknowledges she has had "little contact" with Goddess spirituality, she does not mention Native American spirituality, and she does not discuss Eastern religious experience for they are outside her ken. She writes about what she knows and what she has lived, and she writes with integrity and simplicity. What she arrives at is a very personal experience of god that defies articulation and direct communication. Implicit are the limitations of language when approaching the profound experiences of being human and the awareness of being, "part of a greater reality," and finding in that perception comfort and support.

She does draw on historical writings in her search for concepts of god, particularly nineteenth-century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher's perception of god in self-knowledge. A promising avenue is cut short by his ideas concerning male-oriented notions of "objectivity" versus the centrality of personal religious sensibilities. For me there is a clue here that links her endeavour to feminist epistemology, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of self-in-the-world, combined with moral precepts of connectedness and community that are very much within the feminist project.

The question she poses for theology is basically an epistemological one: how do we perceive reality and our place in it, and how do we confront it and connect with it? Her insistence that women are in a position to, "see the world differently," from men has for her profound implications for women's conception of god and the spiritual.

Here I confess coming to her writing as a third-generation atheist, a closet pagan, and an incipient Taoist, for whom the word "God" does not refer except in the Judaeo-Christian sense. The word is so steeped with meanings, myths, and practices that prejudice me against Western religious tradition that it acts as a stumbling block to any understanding (I attempt) of spirituality or religious experience.

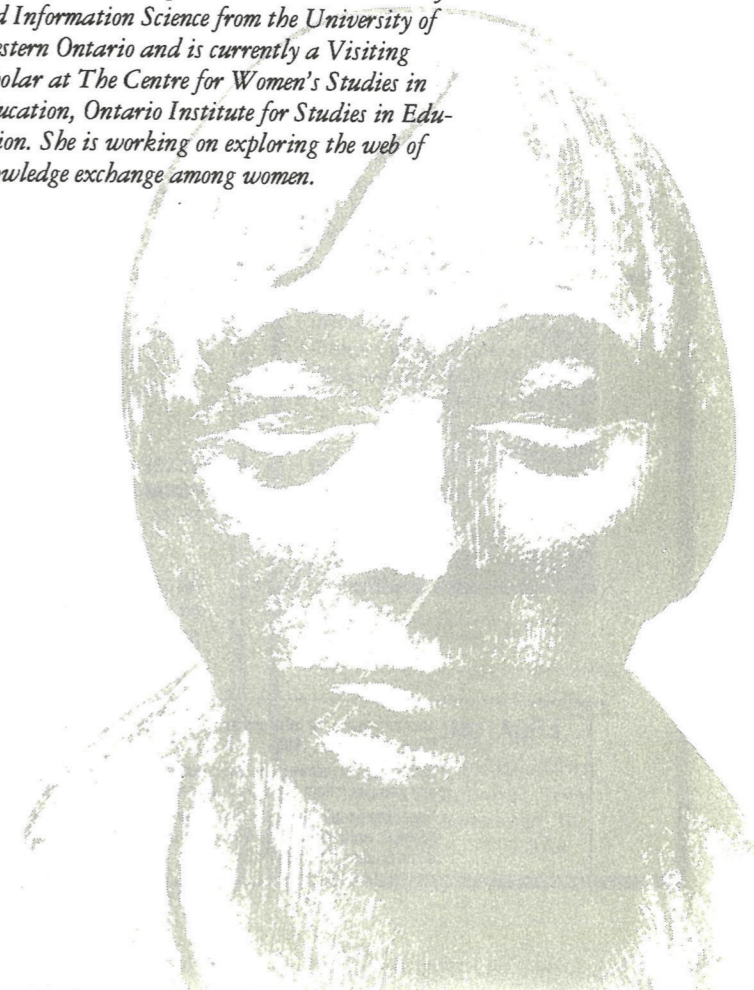
Hampson's analysis of alternatives does point out that given our mind set in the West, whatever term we use is bound to collapse into the old one, to be limited by it. Nonetheless, I found *Theology and Feminism* an exciting piece in laying the groundwork for a feminist reconstruction of faith.

1. Welch, Sharon D. *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985.

2. Gottner-Abendroth, Heide. *The Dancing Goddess: Principles of a Matriarchal Aesthetic*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon, 1991.

By Norma Lundberg

Norma Lundberg has a doctorate in Library and Information Science from the University of Western Ontario and is currently a Visiting Scholar at The Centre for Women's Studies in Education, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. She is working on exploring the web of knowledge exchange among women.



LISTINGS:

Call for Submissions

Women of Power invite submissions for Issue Twenty-Four: Fall 1992; "Leadership: Feminist, Spiritual and Political." Deadline April 1, 1992; and Issue Twenty-Five: Winter, 1993; "Overcoming Prejudice, Celebrating Difference, Cultivating Diversity." Deadline: July 1, 1992

All material should have a feminist, spiritual, and political focus, and reflect one of the issue themes. Please include your name, address, and phone number on the title or face page of all submitted work. If you would like your work returned, you must enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Contact Women of Power; P.O. Box 2785, Orleans, MA. 02653, tel.(508) 240-7877

La chambre blanche, an artist-run centre in Quebec City is inviting artists to submit proposals for exhibitions. Contact Sylvie Fortin, Programming Coordinator, La chambre blanche, 185 Christophe Columbe est, CP 3039, Succ. St-Roch, Quebec, Quebec G1K 6X9, tel. (418) 529-2715

All submissions should include: C.V., artist statement, outline of the project, 10 slides showing earlier work and 10 slides relating to the specific project proposed.

Art show and auction on May 10th; contact Eddie Sherwood, (416)485-9911

Women, Art & Age

The Summer issue of MATRIART will examine the experience of women artists during childhood development, art education and early, middle and late career stages. MATRIART welcomes submissions of critical, theoretical or historical articles relating to the issue's theme, original artwork, artist statements, interviews, poetry, fiction and reviews of exhibitions, books performance and theatre. Deadline for submissions: April 30/92.

Exhibitions

5th Annual Roundup, June 6th-June 14th . Tel:961-5136 & leave message

WorkSeen

Dorrit Yacoby, Apr 21-May 9
Diane Pugen, May 12-30
Tel:362-7548

Agnes Etherington Art Centre
Deborah Stagg, Mar 7-Apr 15
Norma Haller, July 26-Aug 23
Tel:(613)545-2190

A Space

BirthTales, March 14 - April 25
El Salvador In The Eye of The Beholder, May 1 - June 13

Mendel Art Gallery

Gretchen Bender, Marie Lannoo Apr 12
Women and Humour, April 16 - May 31

Other

Private Yoga classes at the T.H. Art Centre (Bloor & Christie)
Tel:533-9643

Women In Action Group, meets Friday's to discuss topics of empowerment, call Thelma Morgan 533-9643

Blood and Aphorisms Literary Classifieds accepts announcements for: Book Launches, Readings, Workshops, Literary Personals or any other literary event. All Classified Ads are free. Call Heather at 614-1010

Celebration of Women in the Arts, a multi disciplinary women's arts group based in Edmonton would like input from other women's arts groups concerning

- 1) how women artists might work in collaboration with women working on violence-against-women issues to enhance efforts to promote change on violence issues.
- 2) how women artists might work collectively to improve their economic situation.

Contact CWA, #905, 10136 - 100 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5J 0P1

Workshops

The Women's Art Resource Centre: Paper Making and Ecology Workshop. Saturday May 2/92. 11-3 p.m. Fee: \$5 Members, \$10 Non-members.

This four hour workshop, led by Eva Ennist, will include a slide presentation representing artists from around the world working with paper in both two and three dimensional formats. Samples of handmade papers and objects constructed from them will also be presented and discussed. A demonstration followed by the participants hands on experience will reinforce and clarify some of the images seen in the slide presentation. Contact WARC for more information and registration. 394 Euclid Ave. Suite 308, Toronto, Ontario. M6G 2S9 (416) 324-8910

Visual Arts Ontario: Artists' Business Seminars; a thematic approach to the professional development concerns of visual artists.

Wednesday April 8/92. LEGAL ISSUES: THE ARTIST'S CONTRACT.

Paul Sanderson, Lawyer
Simon Dresdnere, Galerie Dresdnere

Wednesday April 15/92. MONEY MANAGEMENT: TAXES AND INSURANCE. Dave Lostchuck, BDO Dunwoody Ward Mallette, Al Fleury, Manley Insurance Brokers,


Wednesday April 22/92. THE SUBJECTIVE CRITIQUE. Jane Perdue, Public Art Administrator City of Toronto; Kate Taylor, Art Critic, The Globe And Mail; Carl Skelton, Artist

Wednesday April 29/92. THE TECHNIQUES OF SELLING
Fred Milsum, Bau-Xi Gallery; Tracey Capes, Art Administrator; Chris Temple, Artist. Cost: \$5 per session for VAO members (or \$18 for the series), \$7 for non-members (or \$25 for the series). All sessions in this four part professional development series will be held in Visual Arts Ontario's office at 439 Wellington Street West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, Ontario (416)591-8883, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Pre-registration is necessary.

ERRATUM: Matriart regrets the following errors in Julie Arnold's book review of "The Confessions of Wanda von Sacher-Masoch" - published in Volume 2/Issue 2, 1992.

By placing the following phrase in quotation marks: "a male figure (sic) known in Leopold's vocabulary as 'the Greek'" it appears as if this text was taken from the book being reviewed, when in fact, these are the words of the reviewer.

The text as published leads the reader to believe that the reviewer had to turn to a biography of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch to learn of Wanda's early life. In fact, Wanda details her early years in her "Confessions." What she did not reveal was her name before her adoption of the Sacher-Masoch identity.




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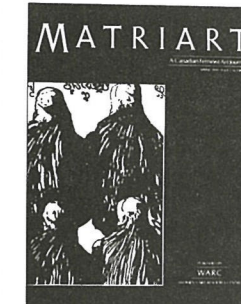
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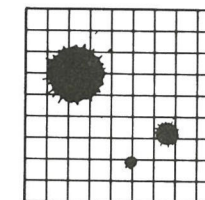
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The Grotto Cycle
April 29 - May 23

RANDY & BERENICCI

The Fourth Corner of the World
May 27 - June 27

ROSE KALLAL

June 3 - June 27

NEW SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

October 1, 1992
February 1, 1993

YYZ

Artists' Outlet

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YYZ acknowledges the support of The Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council and the Municipality of Metro Toronto, Cultural Affairs Division.

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Women at the edge

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**Friday, May 22
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OCA

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100 McCaul Street

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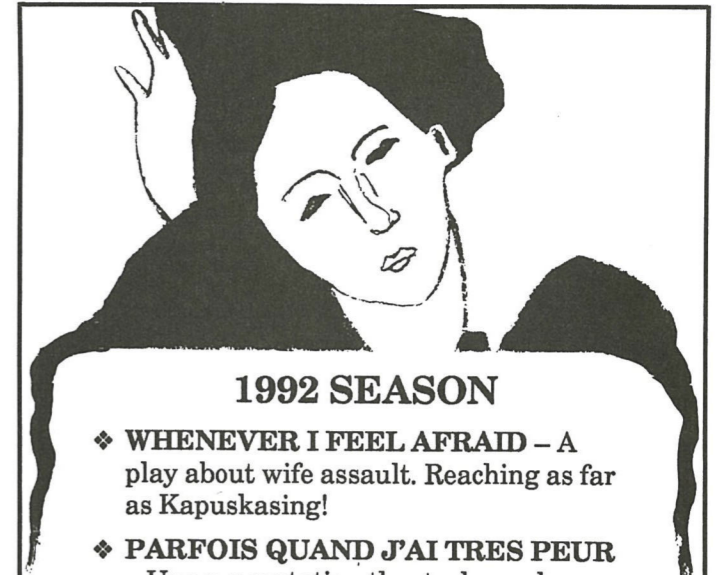
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RoundUp provides a showcase for Toronto artists exhibiting in locations other than traditional gallery spaces. All media are represented. RoundUp publishes and distributes a map and catalog of the sites as part of a city-wide campaign to promote the event. For more information contact the Hotline (416) 961-5136.

ROUNDUP 92 thanks **Tern Art Supplies • 874 Queen St. West** for making this advertisement possible.

THE ART OF EDUCATION

Creative processes in the arts provide students with fundamental ways of learning and expression.

The professional artist plays an important role in stimulating the creative process in the school environment.

The Arts/Education Office of the Ontario Arts Council offers programs and services to bring artists into Ontario schools:

CREATIVE ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS (CAIS):
Assists schools to bring in artists to work with students by contributing to artist fees and, in some cases, travel and material costs.
Deadlines: June 1, 1992 October 15, 1992 January 15, 1993

RESIDENCY:
Brings performing arts companies into schools, for at least five full days, to offer students and teachers the chance to learn through active participation with a performing company.
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SPECIAL PROJECTS:
These grants support professional arts organizations in developing new materials for presentation in schools.
Deadlines: April 15, 1992 October 15, 1992

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

THE ARTS/EDUCATION OFFICE
ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
151 BLOOR STREET WEST, SUITE 500
TORONTO, ONTARIO M5S 1T6

TELEPHONE: (416) 961-1660
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ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL

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CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

L'ART DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT

Le processus de création artistique dote les étudiants de moyens d'apprentissage et d'expression essentiels.

L'artiste professionnel joue un rôle important en stimulant le processus de création dans le milieu scolaire.

Trois programmes du Bureau arts/éducation du Conseil des arts de l'Ontario s'adressent aux artistes et organismes qui veulent aller dans les écoles ontariennes :

ARTISTES CRÉATEURS DANS LES ÉCOLES (ACDE)
Programme qui permet aux écoles d'inviter des artistes pour travailler avec les élèves en contribuant au cachet des artistes et, dans certains cas, au coût du matériel et aux frais de déplacement.
Dates limites : 1^{er} juin 1992, 15 octobre 1992 et 15 janvier 1993

ARTISTES RÉSIDENTS
Programme qui permet aux compagnies des arts de la scène de se produire dans les écoles pour un minimum de cinq jours et favorise l'apprentissage des arts de la scène chez les enseignants et les élèves par une participation active à un spectacle.
Dates limites : 1^{er} juin 1992

PROJETS SPÉCIAUX
Programme qui aide les organismes artistiques professionnels à créer de nouvelles œuvres destinées à être présentées dans les écoles. *Dates limites : 15 avril 1992 et 15 octobre 1992*

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