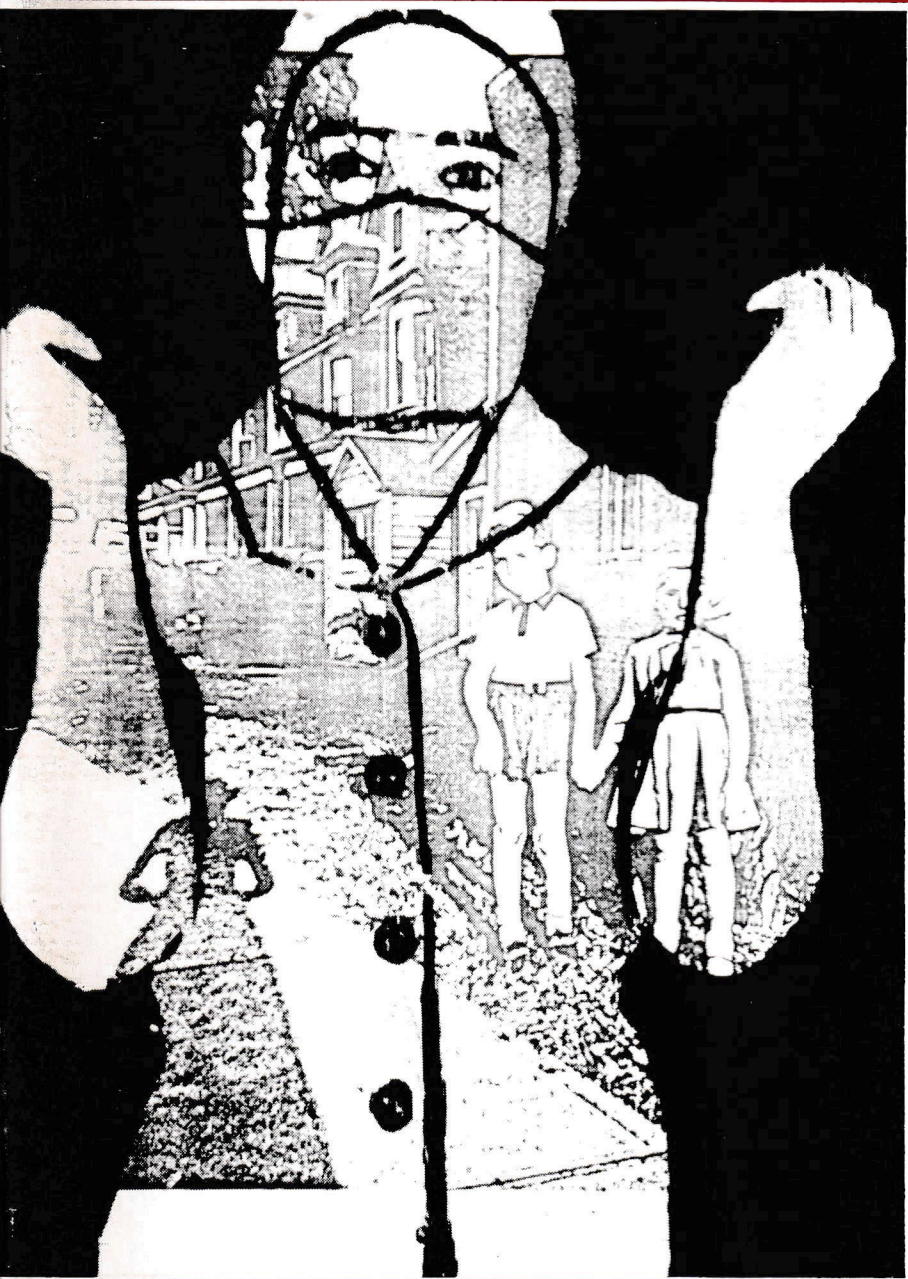


M A T R I A R T

A Canadian Feminist Art Journal

VOLUME 1/NUMBER 4 1991

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Art, Motherhood
& Reproductive
Technologies

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WARC

WOMEN'S ART RESOURCE CENTRE

FOREWORD

Whether we are mothers or hope to be, whether we have experienced a clinical abortion, D & C, Ultra Sound or marched for Choice, there is no question that issues of motherhood and reproductive technology concern most of us at some point in our life. It is difficult in our patriarchal society just being a woman and an artist, however to give voice to issues that are women focused, to give voice to issues alienating to many men, if this is not radical it is certainly empowering for women. Hopefully Matriart's *Art, Motherhood, Reproductive Technologies and Choice* issue has achieved this.

Confronting our limited views of choice and reproductive technology are two feature articles. Barbara Harper writes a historical/ideological critique of "The Medicalization of Childbirth" and Jessica Bradley writes of the continued fragmentation of the body and the denial of the woman as subject in birthing with today's reliance on visual technology. Naomi McCormack and Pam Patterson write articles based on interviews with artists who deal with their experiences as mothers in their artwork — a definitely marginalized position, a sometimes confusing and enervating situation, but mostly an inspirational experience.

On a more personal level is a story by Irene Packer of an artist sharing her work with her son and Debbie O'Rourke's tale of alienation during her first hospital birth and eventual cesarian section. Cartoons drawings by Allison Hyde depict her anger and alienation while giving birth and poetry by Karen Houle describes her mixed feelings as a mother.

Other visuals include photographs of mothers and their daughter by Raisa Fastman and Lesbian mothers and their Children by Cathy Cade. Paintings and drawings by Terri Whetstone, Ruth Koski Harris, Joyce Kline and Nataalka Husar are also featured along with a description and visuals of a long and finally "aborted" collaborative installation project by Elizabeth MacKenzie, Anna Gronau and Carol Laing at the Morgantaler Clinic in Toronto.

This issue's "Artist in Profile" is Elizabeth MacKenzie, who's diptych is featured in the Focus on WARC section. Other features included in the WARC section is a book review by Randi Spires of *The Future of Human Reproduction* published by the Women's Press, a review by Carole Munro of *Don't Remain Silent* a group show organized by Susan Beamish at A Space and of course listings of upcoming events and calls for submissions. Good Reading.

Martha Judge, Editorial Committee

WARC UPDATE

WARC and motherhood — oxymoronic concepts? WARC and reproductive technologies — an inconsistency? We think not! As we proceed with our fourth issue of Matriart, WARC again embraces themes and issues that affect the lives and livelihoods of its members and all women artists.

This is the time of year when we begin to hear about the funding decisions from the various arts councils and frankly, this year, as for most arts organizations it looks pretty dismal. WARC must cope like the rest of the world in this recessive economy. As WARC grows and expands, naturally our needs increase. One bright spot has been the hiring of three additional staff through a federal work grant. Besides assisting in the daily administration and operation of the office and the documentation centre, they will be focusing on a Slide Registry Exhibition and 1993 Datebook. The Exhibition will be mounted in December featuring artists from our slide registry. The Datebook will be available in 1992.

WARC just finished a stimulating weekend of workshops and lectures as a complement to our last issue of Matriart. The Empowerment and Marginalization Conference, held at the Ontario College of Art, was enlightening and empowering for the many women that participated. WARC is hoping to make this kind of conference/workshop programming part of its regular event schedule. A follow up of the conference will be profiled in the next issue of Matriart. The conference committee and participants will focus on race, representation and communication within both the context of the conference and the larger communities. We again want to thank the presenters, participants, staff and volunteers for all the sharing and energy that was generated that weekend.

So where are we now? Half way through 1991 and still going strong. Join us!

Irene Packer, Coordinating Committee

M A T R I A R T

C o n t e n t s

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Tenhaff and Rochelle Rubenstein

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MATRIART welcomes contributions to future issues. Our deadline date for

the Women Against Violence Issue is August 31, 1991. Future themes of

Matriart are: women's spirituality; feminism, art & craft; and older women ar-

tists. For information please contact WARC. The Native Women Artists

Issue will be available by the fall of 1991. We encourage response from our

readers; your opinions, criticisms and concerns are welcome. Views ex-

pressed in MATRIART are those of the contributors and not necessarily those

of WARC. We reserve the right to edit submissions for brevity and clarity.

Please contact WARC at (416) 324-8910 for further information and advertising rates.

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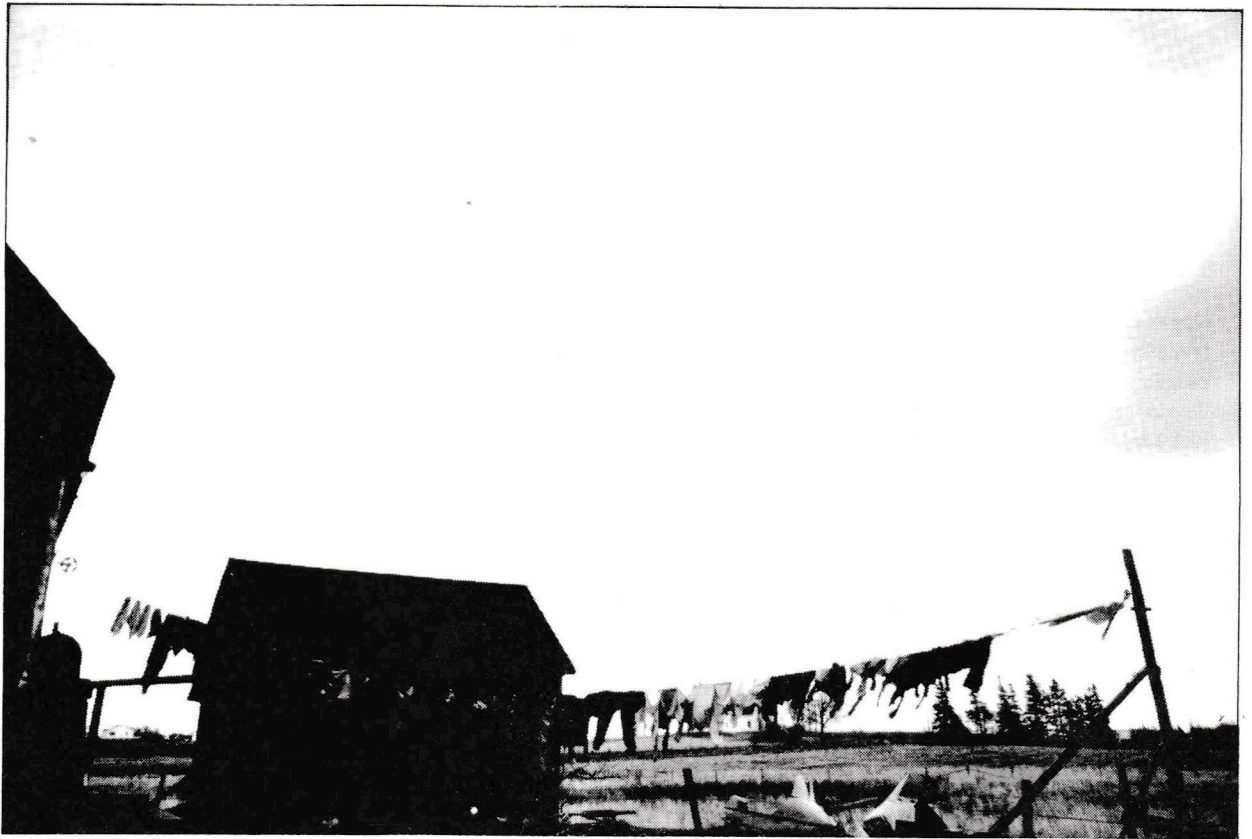
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*Art And Motherhood:
Parallels and Paradox in Cultural Performance*

N a o m i M c C o r m a c k

In contemporary culture, motherhood is still a much romanticized activity. Hollywood lends its muscle to the Virgin Mary in an effort to update and reiterate the sanctity of the role. Artmaking is also a sanctified activity — a society engulfed in a swamp of materialist values calls upon artists to provide a spiritual vision; to redeem its very crassness. But in a secular society sanctity has a twist; to sanctify is to romanticize — to romanticize is to trivialize. In a post-industrial patriarchy preoccupied with materialist ideologies of success, motherhood and artmaking share space on a pedestal of marginalization. It's not a comfortable place. The art establishment sticks out its elbows in a bid for exclusivity. Its misogyny outdoes even that of the corporate world. Women who combine business careers with motherhood are called super-women; women who combine artistic careers with motherhood are called dilettantes.

Despite the artworld's lack of generosity to artists who are mothers, women persist in being both, often at considerable personal sacrifice. Although this study was originally undertaken as an examination of the experience of motherhood and that of artmaking as two types of cultural performances, other issues rose to the surface as the interviews progressed.

Did the participants think that childraising had similar, or related challenges to art production? Were there any points of reference common to both activities and if so, what were they? What were the dynamics of combining the two roles and what effect did this have on both the participants and society? To be an artist and a mother; was it an exercise in double marginality, or a radical challenge to the ingrained stereotypes of the artworld?

I interviewed ten women — painters, poets, filmmakers, video artists, musicians and actors — who had combined professional careers in their artistic discipline with motherhood. The interviews centred on the participants' personal subjective experiences, although the questions covered everything from creative process to the political and economic correlations between artmaking and motherhood. The interviews were conducted over a two month period in 1990.

The participants were mid-career artists, whose children ranged in age from infants up to young adults. All the participants were second or third generation Canadians from urban backgrounds and half were single parents. Seven described their economic level as poor, while three thought they had a fairly middle-class standard of living. The majority had extensive preparation and training for their roles as artists, in most cases four or more years of formal training. This contrasted markedly with their preparation for motherhood, which, for all but one, consisted of reading a couple of books.

Much has been written on creativity, cultural performance and social change. Current theories define cultural performance as a creative process, a sense of ongoing realization preceded by a state of liminality and concluding in a state of accomplishment. While raising a child would fit this definition, our society takes motherhood so much for granted and assigns it so little creativity, that we are left with the idea that childraising is more an exercise in cultural maintenance rather than cultural performance. I asked the participants to articulate their thoughts about childraising as a cultural performance, and the types of creative process involved in it.

The participants were emphatic that childraising was very much a cultural performance, and in more ways than one. Whether the women were caught up in the act of performing for their child (i.e. educating or entertaining them) or with the child (and most of the participants thought that the child's performance as a "child" was intimately connected with their performance as a "mother"), they were acutely aware of their role as performers and their power as communicators of cultural values. In the early years especially, the artists felt that there was no other factor as important in child development, aside from the obvious one of the child's own personality. Factors such as the child's peer group and television were seen as relatively minor influences.

Some participants described an increased awareness of their actions, noting that one had to be aware of the power of each gesture upon the child, the effect of words spoken, etc., and that this type of reflexive

thinking was very similar to that which occurs in other types of creative performances, particularly acting.

Reflexivity is an integral part of most creative endeavours and performances and motherhood is no exception. The difference (this difference cropped up again in other areas) was seen as a matter of timing. A mother is "onstage" all the time, and any reflexivity must occur within the frame of the actual performance. Motherhood is, in effect, a "frameless" performance. While there may be plenty of critical review on the performance (both from outsiders and from the mother herself), there is no formal time in which she can reflect upon it herself. As an artistic performer, a woman can stand back from her work and say "it's finished", but motherhood, as one participant noted, "is never really finished". Viewed as a performance in cultural communication, motherhood faces stiff demands — even the television station can stop transmitting at 3 a.m..

The participants outlined other aspects of the creative process involved in motherhood, and noted that it was a continual exercise in creative problem-solving. One artist stated that "working on the day-to-day creation of another person brought problems and surprise which constantly necessitated new ways of thinking" and pinpointed adolescence as a particular challenge.

Parallels between motherhood and artistic creativity included both positive and negative elements. The participants listed a capacity for intuitive thought, the ability to be self-disciplined, a willingness to be flexible and learn from mistakes, and having a clear philosophy as requirements for both activities. On a subjective level, they felt that the experience of the high moments, when everything was going well and one was completely absorbed, and the low moments of anxiety and self-doubt, were quite similar in both occupations.

While the participants agreed that there were many parallels between the creative aspects of artmaking and childraising, they pointed out significant differences as well. Their responses highlighted the self-involved nature of artistic creativity as contrasted to the other-directedness of childrearing; they saw motherhood as a more responsive process, unrelenting in its

demands. As artists, they could take a break from their work, or even abandon it if it was not developing in the direction they wanted; as mothers, there was "no getting away from it."

There is a pervasive myth that art is a jealous god who suffers no competition. Artists who have lives outside of their studios are inevitably lesser talents, dilettantes who lack the fortitude and focus of the masters. In other occupations, such singular preoccupation is considered unhealthy, likely to induce a parochialism of the intellect if not the spirit. Focus atrophies into tunnel vision. But the same concerns do not apply to the artist — the tradition of the artist as an obsessed and singleminded hero plods on. Post-modern art practices of appropriation opened up new territory for artists to mine, but failed to make a dent in the admission requirements. Artists who combine other occupations with their art propose an alternative view, one that makes allowances for a plurality of visions.

The participants were almost unanimous about the effects of combining the two roles. They stated that the experience of motherhood had a significant impact upon their work; sometimes thematically, frequently in terms of the depth and breadth of feeling that they brought to their work, and invariably in terms of workstyle. In this last regard, loss of time and fragmentation of concentration were pinpointed as major obstacles in combining the two roles. In some instances, and particularly in the cases of single mothers, respondents had to allow their careers to go dormant for a certain time period when the motherhood role was most demanding, i.e. infancy. Conversely, some had to farm their kids out to relatives when the demands of their work required total commitment. All agreed that they had to develop their powers of organization and prioritization to a high degree in order to deal with the often conflicting demands.

In spite of the stress involved in having to deal simultaneously with the demands of two roles, the majority felt that motherhood had a positive effect on their other work. This was described as taking various forms:

"It made my art more personal, gave me a greater understanding of myself, opened areas of deep feeling."

"Living dual roles simultaneously gave me an appreciation of the unity and diversity within myself."

"Having a child makes you more serious about your convictions, crystallizes your thinking, and this bleeds into your other work. It makes you less egotistical and more life-giving — like the difference between Mean Steve Piano and a gospel choir."

"It grounds you, makes you less likely to drift off into mysticism about your work."

The participants concluded that the two roles both enhanced and interfered with each other. Single mothers, not surprisingly suffered the most stress in combining the multiple roles of caregiver, breadwinner, and artist, and were acutely aware of the time that motherhood has cost their art.

All the participants agreed that as both artists and mothers, they were performing roles that were valuable to society, but not valued by society, either in terms of status or monetary remuneration. One noted that both roles (but motherhood in particular) were given a considerable amount of lip service, with little actual reward. This was felt to be part and parcel of living in a society dominated by patriarchal values, where any kind of performance that has a nurturing aspect is devalued. There was also the observation that motherhood and proximity to children tended to remind us of "who and what we are and where we come from, and that this reminder was threatening to a value-system with God-like aspirations".

A perception of motherhood as an occupation completely divorced from culture serves not only to devalue childraising and rob it of its legitimacy as a cultural performance, but as well, to perpetuate an underlying sexism within the arts community itself. It feeds into the popular mythology that artistic creativity itself is incompatible with being female; that women's "natural creativity" (i.e. ability to give birth) precludes the possibility of intellectual or aesthetic creativity. In this mythology, women who choose to be mothers are reduced to baby machines, while women who choose to be artists are merely making substitutes for the "real

thing". Language reflects this ideology — male artists may speak of "giving birth to their masterpieces", while condemning art about the birth experience as "lacking in universality": Women who choose to be both artists and mothers confront this paradox.

The myth that a true artist has no other interests or responsibilities invalidates the work of all artists who choose or are obliged to work at another occupation to pay the bills, and is particularly prejudicial to women artists who are raising children. It is part of the elitist ideology that supports the insularity of the art establishment and contributes to that community's own marginalization. The idea that children are antithetical to culture (except as junior consumers) prolongs this marginalization right into the next generation, increasingly lessening the value and relevance of artistic activity in our society.

By persisting in the face of a sexist cultural establishment, women who take on both roles send a significant message to the rest of society. Their determination erodes the monolith of patriarchal values that inform the present cultural establishment. It provides breathing space for alternatives. Artists who value childraising as an exercise in creativity that is compatible with other forms of cultural performance are instrumental in creating a cultural system that values a plurality of visions.

All quotes are taken from the interviews. My thanks to the women who participated in this study.

Naomi McCormack

Naomi McCormack is an artist, writer, curator, and filmmaker. She is currently working on an experimental film project "El Ser Una Chica" dealing with sex stereotypes and pathological passivity.



Mothering... Occasions for the Ridiculous, 1988

Cathy Cade

There have been lesbian mothers as long as there have been lesbians. (Martin and Lyon in *Lesbian Woman* estimate 2 in 5 lesbians are mothers—even before the mid-70s.)

I came out as a lesbian in the early 1970s in the context of the Women's Movement. When I became lovers with a woman who had a three-year-old child, I befriended many lesbian mothers and began photographing them. In 1978 I became pregnant by donor insemination. This led to my book *A Lesbian Photo Album: The Lives of Seven Lesbian Feminists*.

I've recently realized I have a perfect score in going against the prescriptions that say women aren't supposed to be lesbians, aren't supposed to be artists; and artists and lesbians aren't supposed to be mothers. It's a good life.

Cathy Cade lives in Oakland with her two sons and teaches photography at two high schools on a California Arts Council Artists in the Schools grant.



Grace and
Laurie:
The Last Days,
1986



Family Portrait:
A Diversity of
Energies,
1989

J O Y C E K L I N E

It is the year 2050 and you are in a museum viewing an exhibition of a war YOU survived—THE ABORTION WARS. One day the Abortion Wars will be over. Future generations will dispassionately examine the artifacts of our struggles much as we now leisurely meander through exhibits on the history of child labour, slavery, or the Holocaust.

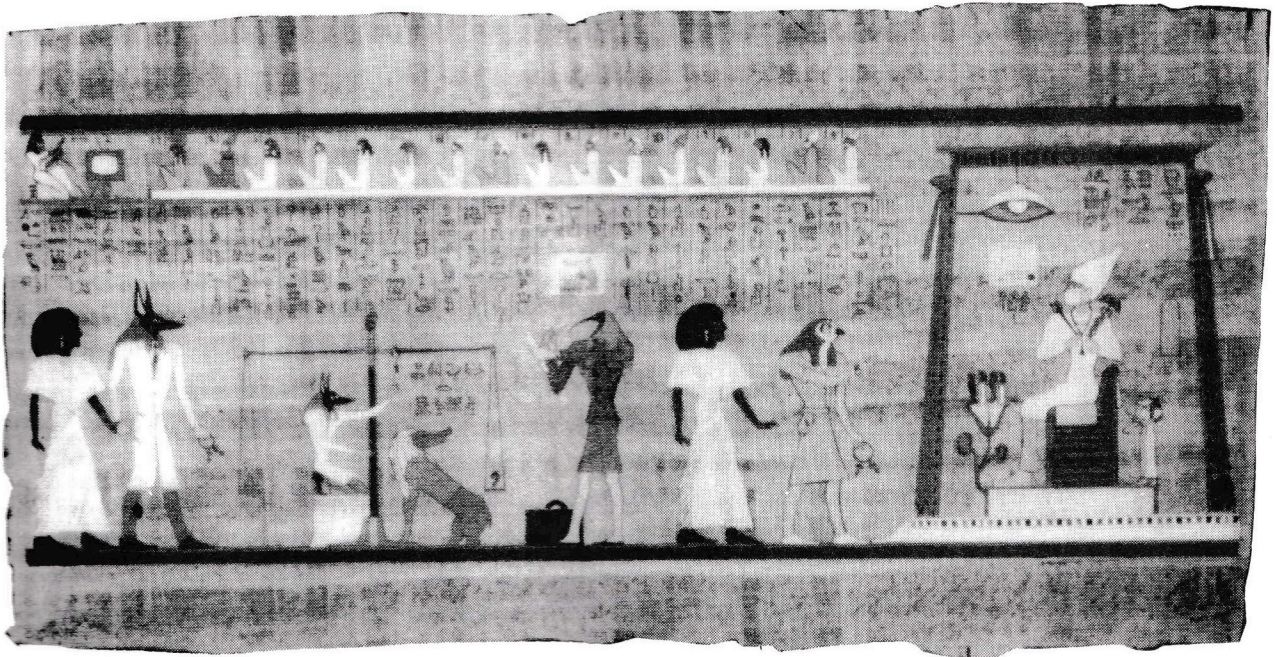
Objectivity comes more easily with distance—and time. *The Abortion Wars* moves the symbols of the present into the future and reframes them as relics of past history rather than current strife.

"Judgement" (The Hospital Abortion Committee) Egg tempera and marker on papyrus, late 20th century, Canadian Maritimes. This papyrus represents the final judgement of the pregnant woman by the hospital abortion committee. Arranged in a line along the register above, the hospital's doctors and medical experts witness the proceedings while a journalist covers the event.

The pregnant woman, at the extreme left, is first led into the hall to be judged by Doctor Anubis, the jackal-headed god of administration and order. Her heart is weighed against the feather of public opinion. Amemait, the Devourer of Souls—part hippo, part lion, part crocodile—hungrily awaits the outcome of the woman's trial. Should her request for a therapeutic abortion be denied, he will devour her future on the spot. An ibis-headed secretary, Ms. Thoth, carefully documents the proceedings.

Having passed the committee's test, the pregnant woman is finally led by the falcon-headed nurse, Ms. Horus, into the operating room of the Surgeon, Dr. Osiris. Here, surrounded by his medical attendants and his symbols of power—the caduceus, the instruments, the diploma—he will grant the woman the medical procedure which will restore her life.

The Abortion Wars



Going Before The Hospital Abortion Committee. Egg Tempera and marker on papyrus, 1990

What Do The Hieroglyphics Say?

The inscription below the scale of Dr. Jones reads "Fear of you to the limits (my)." Behind the Surgeon we read, "I set my power and dread in all countries to their limit" and "Rule Women, Men" under the diploma (possibly a translation of the Latin motto of the medical school).

The members of the hospital abortion committee each have their own thoughts: law and order (the crook), statistics, money, "angles", money, statutes governing the trial, power, patriarchy, sadness, food, love, power, pity for another woman, money, authority, religious ideology. Most of the hieroglyphics convey the woman's thoughts as she undergoes her ordeal.

Joyce Kline is a Toronto-based artist whose work "The Abortion Wars," from which "Going Before the Hospital Abortion Committee" is a part, is currently on exhibit at A Space Gallery.

Painting Mother Love

I touched his cheek and nose with the soft hair bristles of the brush. He closed his eyes and his lips parted in a smile. "I like that, Mom, do it again." A four year old's delight in the gentle, sensuous strokes on his face. I kissed his nose. "Now, let's get to work, pumpkin. This is your brush. It's made of horse hair."

Today was to be the day. The day I would try to paint, at my studio, with my four year old son Josh. I'd always left him with his dad or sitter. I always felt a little guilty. Establishing my priorities in scheduling time always left me tinged with regret. Time I was away from Josh (what if I missed a milestone!) or time I wasn't doing my painting. Two times always in conflict.

There was never a thought that bringing Josh to the studio could resolve this conflict. The need was to share. To let him see Mommy at work. Art is my life. I use to paint three days a week and revel in such a creative high. I would often be immersed in one of my creations. Each a different unique entity. I must admit, I looked at Josh as my creation, though a shared one. A unique little creature so full of life and vivid colour.

Funny how my fantasies always focused on having a daughter. Ginny has a daughter. Jill has two. Camilla has three. Do I detect a

gleam in their eyes? My daughter, the amazon goddess. She would rule her own life, her own world. She would not grow up being told girls do the dishes and boys are better at math. So other mothers are raising amazon goddesses. Josh pounds my knee with his fist.

I'm startled out of my daydream. "Let's go, I want to paint!"

Josh would often show a total disinterest in my work at openings. His perspective was the usual four year old reaction with an attention span of 43 seconds or less! With this in mind we trudged along the snow filled sidewalk that morning to my studio. He grasped my hand tightly in eager anticipation as we climbed the steps. "I'm hungry, Mom." I tried to stay clam, the rush of anxiety beginning to swell.

He insisted upon setting up a little area that was his own space. He lined up his pots of ginger paint. I filled a little plastic cup with water for his watercolour tray. His giggles complemented the excited flush in his face. A new adventure was unfolding. I looked at my canvas, and it did not beckon me as the newsprint sheets beckoned him. He raised his brush like a symphony conductor and chose blue. "This is for water, mommy", he chirped, "You make water too, okay?"

I squeezed a dab of aquamarine on my palette, so cool and soothing. I began to fill in a background of blue and white. I took his advice. I became lost in thoughts of the ocean. Photographs of the California coastline were scattered on a nearby table. Waves thundering in and crashing against rocky cliffs, churning the stones and sand. Blue water with a shimmer of silver glow, radiating a brilliance beneath my brush. My acrylics were drying too quickly. All the dryness of winter heating began to smother the moist sea air.

Our parallel involvement lasted about 10 minutes. A new record for Josh. Still swimming in my own sea of blue, I was jolted by his abrupt shout. "Mommy, Look!—I'm a paint brush!" The deep blue dripped from his soft hair. "I'm a boy hair brush!"

Irene Packer

Irene Packer is a mother, artist and writer. Based in Toronto she is actively involved with WARC and A Space.



Mariana Grezova,
Illustration

Untitled...

you'd think it was
the rationing

war
in me

the dead-cold radiator mornings

late
into
my

undoing
the ease
of a winter dawn's quiet under

belly

no quiet now
no
overhead/fluorescent/discharge

tubes
tied
me

to a place
my body could not sort
keep
abreast
of the exponential cell-divisions

the transitory
ocean/going/vessel
up and down the
sea-faring liner

nausea

seven
unblinking/hours/through/heaving

inside
out

me-not-me

slides

into
stillness

(un)

the new-(not)-now
the role

!
model
breasts

fill up and down
the vessel empties

burst

the
bending
back
way
back
to

wards
off

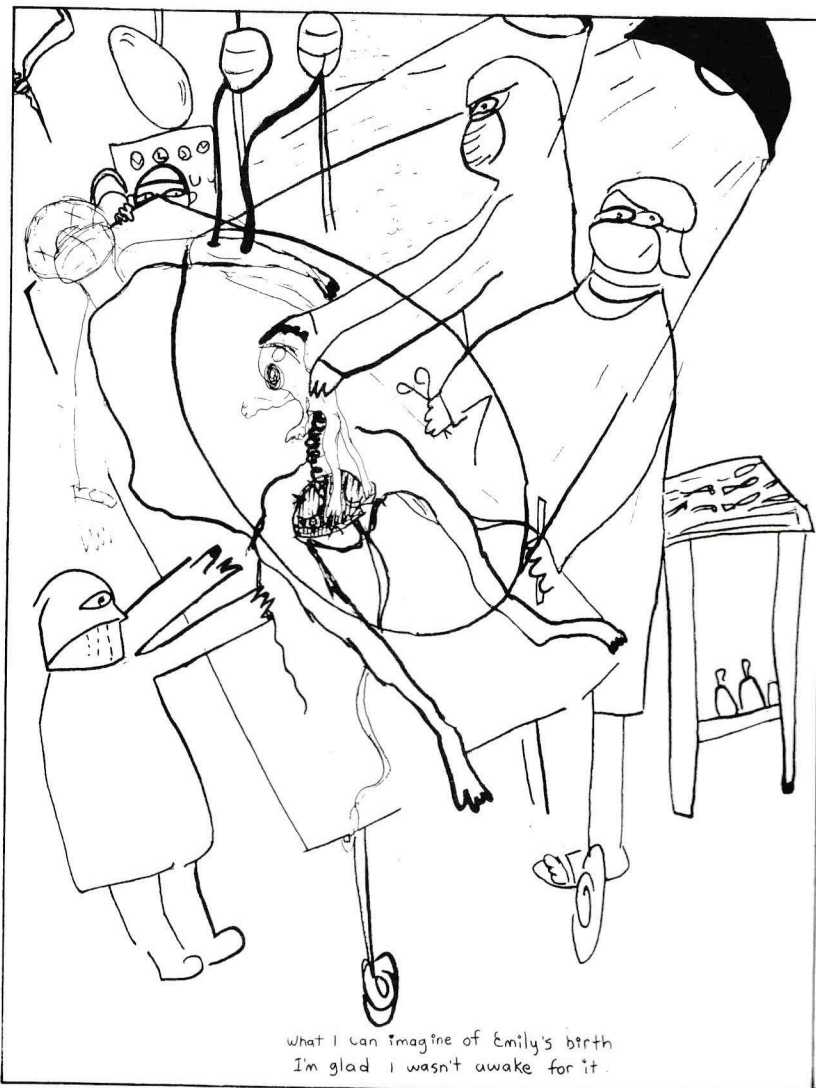
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ending

Karen Houle

Karen Houle is a Master's student at the University of Guelph, working on her thesis on surrogate motherhood. She is a single parent of twin girls. When not scraping play-doh off of sneakers or bouncing cheques, she writes poetry, reads, sometimes works as a camp cook for fun and funds, and never, ever irons clothes. So far, she has written a few articles for the "Female Persuasions" column of the *Montreal Mirror*; her poetry will be published in the upcoming issue of *gasp*.

K.L.F. Houle



Emily's Birth, 1990, pen and ink

Allison Hyde

Over the years I have always worked in sketchbooks. They act as direct links to my nervous system, my heartbeat, my personal world. With all its intensities of flesh and blood and contradictions of pain and joy, the experience of giving birth was for me a shocking and painful one. I was young and unprepared. The birth of my daughter has lingered in my memory, and, much of my work has stemmed from that first experience and my life experience as a mother. Drawing has always allowed for spontaneous exploration and for a certain amount of searching through restless thoughts. It has helped me as a mother, as a woman and as an artist to work through complex feelings and to deal with the many issues motherhood encompasses.



Natural Childbirth, 1990, pen and ink

The Medicalization of Childbirth

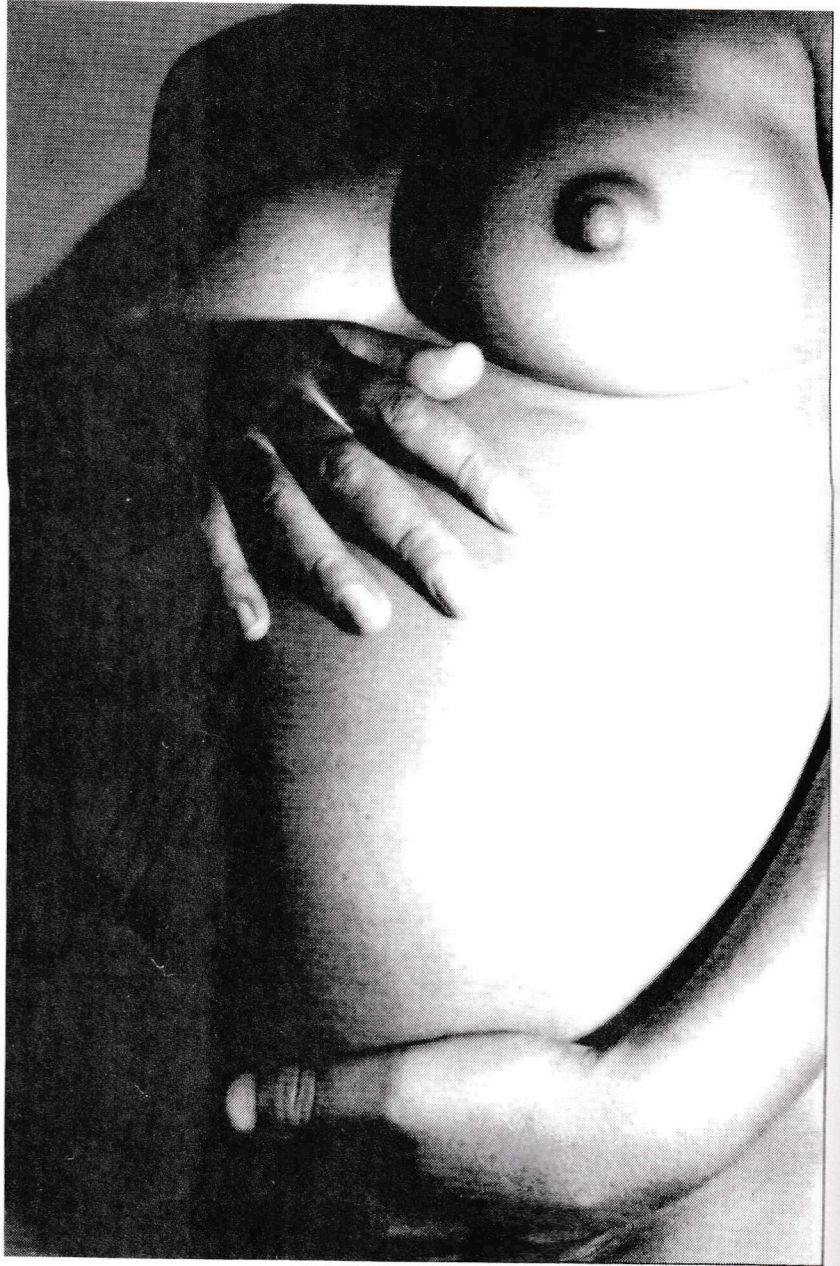


Photo Image for 'The Birth Trilogy' by Pam Patterson, Photo — J. Oughton

Most of our great-grandmothers were born at home without interventions, gently and “naturally”. Women have always supported one another through this natural process, yet they commonly struggled with conditions that complicated their efforts. Diets were less than adequate, sanitation poor, housing uncomfortable and birth control nonexistent.

These conditions resulted in understandable complications in pregnancy, birth and recovery. These current challenges created the most problems for women, but also gave rise to the deepest strengths in women and in women's traditions. Childbirth was a common bond in the lives of all women, and together they overcame the struggles of pregnancy and birth. Childbirth and children

have always played an integral part in how women defined themselves and how they saw their role in society. At the core of the history of childbirth, women's rights have been an ever increasing issue, and continue to be in the 1990s as a growing number of women seek ways to reclaim the primary female experience of childbirth.

Allowing birth to become a medical event in a hospital and separate from the process of life has completely changed how women feel about themselves and their role in society. With the development of regimens and procedures necessary for childbirth in modern hospitals, women began to feel inadequate in their ability to birth their babies. They no longer trusted their bodies, their instincts or the wisdom of their grandmothers. However, this process didn't just "happen". It has been taking place for centuries, but most devastatingly since the 1860s with the advent of the physician in the birthplace and enforced hospitalization for childbirth. Women traded their emotional safety and the shared experience of childbirth for the promise of safer, faster and less painful labours and births. Women were removed from familiar home environments to the hospital environment where childbirth was monitored and controlled by technology. Today's hospital standards, which were developed to enhance the experience of giving birth by protecting life and diminishing pain, often resulted in much less than the implied promises.

The physician was gradually introduced into the birth place over several centuries due to several factors. As early as the 13th century, midwives would call on the male "barber-surgeons" to remove the fetus in a long or difficult labour. These early surgeons were really no more than barbers with sharpened blades and instruments — instruments that women were banned from using by the Catholic Church. Forceps, first invented in 1588, were used by surgeons to try to save the baby from dismemberment and death. Lives were saved but mothers suffered with a host of forcep delivery complications including unspeakable pain, infections, and permanent injury for themselves and their child. Physicians classified forceps as "surgical instruments", and women were under the same restrictions against the use of surgical instruments by the Catholic Church as in the days of barber-surgeons. Thus, midwives and the families they were attending called in these "specialists" in difficult births.

By the early 1800s urban middle class women started inviting the "technically" superior, male practitioner to be in attendance along with the midwife at their births. The inclusion of "barber-surgeons" quickly turned childbirth into a successful business when it had been no more than women serving other women. The 19th

century complied by formalizing medical education, and men entered medical schools in great numbers. Women, and in particular midwives, were excluded from formal medical training due to the prevailing attitude that women were "inherently incompetent". Thus, the battle between physicians and midwives began—a struggle that unfortunately continues to this day. In this new role as a technical and superior adviser physicians were summoned more frequently to the bedside of birthing women. Through the early 1800s midwives were less frequently called upon in urban areas, and physicians increased in greater numbers. Upper-class women had come to accept the physicians' claims of superior skill, and there were no protests to this takeover.

Physicians felt obliged to offer every woman the technology of the day once they were called to attend a birthing woman, their instinct to let nature take its course was easily overridden by the need to prove themselves as physicians by "doing" something. Bloodletting was a popular technique used by physicians to relax women, draining their blood to the point where they would faint or lose control. The use of opium or opiate derivatives for women in labour also gave physicians an advantage over midwives. Ether and chloroform were introduced into the birthplace in 1847, the same year that the American Medical Association was formed. In the 1850s even Queen Victoria of England accepted chloroform for the delivery of her seventh and eighth child setting the trend for her country women. Medical judgement was initially against the use of ether and chloroform, but soon after their introduction, they were used in more than half of all births attended by physicians.

Motivated by fears of death and debility women accepted the promise of improvement in birthing outcomes through the use of "science" and technology. Families who could afford specialists with the latest technology readily sought them out. Women saw the use of drugs in childbearing as a gift that released them from the common religious perception that all women must bear children in pain and suffering. They did not see it as giving up control but rather as retaining control by demanding what was rightfully theirs.

The first birthing patients of charity hospitals were often unmarried, poor, usually immigrant, urban women who had neither the financial means to call a specialist or the support around them to make any other choice than to turn to an institution for their time of "confinement", as birth was referred to in earlier days. American midwives and physicians were suddenly in direct competition for patients, and not only for their fees. An "educational" campaign was launched by the American Medical Association into the professional circles and to the public with the general objective to improve

the quality of health care, but also to improve the status of medical doctors. Midwives were banned from attending medical schools because they were women and were labelled "uneducated, low-class and nonmedical". The majority of midwives practising in New York between 1910 and 1920 were foreign-born due to the recent influx of immigrants from Europe. Physicians saw them as a threat to their new field of obstetrics and argued that these foreign-born midwives were "uneducatable and a threat to American values". Almost no medical schools accepted women, blacks or working class students. The role of physician was relegated to primarily white, upper-class men who had the financial means and the social status to meet medical school requirements. In turn, attendance at childbirth not only shifted from midwives to physicians, but from the jurisdiction of women to that of men. Midwifery in the U.S. was virtually eliminated by the end of the 1930s, except among the poor.

Midwives were banned from attending medical schools because they ... were labelled "uneducated, low-class and nonmedical".

The idea that childbirth was inherently dangerous and needed constant technical intervention grew with the

development of obstetrics and the medical profession. In 1920 an article was published in the first issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* by Dr. Joseph B. DeLee. The article entitled, "The Prophylactic Forceps Operation", outlined the horrors of birth for both the mother and the baby. According to DeLee, labour was dangerous. DeLee stated that "only a small minority of women escape damage during labour".

DeLee further claimed that the stretching and tearing of the perineum resulted in such gynaecological conditions as prolapsed uteri, tears in the vaginal wall, and sagging perineum. The episiotomy, which is the surgical incision of the vulva, did not become popular in the United States until the late 19th century and was not in wide use until after Dr. DeLee's extensively read article. What most physicians failed to realize was that the tearing was largely due to the "lithotomy" position—where a woman

is on her back with her knees elevated. The lithotomy position, the most unnatural position for a woman to deliver, was a gift from King Louis XIV of France and his kinky erotic aberration of watching from behind curtains as his many mistresses gave birth. Up until that time women had used the time honoured birthing squat or maintained a sitting position in someone's lap. DeLee claimed that the episiotomy would restore "virginal conditions", and make the mother "better than new", implying that women were irreparably damaged in normal childbirth and postnatally less desirable sexually. American obstetrics saw episiotomy as the answer.

What person who was basically uneducated and unfamiliar with the birth process could resist such arguments at the time? Even the lay press sold women on the idea of advancements in medical science and technology. The fact remained that the underlying fear in all women was the possibility of death or permanent injury. Women and midwives often stood by with no tools to aid them while birthing mothers haemorrhaged, died of childbed fever or difficult presentations of the fetus. It was precisely these fears that led women to be swayed by the promise of safer and less painful childbirths. They easily gave up some of their most valued traditions—childbirth attended by other women, the support and comfort of the family, and a basic trust in their bodies—to be assured of protection of life and health during birth.

The promise of *complete* pain relief probably brought more women into the hospital than any other assurances. "Twilight sleep", introduced in 1914 appeared to solve all the problems of birth. A woman under twilight sleep can still feel and respond to her contractions but supposedly she will not remember what happened. The amnesic component of Twilight sleep separated a woman from her body, which could writhe, toss, even feel pain, but all outside her recognizance. The birth itself was not part of the mother's conscious experience because the increased use of scopolamine as the labour progressed usually resulted in a heavily sedated mother who was totally unconscious for the delivery. Women had to be carefully guarded from hurting themselves sometimes being strapped or tied to a bed for hours as a result of the hallucinogenic side effects of scopolamine.

Before widespread hospitalization, the twilight-sleep movement was initially supported by women who wanted choices about their birth experience returned to them. Deep within the issue of the removal of pain in childbirth was the underlying religious edicts that women shall bear children in pain and suffering. The clergy as early as 1846, with the discovery of anaesthetic gases, were staunchly opposed to the use of any form of anaesthesia for women in childbirth. The Catholic Church maintained the belief that children were born out of sin and that if women were relieved of pain it would somehow remove her mothering instincts. The Victorian prohibitions against sex and openness about one's body also applied. Some doctors maintained that women were too delicate for the strain of childbirth and needed relief from pain, while others were reluctant to interfere with the natural process of childbirth.

Women began asking and insisting that they be given the option of twilight-sleep. Many of the early supporters of pain relief in childbirth were suffragists whose commitment to twilight-sleep was founded in their strong belief of women's rights and their right to choose. Little did these women foresee that by insisting on a physician-attended birth with the right to choose "twilight-sleep" they were also giving up control over the birth that they were fighting so hard to obtain. Through the efforts of these early vocal women, the public became aware of the possibility of shorter and less painful labours and births. The physicians complied readily to the demands of the public and institutionalized the use of anaesthesia in obstetrics. By the 1930s public and medical opinion were in tune, believing that some form of narcotization should be used for every labour.

The promise of painless childbearing seen as a right by some women in the early part of the 20th century, became the standard of obstetric care and ultimately reduced the choices for birthing women. In 1960 it was almost unheard of for a woman to give birth anywhere but in a "modern" obstetrical unit in a city hospital. The medical profession had considerable control over childbirth, and women unwittingly relinquished the right to choice in childbirth which they had fought so hard to obtain. Women yielded their control over the birthing process to physicians who promised less pain, less death, fewer fetal injuries and no birth defects from difficult and long labours. Women's primary concern was, "Doctor, give me a healthy baby. I don't care how you do it". Women rationalized, "I may lose control, even my independence, but the trade-off is worth the risk".

What are the results of this grand experiment in the interruption of a normal physiological process? Has technology and medical intervention lived up to its promises? What price have our children paid for this technological comfort? Women were seeking to liberate

themselves from the more uncomfortable and often lethal aspects of childbirth, but what were they losing in the process? What has the use of drugs done to alter women's perceptions of childbirth? How do women cope with children who have obvious birth related injuries that need special attention for the rest of their lives? How do families rationalize the child whose abilities to learn, love and trust may have been influenced by the drugs his mother was given during birth? What are the personal costs for women to experience a sense of intimidation, loss of control, humiliation and even a feeling of abuse while giving birth?

The causes of these feelings for women are justly administered by kind, well intentioned hospital personnel for appropriate medical reasons. Unfortunately, that does not remove the indignity that a woman feels when she is shaved in order for the perineum to be a "clean" surgical area. It does not assist a woman's well being to give her an enema so that she won't "contaminate" the surgical site during birth. The humiliation that a woman feels when her clothes are removed is only complicated when her loved ones are excluded and she labours alone. A woman's level of trust in her own body and her ability to birth normally is shattered by repeated vaginal examinations in order to assess "progress". A mother's self confidence waivers when her newborn is taken away to the nursery to be cared for in a "superiorly medical way".

Today the message that most women receive from the entire system of obstetrical care is that we are no longer capable of giving birth without the physician and the hospital helping us get through. With the dawning of "medicalized births," women began to see themselves as less than adequate at the task of giving birth. Women's oral history of childbirth, rich in the wisdom and the transforming power of birth, was no longer passed from mothers to daughters. These daughters, who would one day birth their own children, were just as much robbed of a vital life experience as their unconscious mothers. Our concern for comfort and our sincere interest in protecting the lives of our children helped to create the modern medical mythology. This mythology and the technocracy that accompanies it has drastically altered women's self perceptions and gave society a distorted view of femininity.

Barbara Harper

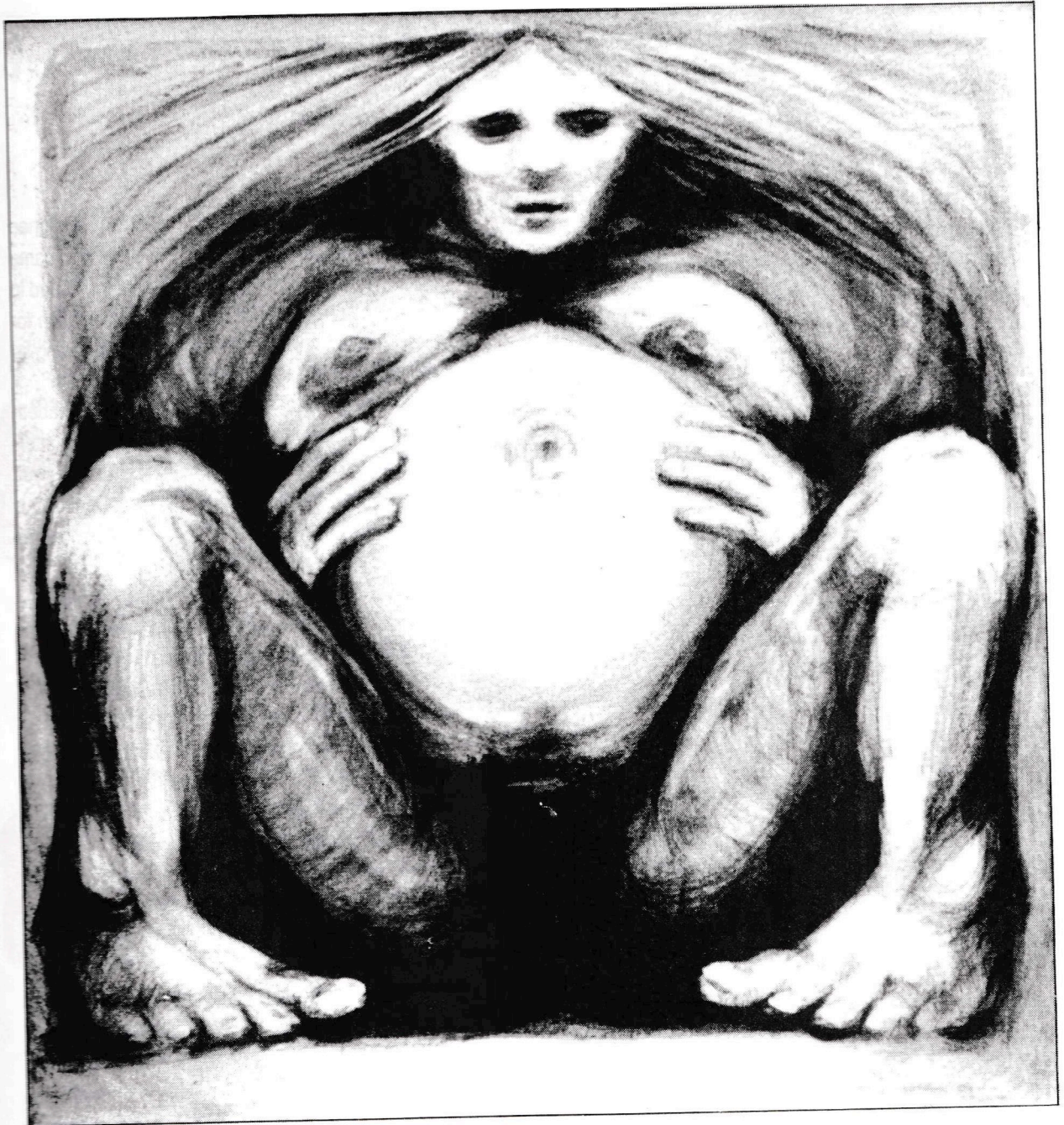
Barbara Harper is a registered nurse and founder of Waterbirth International, an information and referral network helping couples throughout the world to make informed choices about the pregnancy, birth, and infant care. Barbara's book, Gentle Birth Choices for the 1990s will be available in September 1991. For more information please write to Waterbirth International, P.O. Box 5554, Santa Barbara, California, 93150.



Mother and Child, 1990, acrylic on canvass

Ruth Koski Harris

An ex-scientist, PhD in biochemistry, Ruth Koski Harris, 64, has embarked on her second career as a painter of women's experiences. Ruth has shown in the North York Library Series in 1987-88 and at the Generic Theatre in 1988 and 1989, participated in the *Don't Remain Silent* group show(1990/91), and had a show of her work at the Woman's Common in 1990.



Origins, 1988, Acrylic on paper

Morgentaler Clinic Project

The Morgentaler Clinic Project was designed specifically to address the women who came to the Clinic for an abortion. It was intended to create a circumstance of support and affirmation for these women, in recognition of the fact that having an abortion can be difficult, confusing and isolating.

In developing the content of the Project, Elizabeth MacKenzie and Anna Gronau met with and interviewed staff at the Toronto Morgentaler Clinic, as well as staff at the Immigrant Women's Health Centre. Our intention to interview women who had had abortions was modified by the realization that it would be very difficult to do this without being invasive. Instead, we drew on our own experiences and talked to other women artists we knew about their experiences.

The Project initially consisted of drawings and text applied directly on the walls of the Clinic, with coloured pencil. The images showed faces of women of various races and ages, women's gesturing hands and a variety of everyday objects chosen for the sense of comfort and familiarity they might convey.

The text and images were grouped on walls throughout the Clinic, where space allowed, in deference to existing architecture, furniture and the different uses of spaces.

Text was confined to short phrases and sentences, written in the first person, reflecting a variety of responses to the process of obtaining and undergoing an abortion. We tried to indicate the variety of viewpoints that women might feel based on the circumstances of their lives. Texts like:

If they find out I could lose my job.

What was right for my mother, maybe isn't right for me.

It's just not fair... I got pregnant even when I was using birth control.

I don't want my children to know.

Those people out there have no right to tell me what I should do.

In a further effort to include a range of "voices," statements in languages other than English were also included.

As the Project progressed, we realized how difficult it was to choose images and texts for use in certain spaces in the building: in particular, the reception room in the back entrance (which was used as a main entrance), the ground floor and the operating room on the third floor. Carol Laing then joined the Project and the three of us planned that she would use traditional wall stencilling techniques to place a discreet floral patterning across the walls in these areas.

Through the text, images and stencil patterns, we attempted to make contact with women on a conscious and literal level, as well as on an unconscious and metaphoric level. We wanted to make a piece that would be non-intrusive, but would be available to the women who used the Clinic, if they chose. We hoped that they would identify with some of what they encountered and that this artwork might be helpful to them, possibly even after they left the Clinic.

Work on the Clinic Project proceeded very slowly. For security reasons, we could not enter the building when the Clinic was closed, so we had to work at the times that were least busy and we had to be careful not to interfere with the patients.

In January 1986, we still had not completed all the work we were hoping to do. At that time, however, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down Canada's abortion law as unconstitutional and the Clinic began to make major changes in the physical spaces at the Clinic. Structural changes included, tearing down and building new walls, painting and changing the position of doorways. New decor was also added. More modern furniture replaced the old, and framed reproductions of paintings replaced some of the original posters. Some of our work was painted around or simply cut out. In some cases, new furniture or new walls bisected existing drawings or texts.

Further problems for the Project occurred as the Clinic became busier and there was less and less time available when we could come and work, without disturbing anyone. From the onset, we had made it clear to the administrators that we did not want our work to be any sort of hindrance to the Clinic's ongoing needs and functioning. By the fall of 1988, we realized that our work on the Project had slowed to a standstill. This, and the discouraging fact that much of the work we had completed had now disappeared, caused us to abandon the project.

Carol Laing
Anna Gronau

This text was prepared collaboratively by Anna Gronau and Carol Laing from information in Elizabeth MacKenzie's and Anna Gronau's files on the Project.

Carol Laing is a visual artist and art critic practising in Toronto. She teaches Women's Studies and Contemporary Canadian Art at the Ontario College of Art.

Anna Gronau is a film maker. She teaches film at the Ontario College of Art and is currently working on a script for her next film.

Mothers Making Art

Women have often coloured and informed their art with revelations and reflections of their lives, histories and personal responses. A new vitality emerges at the point where their work reveals a world that is particularly of women — in feeling, in sound, in touch, in image. This revitalized and reconstructed view is not only a glimpse and experience of something private but is also immeasurably empowering. A personal art can open new directions for artists who become mothers. They find, as a result of their birth and mothering experiences, new voices as artists, as well as a clearer focus, direction and purpose to their work.

Making art about birth, children, relationships and the home is not peculiar to contemporary women artists. Women throughout history have portrayed their lives in their creative work whether it be in stitchery, story or paint. This rich myriad of expressive forms has given us a sense of women's confinement, strength, endurance and presence. In 1789, the French artist Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun painted "Self Portrait". In it, the artist portrays herself as a smooth-limbed, beautifully-coiffeured, bourgeois woman in her role as mother. Her arms affectionately encircle her daughter, a miniature version of herself, drawing the girl into the closed circle of women's lives. The painting reveals Lebrun's complicit understanding of her daughter's future, not as a potential artist, but as wife and mother.

Mary Cassatt, a modernist, proposed in her radical use of space and subject matter new images of mothers and children. She portrays in works such as "The Bath" (1892) unsentimental children and purposeful mothers contained in the private and confining world of 19th century France.

And the tradition continues. Rather than abandon an art that addresses the roles and experiences of mothers with their children, women artists continue to welcome it. Using themselves as frames of reference, they carve out images which reflect their perceptions of their present existence and future dilemmas. They come to the work with ever more radical ideas and are not afraid to use them. And they discover they have a new reason for creating the work — their children.

I spoke to three women artists: b.h. Yael, June Clark-Greenberg and Lu Szamosi. They differ in age and cultural heritage. All three are mothers and became more strongly motivated to make art as a result of having children. They also use content that refers to birth and children in their work.

b.h. Yael is a Toronto-based video, film and installation artist. Now in her thirties, she began to focus more intently on art-making after the birth of her first son. "Giving birth," she said, "was a way for me to go through something I had feared, and find my own strength." And find it she has. With a career in teaching and in curating and co-ordinating film and video festivals, and with a number of works to her credit, she speaks with authority and maturity through her work. As an intelligent and avid

reader, she reflects in her work her craft as a writer and her interest and understanding of feminist history and theory.

In the film, "Is Dad Dead Yet" she speaks in a voice-over, "Generations of voices resound in the voice I claim as my own." There is a firm sense in this film and others of generations — generations of women and the generations of a family. There is also in her works her personal presence. She admits, "I set myself a task. There is always something I need to work through that has a specific significance for me. The intellectual issues are much more apparent to me, but it is the personal stuff I really have to dig for."



In the video "My Mother is a Dangerous Woman", she explores with her main character the role of storyteller/writer and the roles of daughter and mother. "I refer in the film to the construction of storytelling as much as to the actual stories themselves. I wanted them to be fragmented and interwoven in order to create a texture and a distance in the work and for the viewer. The one central figure functions both as mother and daughter and in fact some of the things she dislikes in her relationship with her mother, she also repeats with her own daughter." It is that element of distance that allows both audience and protagonist to assess and re-evaluate her actions.

"I want to emphasize in all my film and video work," Yael adds, "the multiplicity of experiences in the roles of woman and/or mother. There are many things going on, and we don't do one thing for one reason." Yael's future work includes an examination of the nature of parent-child sexuality. She echoes a phrase common for most mothers, "My [younger] son Niko is growing up fast and I want to catch, at the very least, some photographic images of him for this new work. But there is so little time, it seems."

June Clark-Greenberg, a Toronto photographer and printmaker, also acknowledges the amount of time and energy focused on rearing children. Now entering her fifties, with both her children leaving their teens, she has recently completed a Masters in Fine Arts at York University and is now teaching in the arts. It is her art — photo-etchings, installations and photographs — however, which has been attracting much-deserved attention in recent exhibitions at YYZ and Mercer Union in Toronto.

A large photo-etching, "Untitled", from the YYZ exhibition shows a woman's belly puckered and stretched from childbirth.

It had originally been part of a series of navel photos. She remembers the reactions when she first brought the image into the printmaking studio: "That particular image caused responses ranging from consternation to revulsion. I thought, now wait a minute. Why do they ask us to have these babies when they don't want to deal with what goes on around having them? What about babies that need to be changed or fed in public? They say, 'Just bring them to us when you've trained them and then they'll be fit for society.'" Her feelings about herself as a pregnant woman and then mother challenged this response and spurred her to work this piece into a strong visual statement.

In her solo exhibition at Mercer Union entitled *Mnemosyne* (named after the Greek goddess who personified memory and was the mother of the nine Muses), Clark-Greenberg presented images from her own childhood and her personal history which documented the joy and pain of the Black experience in North America. She continues to work with the idea of disempowerment. However, here she explored the child's experience.

An installation piece from this exhibit, "2191 8th Ave." is a large blank-paged scrap book. The only image in the book is a photostat of one of Clark-Greenberg's early report cards in which she was graded for "training in personality": the ability to use a handkerchief, keeping hands and objects away from the mouth and sitting, standing and walking "correctly". It is a self-referential piece, as is much of her work, and as such is powerfully resonant. "This exhibit is about the rigorous structuring of children's actions without there being any apparent reasons why," she comments. "It is also about the whole idea of growing up in an alien society. What does that mean to a child? Children are very trusting. They believe it when they are told they are less than, or not as good as, someone else. The show is about what that does to a young mind."



She also adds, "The show was extremely personal and very cathartic for me. It is a process that builds. While all of these things do happen, there is a strength that comes from a consciousness-raised awareness of what has been done to you that no one can take away."

However, her vision is not all bleak. The joy she feels about her community and her family is in her work. "There is an understanding that your children allow you to bring to your own childhood," she notes. "I don't think I could have done this work without having had children. You learn from them, from their vulnerability and their strength. Also, I do it for them. It is extremely liberating. It has been a very, very good thing."

Lu Szamosi, now in her sixties, arrived in Canada after years of travelling from her native Hungary in 1964. For almost thirty years she has created art which now in its depth and presence reveals maturity and wisdom. Her sculptures recently on view in Toronto at the Arcadia and the Kyser-Goldberg galleries record her present "obsession" with images which portray the beauty, variety and force contained in the pregnant female form. Her medium of choice, cement fondue, is well suited to this. Its smooth stone-like finish sets off the forms. "I am interested", says Szamosi, "in the pregnant female form in its many stages: waiting quietly, enjoying the unity of mother and unborn child and the active stage of birth. The forms are full and very satisfying. The act of labour expresses strength, struggle, pain and victory."

"Dancing Torso" at the Kyser-Goldberg Gallery is a rich and graceful work. A highly polished and yet simple piece, it represents in a pregnant torso an essence of quiet joy. There is in all her pieces a sense of this earthy reverence.

A less conventional and larger work, "Contraction," shown at the Arcadia exhibit is a stylized view of a reclining figure in labour. A triangular-shaped opening dominates the face. "It is a cry of pain," says Szamosi.

Images such as these of women in the act of giving birth are not often seen in the commercial art world. "It is such an important phase of life," asserts Szamosi, "and I think it is just being pushed under the table. It is something that men don't want to deal with. In some cultures birth was considered shameful. Women were sent into a shack outside to give birth to their children on their own. It was something unclean. I find that pregnant women are beautiful. Birth is an extremely powerful thing. It requires a patience and endurance."

Her work reveals Szamosi's own patient intensity. "I can't imagine what my subject would have been if I hadn't had children," she says. But as a mother and grandmother, her perceptions of pregnancy and birth have been many, and it is this richness of experience she gives form to.

An artist does not have to be a mother to make art about birth and mothering. However those artists who are mothers, make work that has a unique resonance

Pam Patterson

Pam Patterson is a writer, curator and artist. Her work is informed by feminism and addresses the roles and concerns of women and especially mothers. Her daughter, Erin, not only affects her life, but energises her art.

Berthe Morisot, **The Cradle**, 1873

Opposite: Elisabeth Vigée, Le Brun, **Self Portrait and her Daughter**



Immaculate Conception, 1987, oil/linen

N a t a l k a H u s a r

Nataalka Husar is a first generation Ukrainian Canadian painter living in Toronto. "Immaculate Conception" was exhibited as part of a solo show that toured Canada in 1988-89 called *Milk and Blood*.

This image is from Nataalka Husar's 1988 series *Milk and Blood*, in which she used her own self image to trace the source of her female angst in her own ethnicity, and as such explore the experience of middle-class women in contemporary society.



Upcoming shows:

White Water Gallery,
North Bay (July 91)

Woltjen/Udell Gallery,
Vancouver (Oct. 91)

Edmonton (Nov. 91)

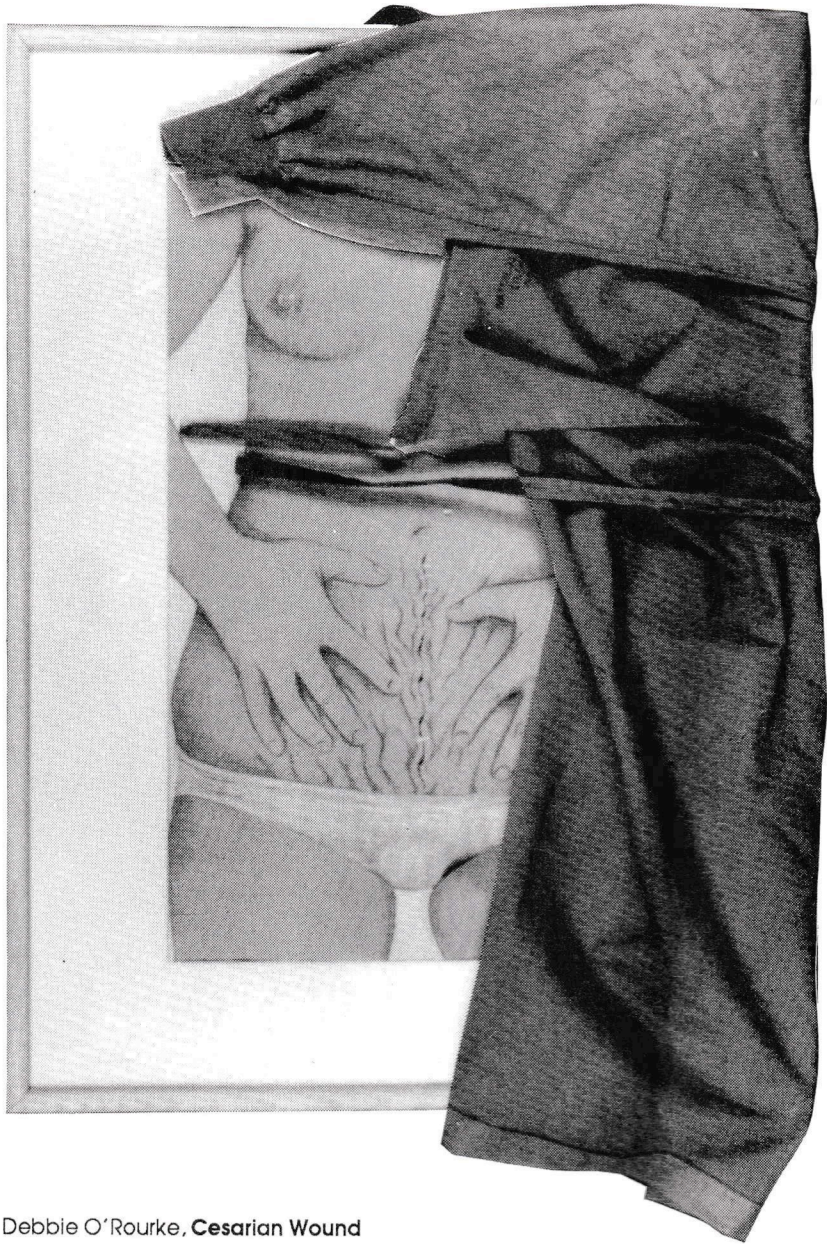
Garnet Press,
Toronto (Jan.92)

The *Birth Suite*, a series of five drawings, grew out of a sketch made while I labored to give birth to my son. I drew a pregnant woman flopped helplessly on her back like a great turtle. A cabinet on wheels smugly guarded her spewing reams of graph paper. From this machine, one wire snaked into her vagina to clamp, unseen, onto the fetal head; another connected to a belt that squeezed her swollen belly. The sketch was a self-portrait I made while I fought for balance in a struggle between technology and humanity.

The purpose of the machine, the fetal monitor, was to record the infant's heartbeat and to measure my contractions.

Four weeks past my due date I had reluctantly consented to have labor induced. This date had been calculated by my doctor based on measurements taken during an ultrasound procedure. Menstruation during the early months had made an exact determination of fetal age impossible. Now I was heavily pregnant and becoming anxious. I believed my doctor's assurances that his technique (an oral dose of the hormone prostaglandin followed by the breaking of the bag of waters that cushioned the fetus) would result in a labor of normal intensity and duration.

I didn't want to be hooked up to the monitor. It would interfere with the mobility that was so important to me, and that my doctor assured me he would support me. I was told that if the fetus's signs were healthy during induction, the machine would be retired for the rest of the labor. I allowed them



Debbie O'Rourke, *Cesarian Wound*

A Birthing Tale

to fasten the strap around me then lay on my back.

After pricking open my bag of waters, my doctor and a nurse kneeled on the bed and began pressing down my belly with their elbows. Glancing at the monitor, suddenly, he called out orders to prepare for an emergency cesarian. I had not taken a breath since they, without warning, had pounced on my body. I did deep-breathing exercises, then asked my doctor to check the monitor. The vital signs were now normal, and remained so until I allowed one of the belts around my waist to be replaced by the more accurate scalp clip. Again, consent forms were waved in my face. I now thought these people were insane: how could they expect to get accurate data while they were fiddling with the technology? But my waters were broken. I could not leave.

By mid-afternoon, the contractions had become so intense that I could not draw. I asked my husband to pack away my sketchbook. Suddenly, I found myself in bed with an intravenous in my arm administering a pitocin drip. I had dreaded this procedure, which is associated with short, hard labors and a high cesarian section rate. I don't remember consenting to it. I only recall feeling confusion upon being told, during a heavy contraction, that my labor was not progressing. Ironically, I was unable to resist the pitocin drip precisely because heavy labor had begun. Labor is not just a physical event: it is a state of altered consciousness in which the capacity for self-defense is lost.

I now realise that I was never asked how my labor was progressing because my doctor consulted the monitor for that information. The machine that misled him about my condition and the baby's committed other mischief. The belt that measured my contractions intensified the pain of back labor and foiled my husband's attempts to move me onto my side or my knees to ease pressure on the spine. Although not medically necessary the personnel refused to remove this torture device.

The trust I felt for my obstetrician eroded so that I feared that a show of strong emotion would result in sedation and surgery. I was afraid to moan or cry or to submit, against orders, to the overwhelming urge to push. I tightly held in my emotions and made choices, such as a request for anaesthetic, based on my need to stay in control of myself.

While the epidural was being administered, my doctor turned off the pitocin drip and went home for dinner. I learned this from the intern who answered my summons when I realised the contractions had stopped. Though doctor's antics appeared to amuse her, I raged and despaired awaiting him! Lying

numbed, paralysed and incontinent I had subjected myself to a needle in the spine for no good reason.

When, at midnight, I agreed to the cesarian, it was because I felt helpless and hopeless. I wanted the operation to take place before the doctor became too tired to perform properly. The birth was peaceful; I remained conscious, my husband was with me and a calm, healthy infant was removed from my abdomen. I was too happy and excited to sleep that night, and I barely slept for many days because they kept my son from me.

For five days my son was in the intensive care unit in another wing of the hospital on another floor. The examining pediatrician recommended that he remain in intensive care for twenty-four hours due to a mucousy condition common to cesarian babies, but this doctor broke his leg and was hospitalized himself that day, so my son was not seen again by a practitioner until, at our insistence, four days after the birth. He was declared to be a healthy, full-term infant, but had to be weaned off oxygen before we could have him.

Meanwhile, my husband and I received no support in dealing with the bizarre after effects of interrupted labor. When I could sleep, I dreamed I was in labor. When I awoke, instinct insisted that because my uterus hurt, my baby was damaged. This anxiety was fed by our forced separation. Only sustained contact with my child stopped this painful delusion.

Nine years later, I still feel in my throat that birthing cry I would not utter for fear of being sedated. I have made a living drawing for others, but have been unable to bring my own projects to term, and push them into the world. I feel, in dealing with my own imagery, even the new pieces not directly related to birth, the same emotions that accompanied labor: the chafing against bonds, the inability to speak or be heard, the fear of attack. I keep at it but I feel like my friend Darlene, another birthing casualty who says, "I don't need a therapist. I need an exorcist."

Debbie O'Rourke

Debbie O'Rourke is a multimedia artist and designer, and the mother of a nine-year-old son. She is currently curating an exhibition called Birthtales: a collaborative event in which artists in partnership with parents, midwives, women's and birthing organizations, and medical professionals examine the emotional, philosophical and medical issues involved in the delivery of care to women giving birth.

Terri Whetstone



Birth in the
Squatting
Position:
Tlazolteotl
Gives Mary a
Lesson, 1990,
acrylic on
paper



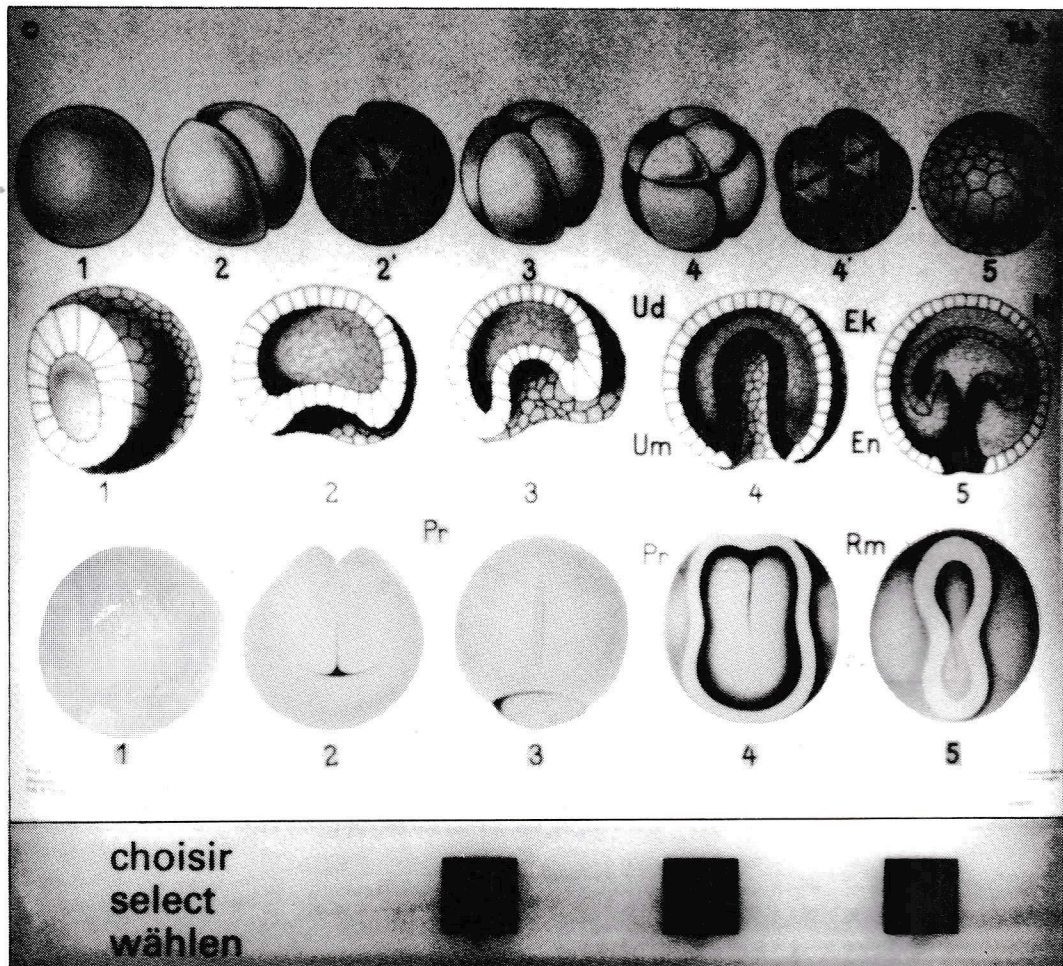
**Mary & Jesus
Do the Eaton
Centre, 1990,**
acrylic and
tempera on
canvas

Terri Whetstone is a mixed-media artist who is currently working on a series of homoerotic paintings. Her daughter, Anna, celebrated her first birthday on

April 12, 1991. Works included in this publication are from the group exhibition *Labour of Love: Feminist Perspectives on Motherhood*, August 1990.

New Reproductive Technologies

The Visible, the Possible, and the Politics of Choice



The following is a series of adapted excerpts from a paper entitled "New Reproductive Technologies: The Visible, the Possible and the Politics of Choice." This research looks at links between traditions of scientific knowledge and cultural representations of the female body from a feminist perspective. Diagnostic technologies are seen as central, rather than peripheral, to the issues surrounding new reproductive technologies. This research is still in progress.

"In so far as fragmentation and disqualification from the position of subject are part of the historical heritage of women, how far and how fast can feminist theory propose a new form of bodily materiality, a sexually specific reading of the totality of the bodily self."

—Rosi Braidotti 1

Far from being limited to conceptive technologies, the current work on reproductive technologies is directly impli-

cated in work on genetic engineering, disease control and the prolongation as well as the creation of life. What is at stake are the limits and potential of our own bodies, of our relationship to life and death.

The original intention of my research was to question visual culture, its relations to the traditions of scientific knowledge, and how these histories intertwine to shape the socio-cultural context in which we are now faced with, the ominous options introduced by the new reproductive technologies. In looking at the relationship between the new reproductive technologies and changing representations of life and death, the more pressing question of how cultural representations of women may be understood and influenced by the new reproductive technologies became of central concern.

In her article "Organs without Bodies," Rosi Braidotti fears that women will move from the compulsory heterosexuality of patriarchy to the new reproductive tech-

Nell Tenhaaf,
Interface
Panel From
Video Disk,
installation
"horror
autotoxicus",
1990, photo —
J. Jardine

nologies without having had the time to seize the issues and create a women-identified re-definition of female subjectivity, of motherhood and of heterosexuality. The question of choice which is so central to feminist thinking on reproduction, takes on a new complexity in light of these technologies. In effect, new reproductive technologies necessitate a problematizing of our very notion of choice.

Attending the hearings of the Federal Commission on New Reproductive Technologies, held in Montreal last November, propelled me from theoretical musings to a reconstruction of my own experiences, a kind of memory work, sometimes painful. Although I had for a period of two years been medically defined as infertile, I was fortunate to later bring two children into the world without the aid of reproductive technologies. I realised after some thought that the diagnostic technologies, such as ultrasound, that I had been subject to should not be discounted so quickly. I had taken this aspect of my pregnancy for granted and I now found it as surprising and important as the more sensational aspects of reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer. At what point can we say that a technology is new or necessary, and at what point is a necessity created by a technology? The contemplation of a sort of technological trajectory, in which the "low" technologies are only a part of a wider spectrum, seemed important to me, yet they are now very much part of every woman's experience in a *normal* pregnancy.

As I read books like *Man-Made Woman*, *The Mother Machine*, and *Test Tube Woman*, gaining more information and becoming more disturbed, I administered the antidote of Mary O'Brien's *Politics of Reproduction* in nightly doses. She constructs a theory of the origins of gender struggle in the different reproductive consciousness of male and female, taking the reader on a veritable tour of political theory, yet always returning to the terra firma of experience, the lived experience of women. This she does with an unsentimental respect and value for the reproductive labour women perform (no doubt gained in her former career as a midwife) and without retreating to the high moral ground of nature with all its essentialist overtones.

A feminist discussion of the new reproductive technologies is fraught with contradictions and impasses. O'Brien's thesis provides only one of many possible routes toward clarifying the issues. Much of what has been written by feminists on the subject of new reproductive technologies unwittingly casts women in a disempowered role. Can we really say that women who avail themselves of these technologies are simply and unknowingly controlled by a male medical plot, that they have no desires of their own? Perhaps looking at these issues from the perspective of technology as the expression of a society at a given moment of cultural and historical development could be more construc-

tive. In our case there is a breaking apart of traditional kinship bonds and a reconstitution of communities, or at least a need for one, in an urban, industrialized world. What these schisms and reorderings throw into sharp relief is the fragility of paternity which has enjoyed protection under the legal system and human sciences, institutionalized in the 19th century. In Mary O'Brien's view, the issue of paternity has determined political structures on the side of male supremacy ever since it was discovered that babies are not made of sperm alone. If this is the case, clearly loss of control over women's reproductive capacity is risky business. And this is why the choices which the new reproductive technologies appear to offer deserve closer scrutiny.

In her summary of the conclusion of the 1985 Warnock commission in Britain, which advocated denying treatment to women without male partners and required the husband's written consent for married women, Michelle Stanworth writes: "[T]o the extent that the medical profession, official enquiries, the state and mass media have chosen to endorse the conceptive technologies, it is only by denying the force of a trend towards autonomous motherhood."²

Further, she notes how politicians who vote against abortion may vote in favour of national programs for pre-natal screening, indicating their interest in terminating pregnancies on genetic grounds, but not on the ground of a woman's choice to bear children or not. A new impetus toward eugenic thinking is raised by increasing interest and investment in the survival of the fittest as aid to the poor, the old and the single parent becomes scarce. We must consider whether choices which the new technologies appear to offer are not seriously outweighed by greater controls over women's choices, not only those that concern their bodies, but the moral and spiritual decisions for which they will increasingly bear the burden such as the choice over which children to bear, and of which sex. What does that burden do for the empowerment of women? And what influences will be brought to bear on her freedom of choice?

An increased pressure to confine female identity to motherhood, itself limits choice, and is often behind the choices offered by fertility technologies. Dr. Steptoe, whose work led to the first successful in-vitro fertilization resulting in a birth, confirms this in this statement: "[I]t is a fact that there is a biological drive to reproduce. Women who deny this drive, or in whom it is frustrated, show disturbances in other ways."³ Could it be that those "disturbances" are also culturally defined and also produced when nature denies a woman her societally prescribed identity? This is not to diminish the real pain of infertility for those who desire children, but to raise the question of an absence of socially validated identities for those who do not, or who have not been successful in their attempts. Given Steptoes's point of view, the only real choice for women seems to be to mother our genetic children, and

given other available diagnostic technologies, only to bear those children considered genetically satisfactory. How society views satisfactoriness is of course subject to changing conditions.

A complex web of changing social conditions — economic, demographic, political and sexual — is the larger context in which bio-technology has been developed, though its uses are popularly made known on the basis of the drama of individual lives — for example, the way the press was galvanized into action when the in-vitro babies and their parents appeared at the hearings on reproductive technologies was somewhat disheartening when there had been compelling representations by other groups who had equally important if less happy stories to tell.

The revolution in biotechnology, though seen as purely scientific, is ideological as well. This is why the profound changes in representing life and reproduction require our attention. Bio-technology makes the living body increasingly available in direct proportion to its visibility and intelligibility. What characterizes both the new reproductive technologies and obstetrical care is the fragmentation of continuous processes. Through many of the new reproductive technologies, time is literally made to stand still — life is suspended. If one thinks about the cultural acceptance and assimilation of bodily fragmentation as entirely necessary to a conception of the body as infinitely accessible, and to reproduction as a matter of controlled encounters between disparate elements, the picture becomes clearer. It is for this reason that I found it worth pursuing fragmentation as a strategy of power in which the “low” diagnostic technologies participate and in which the “high” technologies of in-vitro fertilization or embryo and sperm freezing, for example, achieve mastery in an apotheosis of reproductive discontinuity.

Foucault’s notion of the “loquacious gaze” which he introduces in *Birth of the Clinic* became crystallized in my mind as a perfect description of the sort of fetishized visualizations represented by the standard use of ultrasound on pregnant women, to the exclusion of other methods including the mother’s own knowledge of what is going on inside her. (Under abnormal circumstances this technology is enormously useful — in my own case it confirmed suspicion of a life threatening ectopic pregnancy. But here I am referring to the standard and repeated use of ultrasound on every pregnancy). The loquacious gaze, an oxymoronic marrying of speech and sight, seems to say so much, so eloquently, about our culture: visual representations have undoubtedly become the dominant form of information. There persists an almost obsessive drive to know visually. Barthes, Sekula and legions of other theorists notwithstanding, the truth value of the

photographically generated image remains popularly unchallenged despite our claims to media literacy.

The bio-ethicist Joseph Fletcher describes the present era of technological experimentation as a “steady move toward converting the dark and ominous secrets of biological life into lighted and manageable reality.”⁴ Fletcher has even used feminist rhetoric in his generous offers to relieve women of the “burden” of childbearing. Such appropriations demonstrate precisely the difficulty of an inflexible anti-essentialist position such as that expressed by Shulamith Firestone twenty years ago in her utopian *Dialectic of Sex*, a book championed by first generation feminists. Firestone’s negative attitude to women’s bodily subjectivity and her high-tech solution to the “burden” of biology reflects first generation feminist recognition of motherhood as the quintessential patriarchal oppression. It took another generation to pursue this recognition into a more profound analysis. Interestingly, Firestone’s attitudes toward pregnancy and birth also express a way of thinking about this aspect of woman’s bodily experience which has been encouraged by obstetrics. These attitudes persist today, but they reached their zenith in terms of public acceptance during the same period as Firestone was formulating her ideas. We must therefore ask whether in fact she offered women an alternative to the dominant ideology surrounding pregnancy and birth. Rather she seems to have bought the denigrated version of women’s physical role in reproduction wholesale. Such are the traps which await feminist theorists as they try to negotiate the difficult territory of woman as reproductive subject.

Joseph Fletcher’s language is by no means original or unfamiliar. The operative words are “lighted” and “manageable reality.” From the Greek philosophers to modern medicine the womb has been considered a dark, inner sanctum. In the light of science, it has been slowly stripped of its mystery. Rosalind Petchesky describes the technology of fetal imagery as “the panoptics of the womb,” an assertion which seems justified when paired with the words of a chief of maternal and fetal medicine at a Boston hospital: “[U]ltrasound is a means to establish normative behaviour for the fetus at various gestational stages and to maximize medical control over pregnancy.”⁵ For Petchesky this impulse to see inside which has become the dominant way of knowing about pregnancy has consequences for women’s consciousness and reproductive power relations.

The visual penetration of the womb made possible by ultrasound has irrevocably changed the relation between inside and outside. Between what is the woman’s and what is public,

a fact which was quickly made use of by anti-abortion groups, as Dr. Nathanson's well-known film *The Silent Scream* demonstrates only too clearly. The words "light" and "reality" which recur in statements like Fletcher's recall the technology of photography and its claim on the real. As the fetus becomes more visible, so does it become more real. Seeing is believing. We must ask then, what becomes of the woman, the pregnant subject? If recent Volvo advertisements (the image of a fetal scan, a Volvo station wagon and the caption: "Is something inside telling you to buy a Volvo?") are any indication of the assimilation of techno-medical imagery into popular culture, the woman is becoming invisible, less real, except perhaps as a consumer.

Independent and vulnerable, the image of the floating fetus without reference to the mother's body appeals more directly to our humanity, our hopes and fears. It is almost as if we have returned to the medieval notion of the fetus as homunculus, as a tiny, complete man carried in the father's seed and placed for a period of residency in a woman's body. In general this body is seen as a hostile environment to be monitored for the sake of the well-being of the fetus-patient. Such a concept of the fetus lays the ground for diminishing the woman's part in reproduction, making it as tenuous as a man's. Surely this has some connection to the threat which the increasing sexual freedom of women has posed to the stability of paternity and patriarchal institutions. Both the Daigle-Tremblay affair which rallied the anti-abortionists as well as foregrounding paternity rights, and the baby M case which revealed a will to preserve a deeply conservative idea of the family, that is, one based on financial independence and male lineage, bear witness to this trend.

If the urge to make fetal images is more than one of curiosity or the desire to uphold medical opinion with accurate visual information, and if the images themselves are culturally encoded despite their appearance of objective truth, then we must consider the historical moment in which they have appeared, a moment which coincides with the waning of the baby boom, the liberation of woman through contraception, and the demographics of a society which is producing more old people than it is babies. The visibility of life itself in formation from cell, to embryo, to fetus, now possible, represents precisely the triumph of visibility, fragmentation and their role in securing disembodiment. As visual representation becomes more real than its object (the body of women in the case of new reproductive technologies) the challenge for feminism is once again that of woman's absence, or to put it differently, of keeping ourselves in the picture.

One of the important steps feminists took in the sixties was to discover and reclaim their sexual identity on their own terms. Jalna Hanmer makes a similar case for the fragility of our reproductive identity when she writes: "If biological reproduction becomes ever more securely the gift of men [as sex was] how will the taking away of a process

hardly ever questioned, given its believed timeless, natural quality, add to this loss of self?"⁶ Her question recalls Braidotti's appeal for feminists to work on a theoretical framework for "a new form of bodily materiality, a sexually specific reading of the totality of the bodily self." Yet the equation of women with reproduction is old and unsatisfactory. An over enthusiastic claiming of reproductive power as fundamental to female identity can slip too easily into an essentialist discourse, the kind that has been used by Medical purveyors of new technologies. However, if we think of our reproductive capacity as part of our sexual life that we may or may not choose to live, the question of how we define our identity in light of new reproductive technologies becomes more pressing. Of course, culturally and medically, motherhood has been radically desexualized. In my own research it was only lay midwives that spoke of birth as a sexual act rather than a medical event. Can we construct this new form of bodily materiality, "a sexually specific reading of the totality of the bodily self", without being confined to and defined by that bodily self? This is the challenge.

The most serious threat that the new reproductive technologies pose at this moment is the rapidity of their development, daily depriving women of time, just as they have begun to redefine and re-theorize their subjectivity, their sexuality, motherhood and the body. In the face of an epistemic avalanche already well on its way to transforming the geography of popular representations of life and death, how are women, if not given time to consider their right to choose in all its dimension, to know what they want?

Jessica Bradley

The author wishes to thank Kim Sawchuck and Elizabeth MacKenzie for their enthusiasm and support.

ENDNOTES

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2. Stanworth, Michelle. "Reproductive Technologies and the Deconstruction of Motherhood," *Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood and Medicine*, ed. M. Stanworth. Polity Press, p. 24.
3. *Ibid.* p.15.
4. MacDonnell, Kathleen. *Not An Easy Choice*. (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1984), p.111.
5. Petchesky, Rosalind. "Foetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction" in Stanworth, op cit, p. 69.
6. Hanmer, Jalna, *Transforming Consciousness: Women and the Reproductive Technologies*, Gena Corea et al. *Man Made Women: How the New Reproductive Technologies Affect Women*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987, p.98

Jessica Bradley is an independent curator from Montreal. She teaches a course in feminist theory and criticism in the Fine Arts Department at Concordia University and is doing graduate work in Communication Studies.

Mothers and Daughters



Left,
Landes Good, 37, fundraiser, and Teal Good, 40, 1984.



Right,
Frances Kocha Sheykhzadeh, 22, creative writing student, 1987.

Raisa Fastman

Every woman is a daughter. Many women are mothers. The mother/daughter relationship is so fundamental, yet so little understood. Although women may be greatly influenced by their fathers, it is our mothers who are the primary role models; and no matter how differently from our mothers we may lead our lives, it is the world of women that we, as daughters, inherit.

Raisa Fastman has had the distinct advantage of seeing the world from several perspectives. Born in the Soviet Union, she spent a part of her childhood in Poland before coming to the United States at the age of 13. Ms Fastman holds a master of arts degree in photography from San Francisco State University, and has taught, lectured, and given numerous workshops on photography.

Excerpt from a book of Raisa Fastman's photographs, A Portrait of American Mothers and Daughters, New Sage Press, 1988.



Margaret Sloan-Hunter, 39, writer, and Katherin Sloan, 1986.



Merle Woo, 40, social feminist educator, and Emily Woo Yamasaki, 19, actress and clerical worker, 1982.

FACILITY UPDATE

There is a small gem to be discovered on the top floor of the Euclid Theatre building in downtown Toronto. Here, in the only art resource centre for women in Canada, is the WARC Documentation Facility, a library housing information on Canadian women artists. The facility includes an extensive slide registry, art periodicals, books and other information valuable to artists, students, researchers, teachers, curators and the general public. Historically, information on women artists and women's cultural activities has been lost through lack of documentation. The WARC Documentation Centre was opened in 1985 to insure that work by women artists was not ignored and forgotten. Hundreds of artists have sent documentation of their work to WARC since it opened and in 1990, the Ontario College of Art generously donated their entire 'Women and Art File' to the Documentation Facility when the growing File could no longer be accommodated at the OCA library.

This summer, WARC's first Women Artist's Slide Registry Exhibition and Datebook is being organized to publicize the slide registry. A Call for Submissions has recently been sent out inviting women artists to submit slides and photos of their work for consideration in the multi media group exhibition scheduled for this fall and the 1993 Women Artists Datebook. The exhibition and datebook will present contemporary artwork from feminist and politically engaged perspectives, and both are open to women artists currently in the Slide Registry as well as to those interested in joining.

Submissions for the Exhibition should include 5 or more slides of art work, slide list, C.V., and an artist's statement. Good quality, black and white photos of artwork should be submitted for the Datebook. Submissions from women of different regions, sexual orientations, differently abled, older women, Native, Asian, African and other women of colour are encouraged. The deadline has been extended to July 31st, 1991.

The Women Artist Exhibition and Datebook will be curated by a Curatorial Committee. Women interested in becoming part of this committee are invited to call the WARC office for more information and meeting dates.

Loren Williams, Project Coordinator

THE FUTURE OF HUMAN r e p r o d u c t i o n

No language is neutral, says Toronto poet Dionne Brand in her book of the same name. Nor, for that matter, is any other human activity, including science and technology. Feminist commentators, among them Dale Spender, have long criticized 'Big Science' for its masculine bias. Technology, the practical application of scientific 'advances,' is developed and delivered in a military-industrial-commercial context, a milieu where patriarchal assumptions reign supreme. It's bad enough when the boys tinker with cars or cake mixes but when they begin to screw around with women's bodies, matters become decidedly ominous.

In *The Future of Human Reproduction*, editor Christine Overall, a professor of philosophy at Queen's University, has gathered 17 essays on the legal, technical, political and philosophical aspects of reproductive technology. What these articles make clear, is that, if feminists don't start to seriously challenge the assumptions and practices of these procedures, the future of the female sex could be on the line.

These techniques, especially donor insemination (DI) and in vitro (out of body) fertilization, were developed by male scientists for the benefit of other men. On the surface, it appears that women are the beneficiaries of these researches. Clients come to fertility clinics on a voluntary basis. Indeed, these women are willing to pay thousands of dollars and to endure much pain and heartache on the off chance that they will conceive that desperately wanted child of their own.

But why do so many apparently intelligent and successful women feel unfulfilled unless they biologically reproduce? Why is adoption so often not a satisfying option? And why is so much money spent on procedures which have a very low success rate and benefit only a small number of middle class women, when much less money is spent on studying the cause of infertility or on economically/socially supporting women who already have children? In order to begin to answer these questions, one has to understand that motherhood is more than a simple feature of biology; it is an institution which is socially constructed for the benefit of the patriarchy.

The techniques of in vitro fertilization were developed by scientists looking for more efficient factory farming techniques. The underlying values of these processes are the basic patriarchal ones of distance, dispassion, fragmentation and control.

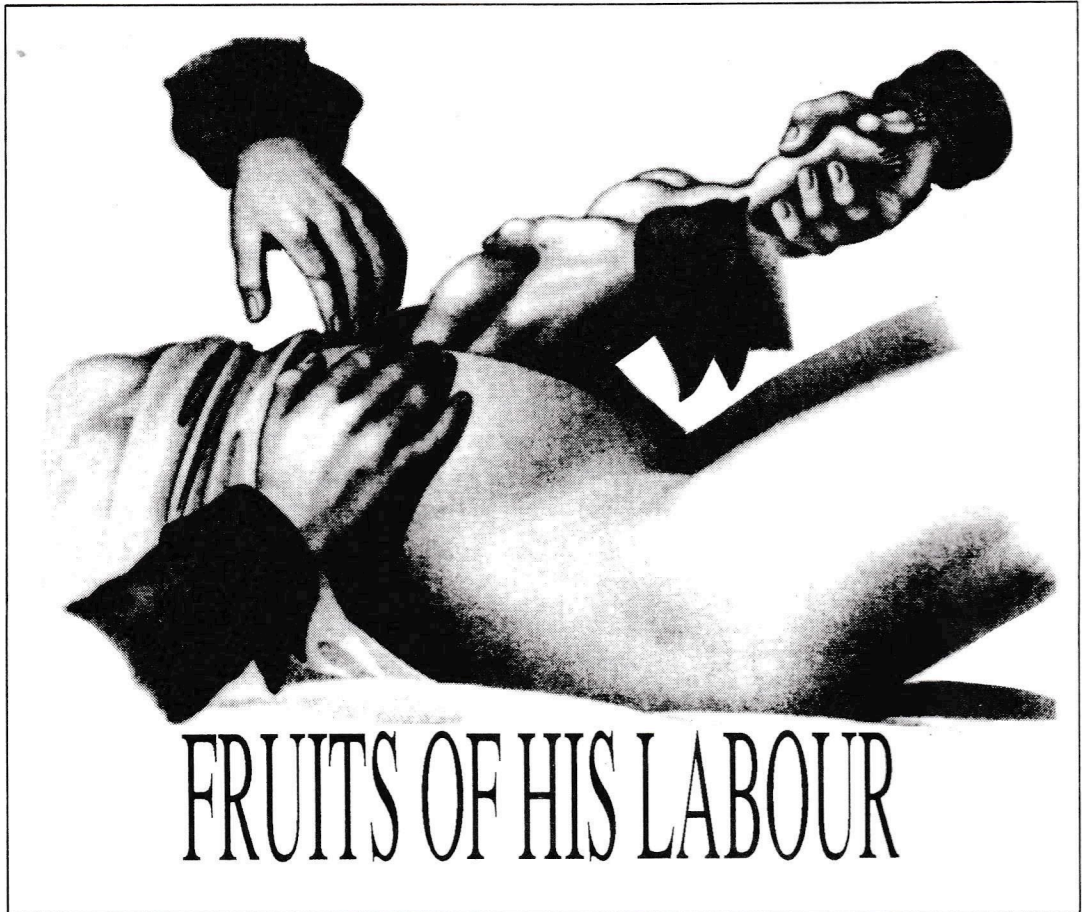
Eggs are 'harvested' from either a cow or woman, fertilized by sperm from a selected donor and injected into either the donor's or a surrogate's womb. Among cattle, surrogate mothers are biologically fit but deemed inferior because they produce less milk or meat than the donor of the eggs. Among humans, deciding who is superior and who is inferior is much more problematic. Most surrogate mothers are working class women performing reproductive work for their 'class superiors'. This power dynamic carries with it the disturbing possibility that black or other women of colour could be recruited to carry the embryos of white parents. Surrogacy is a complex issue. Feminists who are uneasy about accepting surrogacy are frequently told that reproductive freedom is a matter of individual rights. One woman's right to have an abortion is equated with another woman's right to rent out her reproductive capacity. This of course ignores the full spectrum of what pro-choice activists have long been fighting for "not only abortion on demand, but also better birth control, daycare, employment and other social supports which would make motherhood a more feasible option. By focusing on individual rights alone, advocates of surrogate motherhood place it in the realm of contract law. In doing so, they end up equating a man's donation of sperm with a woman's 'donation' of her baby.

Real women, surrogates or not, are complex and variable. The low success rate of embryo implantation makes a mockery of male expertise. The tendency of surrogate mothers to become emotionally attached to their babies and thus break precious contract law, also increases the unpredictability of the surrogate process. From a patriarchal perspective, the ultimate womb would be an artificial, fully controllable one. Far from freeing women from the perils of pregnancy to lead independent lives, the artificial womb, along with the ability to select embryos on the basis of sex, might eliminate the need for women altogether (except for a few who might be kept around for their supply of ova).

This chilling scenario is not yet upon us but it seems all too possible. The first step in preventing these events, is to better inform ourselves of the issues surrounding reproductive technology before deciding on appropriate action. *The Future of Human Reproduction* is really only a primer on these issues, but it is a much needed one.

Randi Spires

Randi Spires is a writer who lives in Toronto and has written for Broadside, The Star, Matriart and other publications.



Elizabeth MacKenzie

As in my previous work, my current project is concerned with contemporary representations of women. I am interested in how these representations are socially perceived, and how they affect women's self-perception. My most recent work, an installation entitled "With Child", is currently on exhibit at the

Glenbow Museum in Calgary. It is the first in a series of works which are concerned with the representation of women in relation to reproductive technologies. By reproductive technologies I mean any of the processes, both old and new, which assist or interfere with reproduction, these would include: sterilization and

artist profile

"I'm having a great time," says Keane, holding some of the fruits of his labour – believed to be the world's first surrogate triplets.

"Childless Couples Seeking Surrogate Mothers Call Michigan Lawyer Noel Keane – He Delivers" by James S. Kunen
People Weekly, March 30, 1987.

birth control; technologies used in relation to pregnancy; and technologies used in relation to labour and birth. Although my response to these technologies is quite critical, I do not necessarily assume that they are inherently evil. It is my feeling that the manner in which these technologies are being developed, and how

they are popularly represented, indicates quite clearly how women's relationship to reproduction is generally perceived.

Elizabeth MacKenzie is one of the over 900 artists represented in WARC's Slide Registry. Women artists are invited to join the registry by submitting slides and related documents.

Montreal Massacre

Commemorative Group Art Exhibit — “Don’t Remain Silent”

WARC has initiated a series of talks by women artists exhibiting at various galleries in Toronto. Recently WARC co-sponsored a discussion with artist's exhibiting in the Don't Remain Silent show held at A Space Gallery. The following is a review of the Don't Remain Silent exhibition and the events leading up to it.

In February 1990, Susan Beamish, a member of The Woman's Common Exhibition Committee, sent out a flyer requesting submissions of artwork by women, dealing with the Montreal massacre. The committee received seventy-nine works, all of which were hung in the upstairs restaurant at the Common, a women-only private club located in Cabbagetown. Entitled *Don't Remain Silent*, the show made a powerful statement, emotionally honest and thoughtful despite the pain and anger explicit in its theme. It contextualized the extremism of Lepine's act within the long and on-going history of violence against women. In March 1991 *Don't Remain Silent* was re-installed at A Space.

While the thematic unity of the show is to be expected, *Don't Remain Silent* is surprising in its visual variety: photographs on paper and cloth, paintings in oil and acrylic, drawings in pen and ink, collages, assemblages, installations and text—separate as poetry or combined with images.

Some pieces are as violent in their expression as their subject matter. One of the most startling (also the one to receive focus in the limited media coverage the show has provoked) shows a mutilated female torso, her head cut off by the picture frame, her feet cut off by an unseen attacker whose hand shoves the mouth of a pistol into her vagina. In a small hand-written note, the artist assures us that she offers here no rhetorical fantasy of horror, but the lived experience of terror.

When the exhibition opened at A Space I found myself confronted by more than the images. I met and talked to several of the artists and discovered that my suburban middle-class assumption about the rarity of abuse and comparable agonies were sadly, depressingly inadequate. While I had seen *Don't Remain Silent* as an eloquent artistic expression of anguish and despair I had underestimated the most immediately personal, diaristic aspects in some of the work. This knowledge changed an unusually moving event into a unquestionably enlightening one.

Several pieces declare the artist's identification with the Montreal victims. There are a number of self-portraits: straightforward in their implication—it could have been me, and in one instance, made explicit by a text—it should have been me.

Some works are gently sorrowful—a watercolor of daisies blowing in a field—until you count the fallen blossoms. It should seem sentimental but it doesn't. Some are witty—a hunter crouches in a field, his prey a tiny dancing adolescent girl. The title: “It's Going to be a Knockdown Dragout Day”.

A large oil painting reflects the grief and shame the mother of a killing son must feel, and another work recalls other mothers too embarrassed to declare their anger and fall into complicity.

The many other female victims of male violence are remembered. A field of ♀ marked graves—Verdun in the battle of the sexes. The Montreal 14 join the ranks of fallen soldiers, casualties of “The Hidden War”. An oddly beautiful mixed-media sculpture identifies the battlefield with the domestic front. A battered, bloody head lies upright in a wooden box, its open flaps like doors on either side. A long metal spike on top and a scrap of poetry copied out in pencil and stuck to the open door.

A vertical assemblage of driftwood, seashells worn smooth till they resemble small skulls, bones, stones, small crystals and feathers. Some whole parts of broken wings. Leather and crimson embroidery thread. Seven wreathes or crowns woven of twigs, and wire—looping decoratively, each twisted section spelling out a victim's name.

At A Space we were able to include a large sculptural piece of fourteen white body casts of various women, modelled from the artist's friends, which were suspended upside down near the window. Feet bound by rope, arms folded over unquiet breasts, black cut-out holes where each face ought to be. In the soft daylight what was awful was also eerie and elegiac—in one sense empty shells from which the indestructible spirits have escaped, recalling other spent shells that shot short these human lives.

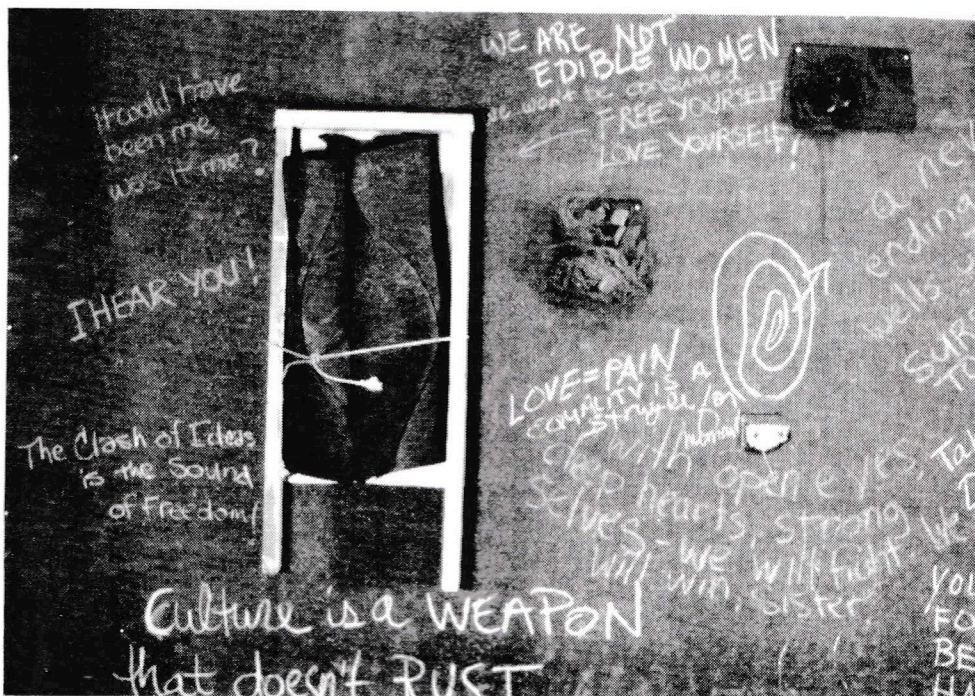
14 women died in Montreal under gunfire. In *Don't Remain Silent* more than 60 artists chose to speak out in acknowledgement and recognition. Through their work these women have demonstrated strength and courage in face of overwhelming sadness and rage. Curator Susan Beamish said, “We must speak.” Their voices have been heard.

Carole Munro

*Given the unjurious, collective nature of the show I have deliberately excluded the names of the individual artists because I could not include them all.



Katherine Zsolt,
"Daughters & Sisters",
 Body Cast
 Installation,
 1990



Gillian Genser,
"In a Box",
 roofing paper
 and wood,
 1991

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Call For Submissions

■ Artemis Alive Producers are seeking women interested in production assistance, sound recording, editing, camera operation, production managing, and lighting design. Anyone interested with film or video production experience is especially encouraged to offer her skills to the Producers. However, you do not necessarily need to have production experience to lend you assistance. Please contact either the film/video makers or the NWMN office at 448-0730.

■ If you want to write and be read, then consider composing an article, a review, an interview, or a point of view concerning women in film and video. The NWMN Newsletter welcomes your submissions anytime. Mail or deliver your news to the NWMN office: The North West Media Network, 97722-102 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5K 0X4.

■ WW3 is a new art "gallery" that presents art to the public through the use of a window that faces out onto the street. WW3 is looking for artists who are interested in presenting their work in an unusual and interesting public setting. Submissions are encouraged throughout the year and exhibitions are scheduled 2 to 6 months in advance. All mediums are welcomed. For more information: WW3, 198 Walnut Avenue, Unit #3, Toronto, Ontario, M6J 2N6, (416) 368-0139.

■ Groupe Intervention Video is a distributor and producer of videos by and about women. We are looking for videotapes to include in our collection. We especially welcome works by women of colour and native women. Contact us for more information or for a free catalogue: GIV, 3575 boul. St-Laurent, bureau 421, Montreal, QB, X2X 2T7, (514) 499-9840.

■ Call for Submissions for an Anthology of Writings by Asian Pacific Lesbians (including: South, Southeast, East and Pacific Asians) of the North American Continent. Deadline is December 15, 1991. Send Submissions to Anne Mick Bruining, 41 Shaw Road, Little Compton, R.I. 02837.

■ Definitely Superior's 1991 Regional Photographic Exhibition Call For Entry. Entries must be photographic in nature but may embody any additional methods or combination of methods desired. Material may be black and white or colour, 5" X 7" to 30" X 40", captioned, ready to hang, with a short written support statement. Send Entries to: 1991 Regional Photographic Exhibition, Definitely Superior, P.O. Box 3701, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 6E3. Closing date is September 26, 1991.

■ Groundswell Festival 1991: Call for Submission

Nightwood Theatre is currently soliciting innovative and original proposals for development and performance at the 7th annual Groundswell Festival of New Works in Progress by Women, to be held October 24 to November 3 at the Tarragon Extra Space and the Maggie Bassett Studios.

Nightwood Theatre is a feminist company committed to building women's culture through play creation and the long term development of theatre artists. We are dedicated to exploding stereotypes and promoting alternative visions of the world. Groundswell offers an opportunity to try out short pieces (15 to 45 minutes) or extracts from longer work in a supportive festival environment. Plays, performance art, collaborative creations or any theatrical initiatives are welcome.

Please note that Nightwood wishes to encourage writers from Canada's diverse cultural communities and will practise non-traditional casting.

Please include in your submission: a short summary of the proposed work, how inclusion in the Groundswell Festival will serve your process, resumes of all creative personnel, a sample of writing, technical requirements if applicable, and a SASE. Please send submissions to: Nightwood Theatre, Groundswell Selection Committee, 317 Adelaide Street West, Suite 6000, Toronto, Ontario, M5V 1P9. Deadline is July 2, 1991.

■ Violence In Popular Culture. Randi Spire and Kalli Paakspuu are developing a feature length documentary on the eroticization of violence in popular culture. Our aim is not to advocate censorship but to promote awareness. We will be looking at many areas of popular culture including music, television, film, advertising, comic books etc. We would like your input. If you have come across some relevant examples, please let us know. We are also looking for original material by visual and performing artists who have addressed this issue in their work. If you have any fundraising ideas (we have development but no production money) please call. (416) 365-0144 or 261-7889 or write to 110 Frederick Street, Unit C, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 4A9.

■ Reflecting Women At Their Natural Size is an ad hoc group of artists who have come together to coordinate a visual arts exhibit and two evenings of films of the theme of *The Politics of Beauty*. The exhibit will run from October 28 to November 3 as part of Eating Disorder Awareness Week, 1991. Please submit project proposal slides, C.V.,

videos, etc. by July 30, 1991 to: Reflecting Women 2 Bloor Street West, Suite 100-430, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3E2.

■ Feminism and Cultural Resistance in the Americas. The Union for Democratic Communications is having an international meeting at Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario from the 7th through the 10th of May, 1992 to discuss the issues of feminism and communication and the 500 years of cultural resistance. Ideas, proposals and papers may be sent to: Alan O'Connor, UDC Conference, Peter Robinson College, Trent University, Peterborough, ON K9J 7B8.

■ Artists from all disciplines are invited to participate in an exhibition focusing on the emotional aspects of childbirth and pregnancy. Visual artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians and performers may submit work to be included in a gallery show, and a lecture/slide series to tour medical schools. Very specific personal, anecdotal and biographical works are most welcome. Artists who have previously shown or published on this subject are invited to submit documentation to aid in the compilation of a bibliography to accompany this event. Include a brief description and history of the work with your submission of slides, tapes, manuscripts and proposals to: Debbie O'Rourke, Community Arts, A Space, 183 Bathurst St., Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2R7. Phone: (416) 364-3227 or 364-3228

People with a special interest in childbirth are invited to organize and participate in related events. Non-professionals and professionals in the medical, women's, alternative birthing and other communities are being solicited and are welcome to respond to the open call. Submissions must be received by September 15, 1991.

■ Women Artist's Exhibition and Datebook — Call for Submissions

The exhibition will present contemporary artwork from feminist and politically engaged perspectives, and is open to women artists currently in the slide registry as well as those interested in joining. Submissions from women from different regions, sexual orientations, differently abled, older women, Native, Asian, African and other women of colour, are encouraged. In 1993, a Datebook based on the exhibition will be published.

Please send 5 or more slides of work, slide list, C.V., and an artist's statement. Good quality, black and white photos of artwork should be submitted for consideration in the 1993 Women Artists Datebook. Submissions will also ensure a 1 year membership at WARC.

WARC's Slide Registry is used by artists, teachers, researchers, and the general public. It provides a much needed resource facility on Canadian women artists and their work. To keep the slide registry current, members should update their files with a change of address, new slides etc.

Deadline for Submissions: July 31, 1991

The Women Artist's Exhibition and Datebook will be curated by a Curatorial Committee. Women interested in becoming part of this committee are invited to call the WARC office for more information and meeting dates. We are particularly interested in being inclusive of women who are under-represented.

Women's Art Resource Centre,
394 Euclid Avenue, Suite 308
Toronto, Ontario M6G 2S9 324-8910

■ WARC Studio Visiting Group 1991-1992; Support, Feedback, Peers, Information—Sharing, Fun. Groups to be organized around themes determined by participants' interests and work. Organizational meeting Sept. 10 1991 7pm at WARC (394 Euclid Avenue, #308). Contact Terri Whetstone 926-8217 to confirm or for information.

■ *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly* is seeking submissions for the Sex and Sexuality Issue. We are looking for fiction, real life/wishful thinking, confessions, poetry, photography, artwork, pornography, fantasy, reality, discussion, history, reviews, interviews, theory, speculation and exploration from an autoerotic, bisexual, celibate, lesbian, heterosexual, sadomasochistic, or transsexual perspective — work that covers an entire spectrum of women's sexuality. We are interested in hearing how your sexuality interacts with physical ability, religion, class, race, culture, or work. Deadline is July 31, 1991. Submissions can be sent to Sex and Sexuality Issue, Fireweed, P.O. Box 279, Stn. B, Toronto, ON, M5T 2W2.

■ Remote Control is a quarterly arts publication produced by Definitely Superior. We are looking for work by regional artists and writers: short articles, reviews, critical writing on the arts, social and political commentary, short fiction, essays, poetry, cartoons, and drawings and photographs that will reproduce well in black and white. Send your submissions to: Remote Control, c/o Definitely Superior, Box 3701, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7C 6E3.

■ Dancers sought by Dawnswyr Y Ddraig Goch. The Dance team is dedicated to the promotion of contemporary and traditional Cymreag culture. Dancers must be permanent, of Welsh background, and over 21. For more

information contact Brandy w:867-3837, h:821-2448.

Workshops And Conferences

■ The Fringe Research Holographics, Inc. Artist-In-Residence Program in Pulsed Holography is open to all Canadian artists who wish to explore the holographic medium. Artists applying for the residency do not have to have personal technical experience with holography. Seven positions are available: Each position receives a \$500 Honorarium, up to \$750.00 of holographic materials and a maximum of two weeks of studio time and technical support for the realization of their work, and participation in the group's AIR exhibition at the Interference Hologram Gallery. Deadline: September 30, 1991. For more information contact AIR Program, Fringe Research Holographics, 1179 A King Street West, Toronto, M6K 3C5.

■ The Fourth International Symposium on Display Holography will take place July 15 to July 19. For more information contact Fringe Research Holographics, 1179 A King Street West, Toronto, M6K 3C5.

Exhibitions

■ *The Image is the Message*, by Audrey Holrod with take place at The Abled/Disabled Creative Arts Centre, 49 McCaul Street, Toronto. The exhibition date is June 27 through August 10, 1991.

■ *Visions of Power* is an exhibition of art by First Nations, Inuit and Japanese Canadians from June 28 to July 28, 1991. *Visions of Power* is located at York Quay Gallery, Harbourfront, 235 Queen's Quay W., Toronto, and Leo Kamen Gallery, 80 Spadina Avenue, Suite 403, Toronto.

■ *Miniature and Small works* by New York Artists at 228 Parliament, Toronto, 365-1736. The exhibition runs June 26 to July 20.

■ *Public Domain* with Sara Diamond, Anne Ramsden and others at the Contemporary Art Gallery, 555 Hamilton Street, Vancouver, V6B 2R1.

■ *Works in Progress* by Nataika Husar at the White Water Gallery, 226 Main Street West, North Bay, Ontario. The exhibition runs July 4 to July 27, 1991. (705) 476-2444 for more information.

■ *Name Ten Parts of the Body* is an exhibition of installations by Millie Chen, E. Jane Huggard, Jeannie Thib, Evelyn Von Michalofski. The exhibition is lo-

cated at John B. Aird Gallery, Macdonald Block, 900 Bay Street at Wellesley, Toronto, Ontario. July 4 to Aug 3, 1991.

■ An exhibition of paintings by Kathleen Migliore Newton will be held at 101 Wooster Street, DNC Exhibition Space, 101 Wooster Street, New York, NY 10012, 2122192790. The show opens July 8 and continues to September 28, 1991.

■ *Installation and Paintings by Kartz Ucci and Alina Martiros*, July 4 to August 3, will be at Mercer Union, 333 Adelaide Street West, 5th Floor, Toronto. Kartz Ucci's installation on Italian mothers' rights originates from a connection between her work and Kartz's experience as a mother. Alina, an Armenian from Iran, discusses the isolation of mothers and women artists-experiences as a new mother. A catalogue, *Cultural Remnants*, written by Janice Andreea, is available.

■ *Reflecting Women...at their natural size*. A film series on the politics of appearance. Several provocative films confront women's relations with their bodies, appearance and sexuality for different ethnic, cultural and political perspectives. Wednesday, October 30, and Thursday, October 31, 7pm.-10pm, Studio Room, Harbourfront, Free Admission.

Positions Available

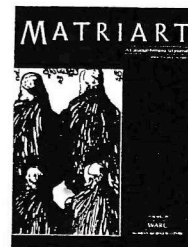
■ NWMN is seeking a volunteer Editor for the bimonthly NWMN newsletter. Please send C.V. to: The North West Media Network, 97722-102 Street, Edmonton, AB, T5K 0X4.

■ Call for Regional/Provincial Coordinators for Canadian Content a cultural celebration, August 3-5, 1991. We are seeking individuals to act as regional or provincial representatives to network with artist participating in their areas and in coordination of the national effort. A modest honorarium may be possible, pending funding. Please send a letter of interest and support information to: Larry Rosnuk, *Canadian Content*, Niagara Artists' Centre, 235 St. Paul Street, St. Catharines, ON L2R 3M6. (416) 641-0331.

■ Administrative Co-ordinator needed for Definitely Superior. For more information contact: Anne Warren, President, Definitely Superior, Box 3701, Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 6E3. (807) 344-3814.

■ Full time summer position Administrative Assistant to work with kids and artists. Must be on social assistance, or 18 years and under, or recent high school graduate. Contact: Joanna Black at Inner City Angels (598-0242) ans soon as possible.

Next Issue



Native Art & Artists
Fall 1991

Women
Against Violence
Submission deadline
August 31, 1991

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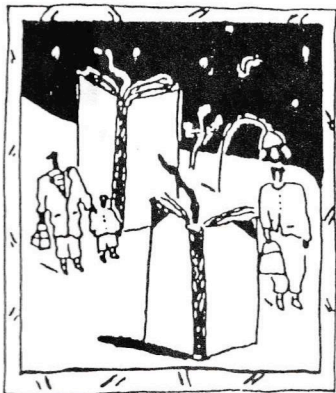
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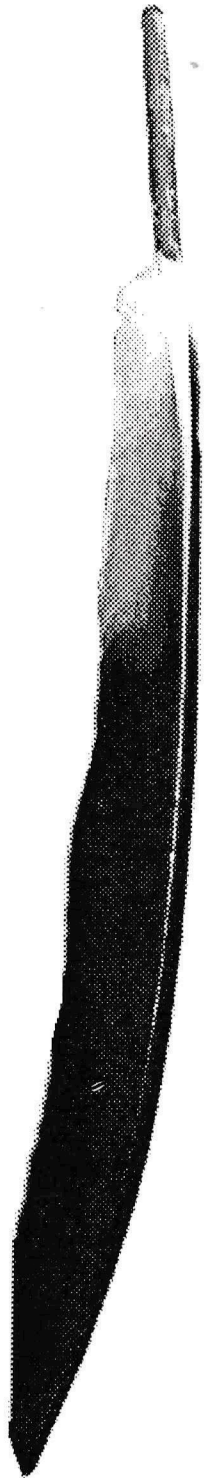
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