

M A T R I A R T

A Canadian Feminist Art Journal

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Women
Against
Violence

PUBLISHED BY

WARC

WOMEN'S ART RESOURCE CENTRE

FOREWORD

In this issue of Matriart, we focus upon a continuum of violence that stretches from the authority of the family to the force of the military. A global continuum of violence rooted in a patriarchal value system that is contemptuous of human rights. Our contributors share with us, their personal examinations of crimes committed against themselves and others.

"Everything You Feel Is True: Times Two", by Aimee Clair & Roseanna Sorella, describes the influence of childhood abuse upon their struggle, as adults, to develop an intimate relationship. Suzanne Macloed, in "My Story", tells of two separate ordeals of rape. Her account expands beyond the usual "report" of rape to share details of the exhaustive processes victims are expected to withstand. Amarna Moscote writes about the efforts of a group of Latin American, "Women of Courage", who are dedicated to assisting battered immigrant women and their children challenge their vulnerabilities. Today, Satanic Ritual Abuse is a phenomenon that is as difficult to fathom as child abuse was fifteen years ago. In "Surviving Ritual Abuse" Cheryl WaterWomon, recalls her ritual abuse/torture by her own family and other Satanic cult members. "Web of Violence", by Tasse Geldart offers an overview of patriarchy's continuum of violence, encouraging an analysis that, above all, trusts in the victim's voice of experience. "The Granddaughters of Ixmucane" by Emilie Smith-Ayala, presents a collection of Guatemalan women's testimonies on their struggle for survival and change. "The Murder of Rosario" pays tribute to a Guatemalan activist, Rosario Godoy de Cuevas. The chilling anonymity of terrorism becomes "personal" in a letter Rosario shared with artists Lynn Hutchinson and Amanda Hale. We have Robin Pacific discussing "Words Had No Passage", an empowering exhibition of artwork created by survivors of incest. We also feature an excerpt from a performance by Elaine Carol, "Marc Lepine Thought He Was A Hero In A Uniform" and our Artist Statements include the work of Diana Thompson and Tasse Geldart. Poetry in this issue is by Kathy Shaidle, Karen Fogg and Cheryl WaterWomon. Book reviews include Anne Vespry writing on "The Beauty Myth" and Julie Arnold on Confessions of Wanda Von Sader-Masoch". We also have Randi Spires reviewing the film "New Shoes". In our Focus On Warc section, Mimi Stables reports on the WARC sponsored exhibition, "Out Of The Drawer" and interviews Ontario College of Art professor, Carol Laing.

Our sincere gratitude to the "Women Against Violence" featured in this issue. Their courage and honesty contribute towards dismantling perhaps patriarchy's most threatening weapon; denial.

Linda Abrahams

WARC UPDATE

This winter we can look forward to many exciting events at WARC. "Out of the Drawer" is WARC's first exhibition curated from artists files in the Documentation Facility. This multi-media exhibition, taking place at A Space gallery will feature the work of 21 Canadian women artists.

WARC's stimulating winter workshop series will include: "Documenting Your Art", a photography workshop with Alison Binder-Ouellette. This workshop takes place on Saturday February 1, at 1 pm. and will take the form of a lecture and hands-on demonstration.

Curating Feminist Art with curator Janice Andrae will include a discussion of feminist philosophy and how it affects the curatorial process. Curating Feminist Art takes place on Saturday February 22, at 1 pm.

During Black history month in February, WARC will co-sponsor two workshops with local Black women artists. Ayanna Black will present a lecture/discussion on Black women and the Arts, with a focus on developing interdisciplinary structures for Black women artists. Textile artist, Winsom will conduct a hands-on workshop on cassava paste resist, a traditional West African technique of dying fabric. This series will take place on Saturday February 29th.

Our Studio Visiting Group will continue to meet and a new venture, WARC "Slide Show Nights", featuring the work of artists in our documentation facility artist files will be presented on a monthly basis.

As WARC expands its services and programs, we are involved in restructuring workshops to assist in the adjustments and changes taking place. As well, we continue to regularly program Antiracism Workshops for WARC staff and volunteers. We thank Ann Marie Stewart for her skillful guidance throughout this continuing process.

WARC welcomes the vitality of new members and remains committed to developing a centre that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve.

Best wishes to Carla Murray, who has decided to leave WARC for other pursuits. Carla was one of the founding members of the Women's Art Resource Centre. From her initial idea and with the help and support of many, the centre has grown steadily. A heartfelt thank you from the staff and volunteers.

Daria Essop

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MATRIART welcomes contributions to future issues. Our dead-
line date for the Spirituality Issue is February 6, 1992. Future
themes of Matriart are Women, Art and Age, Differently-abled
Women, Systemic Oppression, Sexual Identity. Please contact
WARC for information. 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
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EVERYTHING

By Aimee Clair and Rosanna Sorella

BETWEEN TWO WOMEN

In the beginning, I pretended that my interest in her was casual, intellectual even, and certainly nothing more. I did not want to chase her away by being too aggressive or admittedly sexual. There was a fragility about her — the cause of which I did not know — that would spring to life in an instant and then be gone. It kept me guarded.

I know I wanted us to be lovers, but sensed that I needed to wait for her to initiate our first time together. We were up late, talking intimately on her futon. The sound on the television had long since been turned down but the picture from the screen, an old black and white movie, provided light for the room. The closer we got, the more nervous I became and I began to chatter pointlessly. "Stop talking," was all I heard her say. Then, she began to kiss me. Slowly, we began to make love, passionately, and I could feel myself becoming overwhelmed with emotion. I remember crying with happiness. What happened after is less clear in my memory.

I remember her saying how she was surprised that I wasn't aggressive. Mistakenly, I thought that she was asking me to take more control. In response, I moved my position from beneath her body and kissed her until I was on top. I felt incredibly close to her and was enjoying our lovemaking. "Get off, the weight," I remember hearing her say. I felt her push me up and away from her. It all happened so fast, in an instant, but I knew it all then. I saw the look of absolute terror on her face, in her eyes. I looked down at myself and realized, for the first time, that I was naked. I looked at my body in horror. I never felt before that my body had the power to terrorize anyone. I felt as if I had raped her. She was so terrified and wanted

me off, away, gone, dead. But I had no where to go except beside her.

"When did it happen?" I asked. We were sitting side by side by this time and I had my arm around her waist. I could not see her face, but the flickering light from the television cast her in shadows on the wall. She talked for a long time, haltingly and barely above a whisper. She tried to say, and not say, that she had been sexually abused. I was not surprised by her revelation, only shocked that my own body could be confused with others that had hurt her. I did not know what to say, except that I was sorry.

PERSPECTIVE

It has only been a day since we last saw each other but I feel like every hour that I wait for her to appear at my door is like a small eternity. I am thinking of nothing else but how the time I spend with her is charged with unknown depths, with meaning. I have not yet thought of love. I know only that I am happy, comfortable and feel more trusting than I ever have. But I can not predict what will happen between us tonight.

How did things begin? It isn't clear to me. The kitchen light is on. The T.V. is on but we have the sound turned on low so we can hear ourselves talk. I don't want to shut it off. I am happy and want to show her that she makes me happy. I ask if I can kiss her, or I don't ask and I do kiss her. It feels right. It feels safe. She is talking about whether she should be doing this, asking me if this is what I really want. And I say that I don't know. I only want to kiss her, to keep feeling happiness, to be close to her.

We are making love but I never fully realize it. I am not all there. I am struggling to keep fear out of my mind. And then it happens. She is on top of me and happiness disintegrates into

IS TRUE:

YOU FEEL

terror. I feel only the weight of her body. I can't think. I say something so that she will move, so that she will not hurt me. I want to breathe. I can't see clearly. I am sinking away. Then she moves. I am afraid of what she might do. I wish that I could disappear.

She holds me. She does not get angry. She does not push me away. She holds me gently. "When did it happen?" she asks. I am confused by the question. I want to deny my terror. I want to deny being terrorized as a child, in ways I can't clearly remember. In my mind, there is no beginning and no end, only a re-living of sorts. I am a child again in her arms, except that I trust her with my uncertainty. We speak in whispers. I don't remember what I do or don't say. I remember only her telling me that she is sorry and that I can cry if I want to. I am surprised that she stays.

A day or two later she tells me that she loves me. I cry in a way that I could not that first night. No one has said these words to me quite like she does. It will take time before I believe her. It will take time before I believe myself.

SCARS

Today has been a long day. I feel emotionally drained. Earlier, I went to counselling where I tried to talk about my family, about some of the pain in my past. I am struggling with both a lack of information and a lack of memory. It is always a struggle to reveal. I feel as if I am being disloyal, a traitor — possibly a liar. I don't know if I spent the afternoon crying or if I went back to my classes. I know at some point I felt hopeful but needy of reassurance.

I call her. Her voice is full of warmth for me and I ask her to come by. I know how busy she is but I hope she will. I need her. She has to see a friend, get some work done. I pretend it doesn't matter. I've gotten through the day — I can get through a few more hours on my own.

She surprises me by appearing at my door. We sit on the futon and work. At times we interrupt each other with conversation. At times we touch.

I know that we have decided not to make love. The problems attached are too overwhelming. I don't want her to become my abuser when we are making love. She does not want me to forget who she is.

But I still feel happy. Happy to be so attracted to such a wonderful person. Happy to be loved, and loving. I touch her. We kiss. We part. Some time later, when she is working at the dining room table, I tell her how comfortable I feel. I touch her again. We kiss passionately. I don't want her to leave. I don't want to lose this mass of feeling I so seldom let myself feel.

She says she needs to leave. It is late. I kiss her and she kisses me back. I can feel the passion she feels for me. I want her to forget about leaving.

She has gathered her things together. She has her coat on. I see all this but I still think there is a possibility that she will stay. I kiss her before she goes. I never want her to leave. I want to remain forever safe, with her. She responds.

I don't know how it happened. She is against the wall. My hands are on either side of her, my body is pressed against hers. She has stopped kissing me but it takes me time to realize this. I ask her what's wrong and I finally see her eyes. She is terrified. She says, "It's the wall" or "the wall." And then I realize that I am pinning her against the wall and I am horrified. I don't know what to do, where to move. She asks me to let her go. I am horrified at the position I've put her in. Angry at myself. I say I will let her go but she is terrified and asks me again. I apologize. But it doesn't matter. She wants to get away as quickly as she can. I am reminded of the first time she touched me in a sexual way, how terrified I was of contact. Part of me wanted to stay — I had craved touch for so long. The rest of me wanted to scream. I wanted to leave but she stalled me. Later, she told me that she did this to prevent me from running away upset. Now I am the one who is trying to make sure she does not run away. But, she does.

TIMES TWO

I cried when she left. I knew I was a horrible person and that everything and anything that may have happened to me I had deserved. And worst of all, I felt that I had become what I most feared — an abuser. I waited until she got home and I called her. I told her how sorry I was. She told me that what had happened could never happen again. I told her it would not, ever. I hung up feeling that she would never want to be with me again. She would stop loving me, I thought.

I had never hurt anyone in my life. This was the first time I had come close to hurting someone. And though I had stopped, I had hurt her. It was some seven months later that I learned that she had cried for hours after my call, re-living the abuses she had survived in her childhood.

RETROSPECTIVE

I needed to go home. I had to be at work early the next morning and I just wanted to get some sleep. She knew that I wanted to go but she began to kiss me passionately and caress my thigh. I kissed her back and began to gather my things. I had my backpack in one hand and my car keys in the other. I turned to say good-bye one last time. She came closer to me and began to kiss me again. I kissed her for a while and then stopped. She kept kissing me and I kept trying to tell her I had to go. She wasn't listening. She shoved me against the wall, pinning me with her body, putting both arms against the wall on either side of my head.

My brother has picked me up. I have gone after him with a baseball bat because he has shoved my mother against the kitchen wall. He is carrying me, age eleven, into the living room and towards the sliding glass door. He tells me he's going to throw me through the glass. I believe him. My mother is hysterical. I am powerless. He throws me, but only onto the sofa which is perpendicular to the glass a few inches away.

I wanted her to realize what she was doing. All I could think of was that I could not, would not, do anything active to stop her violence. She had to stop herself or I could never be with her again. "I'm pinned against the wall," I tell her, more than once. Finally she hears me and lets me go. I leave and drive home shaking, confused as to why violence keeps following me.

She calls me, crying, fully aware of what she has done, and I say, "It can never happen again." I feel safe, alone in my house. I sit on my own sofa and weep for a

past of violence I thought I had escaped. I am not sure if I can trust her anymore. I'm just glad she didn't hit me. I wish I were some place else.

COLLABORATION

Seven months have passed and she says she needs to tell me everything she remembers. I am ready, but fearful, angry that I will have to hear what tortures the woman I love has endured. She speaks forcefully, driven, knowing as she tells me, "If I don't say this now, I never will." She releases facts, times, places, sources, names, abuses — abuses no one should have had to suffer, let alone a child, let alone the woman I love.

I have waited a long time for this telling. I tell her the words I have been yearning to say. "It's okay," I reassure her. "No" she says through tears, "It's not okay."

I want to minimize reality, to erase, remove, forget, to fix her past, my own. Our pain. Survival.

She says to me, "This must be difficult for you." I marvel at her courage; she loves me, I know this with all my soul.

We embrace and cry for each other and for those we need to leave behind. Those who hurt us when we could least protect ourselves. We lie together and I feel the weight of our safety. And know that everything we feel is true.¹

¹ Our title and concluding line are respectfully borrowed from Adrienne Rich's poem "A Women Dead in her Forties (dead????)." IN THE DREAM OF A COMMON LANGUAGE. N.Y.: Norton & Co., 1978.



Be Silent in the Arms

TASSE GELDART – ARTIST STATEMENT

For the child abused within the home, there is no safe place to go. Running and living on the streets only changes the face of danger. If we are to help children who have been sexually and/or physically terrorized by adults who hold authority over them, we must understand how these children manage to cope and stay alive. For the past several years I have attempted to enter that inner world of the child via the visual images I make.

No victim of child abuse should have to be content with merely surviving. They are entitled to flourish as fully integrated people with safe access to all their emotions.

Web of Violence

By Tasse Geldart



No One's Listening, Triptych, Father, Daughter, Mother, 1991, oil on canvas

I would like to start by defining violence as it pertains to women in order to set a frame in which we can discuss the issue. We must understand it within a broad view of society and culture. We must see violence against women as a result of patriarchal modes of thinking which affect all of us. It is not inevitable. It is a result of the construction of patriarchy. So, how does the language of patriarchy define violence? Heritage Illustrated Dictionary defines it as: "The abusive or unjust exercise of power; an outrage; a wrong."

On the surface the definition looks fine, but on reflection it fails. It fails until we take into account the female gender. While the definition is undoubtedly true, it fails to take into account the facts. Society consists of two classes of humans, male and female. One gender holds a vast majority of power. All established knowledge must be examined in the light of male bias.

Mary Daly states in *The Quotable Woman* that violence "is symbolic as well as physi-

cal: the universe of thought, language and behaviour. These symbolic universes are all present in each concrete violent act of aggression."

To do violence to a woman. Imposing upon a woman a belief or action that is unwelcome to her or that does harm to her sense of self is an act of violence. I do not see violation of women correlating with "noticeable" resistance on her part. Many factors make it difficult for a woman to resist or even express feelings of being violated. But, even when a woman is smiling and apparently eager to participate in her violation; even when she believes that a violation is enhancing to her self worth; she is still being violated. The "Sunshine Girl" is an example of this.

We can understand the issue of violence with the metaphorical image of a spider's web, constructed of many intricate paths and lines of intersection forming a whole. It contains gender roles and stereotyping right beside murder motivated by the

victim's female gender. There are hundreds of points within this web and wherever we stop, we can, with analysis, connect the point to all parts of the whole. Thus this is not a hierarchal line but a series of events and attitudes which all connect together. We can only understand each event when we sense it's relationship to the whole.

I realize there is a certain danger with a definition of violence against women that is this broad and encompasses all female experience. The danger is from those resistant to making the connections in an effort to deny their collaboration in the violation of females. This allows them to pass culpability on to those males who express the most extreme hatred of women. They will acknowledge these acts as abhorrent but fail to see the violence inflicted on women by such things as discrimination in the workplace or male dominated language. In this way the whole picture can easily be avoided; the actions of a Marc Lepine can be dismissed as an isolated and deranged act of violence.

So what are the effects of male violence on women? We can only know if we listen to female voices. In *Rapid Transits*, Holly Rubinsky writes about Harriet, the violence committed against her, and the practice of disassociating from rape "shifting from my body to outside it, bidding my time some place else, the sound of wings fluttering in my ears."

Harriet showed no outer resistance but if we hear her, and if we acknowledge the truth of her experience, we see a tremendous resistance on her part. We can also see that the effects of rape last long after the act. It affects Harriet for the rest of her life: how she sees herself, how she finds ways to express her pain, how she disassociates from the world. The residue of the damage inflicted on her sets up a pattern of denial which directs all her actions and thoughts and places her in the terrorizing state of being out of control and disconnected from her body. If her pain is never truly heard and understood by another person, she is severed from the human race. Her "accidental suicide" can then be understood as the exit from intolerable pain. The "statistics" gathered from death certificates do not reflect that violence experienced by women can kill us without a shot being fired.

Why do so many refuse to acknowledge past abuse as a source of female depression, addiction and suicide? The disconnection, humiliation and overwhelming state of powerlessness experienced by all women who have had their bodies or

psyches invaded by violence creates the fear of death which exists alongside the wish for death to end the pain.

Freud denied findings that made the direct link between abuse of females and how that experience gets expressed, released and acted out in their lives. Men seized upon his denial of female experience in the patriarchy. To do this they merely had to not hear the voices of women.

The female body safely disconnected from personality has been forged by men to be the receptacle and vehicle for their unacknowledged need and anger. The fact that men have not learned how to fill their emotional needs has devastating results for women. Men take, women give. That's how men see the natural order of things. They can-



Victim in the Mirror of the Abuser, 1990, oil on canvas



Survival Strategies of an Abused Child, 1991, oil on canvas

not hear that women do not always wish to fill their needs and in fact resent them because they must maintain their access to the female at all costs. If they faced female pain and rage they would become enmeshed in the contradictions of their behaviour. So they continue to pat bums, stare at tits, tell sexist jokes and recoil in indignation when women say no. Women living under constant attack on our integrities are daily subjected to violence by men.

Male resistance to seeing that they operate in a system maintained at the expense of women is a huge problem in that it prevents most men from entering into a collective strategy to prevent violence against women. I don't believe that we can solve this problem without the active participation of men. I see three important roles for men who are working for change. First is educating their fellow males. Second is working together to understand where patriarchy and violence harm men as well as women, and third is learning how to look after their legitimate emotional needs in a way that we can all win.

Although I think the effort to bring about change is tremendous, I am encouraged when I hear "I have a Woman in Me" by Men Without

Hats and know that 30 years ago that song would never have made it to air. I am encouraged when I see men listening to women's voices and giving those voices the consideration they deserve. I am encouraged by the bravery of some men who challenge and heal themselves. Despite this, I want to emphasize that I maintain my legitimate anger against those who continue to do violence to myself, other women, children and other males.

My strategy is to speak the truth as I see it. To refuse to buy into the process of denial so strongly in place in our culture. To keep learning how all this came to be. To share my own process of coming to grips with violence against women. To be willing to keep exploring all the gray areas, all the complexities of our need to collude with the patriarchy and to try not to fall into the traps of dogma.

An analysis using intellectual deconstruction of society must, in my opinion, be accompanied by the voices of our experience, the breaking of the silent suffering and those voices must be given equal importance and time. Believing our felt experience is healing. Putting our experience inside an analysis that helps us understand how our experience came to be is empowering.

MY STORY

AN ACCOUNT OF RAPE BY SUZANNE MACLEOD

I was enjoying my high school activities and looking forward to graduation.

One night in January of 1986, I was leaving a party with no means of getting home. I decided to hitchhike, which is a common practice in Nova Scotia. You often get picked up by someone you know. However, I had never before seen the man who pulled over in the blue Honda. I got into the car and as we drove away, he explained that he had had a couple of beers and was going to take the back roads instead of the main highway. I didn't think anything of it.

Suddenly, without warning, the stranger pulled off the backroad and into a clearing. At this point I realized I was in danger.

As soon as the car slowed down, I tried to jump out but the stranger caught me and started to beat me incessantly. The more I pleaded and begged for him to stop, the more angry and violent he became. The blows to my head and stomach continued and I began to drift in and out of consciousness.

He finished raping me and took off, leaving me in the middle of a field in sub-zero weather. As reality set in, I wept uncontrollably. This moment will remain ingrained in my mind forever.

Within a week the bastard was caught. Although the RCMP were compassionate to me, the police line ups, preliminary trials and interrogations were an ordeal. Having to tell my story in front of a court room full of men was a degrading experience. Throughout the procedure, I felt intimidated, embarrassed and ashamed. My interrogators subjected me to questions such as: "Well Miss, with what exactly did he penetrate you?" My response was, "What the fuck do you think he penetrated me with?" I felt abused again.

My attacker was found guilty and sent to prison. He was subsequently released on "good behaviour" and proceeded to attack another woman. Now he is back in the Dorchester Penn in New Brunswick, serving seven years for both crimes.

As a result of this nightmare, I withdrew from most of the activities in which I was previously involved and my course average dropped twenty percent. Three years passed. I graduated (barely), and spent two years studying Fine Arts. To continue my education, I moved to Toronto and enrolled in a program at Ryerson. I refused to be intimidated by the city's size. Ready to begin my

life over again, I found both a job and a nice place to live in the Annex neighbourhood. My cat and I were happy.

Then the horror began again. I fell asleep with the window open and awoke sometime around four am to find a man sitting on top of me with his hands over my mouth to prevent me from screaming. He said to me, "Just do what I want and I won't hurt you. I have a knife. If you don't, I will kill you. Whatever you do, don't look at me."

Over the next ten minutes this man forced sexual intercourse upon me as he held a pillow over my face. Then he tried to force me to perform oral sex on him. I couldn't, I would have rather died. Here I was, twenty-two years old and this was happening to me again. I was overwhelmed by disbelief and horror. Before he left through the window, he covered me with a sheet as if I were lying in the morgue.

I was taken by one of my friends to the Women's College Hospital to undergo an examination. The procedure is a gruelling one. Essentially, you must sit for three or four hours with this person's stench on your body. You aren't permitted to shower. You must then undergo blood testing for diseases that you may have contacted. A special Sexual Assault Forensic Kit requires that your finger nails be scraped, your pubic hair combed, vaginal swabs taken and clothing and bedding retained as evidence. Once people know you are a victim of sexual assault they look at you differently and you too, look at them differently.

This time, I reported to the Sexual Assault Squad of the Metropolitan Toronto Police. They showed none of the compassion displayed by the Nova Scotia RCMP and have not yet managed to apprehend this rapist.

I went on to present my case to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, a panel that included an accountant and a psychiatrist who listen to your story and then put a price on your pain and suffering. When they told me how much they were going to award me, one panel member said, "Well, I hope this will help ease some of the hurt." Thanks anyway" I replied, "but no, it won't help."

The brutality I experienced has changed me. I find it more difficult to trust people and I am more withdrawn. I am in therapy and learning to speak freely and openly about Sexual Assault. This is helping to heal the scars.

SURVIVING RITUAL

By Cheryl WaterWomon

Ritual abuse is defined as any systematic abuse by an individual or group with the intent to harm and control. It is a combination of mental, physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual abuse. Victims are often forced to experience and/or witness sadistic acts, gang rape, forced impregnation, prostitution, sacrifices in which one or more people are tortured and killed, cannibalism and other severe forms of abuse. Ritual abuse is torture. It is a calculated effort on the part of the perpetrators to systematically brainwash victims and destroy basic human values. The abusers are able to distort a victim's sense of self and sense of reality so that s/he feels personally responsible for all that has happened.

(Paraphrased from a definition prepared by an organization called "Healing Hearts.")

My name is Cheryl WaterWomon and I am a ritual abuse survivor. When I look back at the poetry I was writing before I remembered my abuse, I am amazed to find how explicitly it depicted the ritual abuse I had experienced. People around me looked at my art, read my poetry and told me that it was very powerful, that it had great metaphors. Remembering this, I want to cry — and laugh. I was trying to tell people my experiences and no one heard. Even now, as an acknowledged ritual abuse survivor, and someone with multiple personalities, I find myself having to explain that my work is not metaphorical. What you see in my artwork and read in my poetry is what I experienced.

I was ritually abused on a daily basis from infancy until 17 years of age when I

left home and ended all contact with my family. The people who abused me were members of an inter-generational Satanic cult that included people within and outside my biological family. I can only recall one person in my entire extended family who didn't ritually abuse me.

There were formal rituals and gatherings that took place both in distant locations and in our home. There were also less formal incidents of ritual abuse which my parents perpetrated daily outside the group. I never knew what to expect at home. Would I wake up in the night with strong lights shining in my eyes, a knife at my throat and a gun up my vagina? Would I be forced to consume cut-up body pieces for a bedtime snack? Or would I be led to a graveyard where others were already gathered, waiting to begin a ceremony.

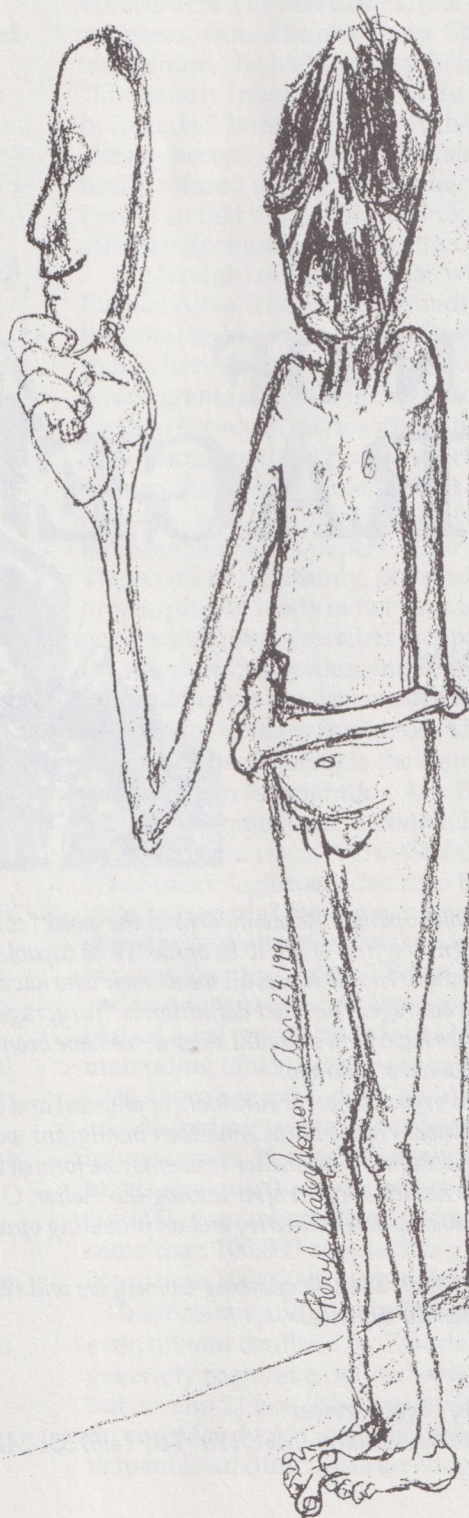
I remember one occasion when the cult placed me in front of a gun resting on a stand. They brought out a person whose wrists were bound and commanded me to shoot him. I yelled "no," so they shoved him out of the way, brought out a few more people, made sure I was watching and shot them all. They brought back the man, and again I refused to shoot. The massacre was repeated. This occurred several more times before I reluctantly agreed to shoot him. Later, they made me believe it was all my fault that these people had been killed. If I had only obeyed them the first time, they claimed none of these people would have died.

In order to survive such a crazy-making life, I learned to highly develop and trust

my intuition. I totally blocked out all memory of the abuse and created multiple personalities. I also quickly absorbed the cult's teachings; they threatened my life if I didn't. And yet, even through all this severe abuse and brainwashing, I fought back in my own little ways, just as I have heard so many other survivors did.

Cults are powerful. Their members are experts in brainwashing; inflicting maximum pain on the body without leaving marks; eliminating evidence of their crimes; exercising power over their victims and members and fitting into society as seemingly normal functioning people. Cults vary in their sophistication but from my experience many of them are well organized and highly skilled. I believe that ritual abuse has been going on for thousands of years and that it is only now that we survivors are speaking out and being heard.

Through their torture and abuse cults have taken away a great deal from us ritual abuse survivors. They have destroyed our self love and trust and left us with self-hatred, self-destructiveness and mistrust. Just as wife-assault and incest were once disbelieved, ritual abuse is now the "unspeakable" topic. Cults do their calculated, determined best to keep survivors from talking – and yet we still are. We are even connecting amongst ourselves. These are radical steps. We are making real change happen. We are not allowing them to silence us anymore.



WOMEN OF COURAGE

*By Amarna Moscote
(Translated from Spanish by
Shauna Herman)*



The dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy defines the word "coraje/courage" in two ways. "Tener coraje/ to have courage" signifies, first of all, to be brave. To be capable of making a decision and acting on it with a spirit of determination. In this sense, all we women who have suffered physical or emotional blows and survived are women of courage. The other definition is "fury, rage, aggravation". We have been beaten with fists and with sticks, we have been sexually abused, we have been insulted. If all this enrages us, then we are in this sense also, women of courage.

Women of Courage is an organization of survivors of physical and emotional abuse who have the courage to say "no" to violence. We are Latin American immigrant women and children who have banded together to overcome our isolation. As ex-shelter residents, we formed Mujeres de Coraje/Women of Courage because we felt we needed support after leaving the shelter. Our emphasis is on creating a network and an environment of friendship and solidarity and on providing opportunities for growth. While Mujeres De Coraje/

Woman of Courage is made up of Spanish speaking women, we will reach out to all women who seek a solution to the problem of family violence.

*Women of Courage
c/o Parkdale Community Legal Services
165 Dufferin Street, Toronto, Ontario M6K 1Y9 Tel: (416) 531-2411*

Women of Courage is a group of immigrant women that has adopted a firm stance against violence. A physical blow, as we well know, is not the only form that violence takes. There is abuse, when one country invades another, when one country adopts a resolution and then does not comply with its promise, or when one country's army blockades those who justly seek to defend their rights. There is also violence when the arbitrary will of other truncates our growth. We would like to discuss some of these forms of violence from the viewpoints of immigrant women and First Nations women attending the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter, November 18-24, 1990.

For Women of Courage, the possibility of attending the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter was vitally important. Since we first gathered in 1988, our group has tried to create a circle of friendship and comradeship that welcomes abused women and their children, and allows them to grow. What better opportunity for growth than meeting with more than 2,500 women of different countries and different feminist perspectives.

The theme of this Encounter was "Feminism as a Transforming Movement." The organizers promised to make the Encounter a time for emotion and fantasy, a time for creative reflection and a time for renewed celebration of our growth. We looked forward to discussing work, social communication, violence, political power, theology, sexuality, education, health, ecology, human rights, lesbianism, culture and other issues — all from a feminist perspective.

Of all the Women of Courage who wanted to take part in the Fifth Encounter, only four of us were able to go. Many women, all of whom had been in Toronto for a number of years, waited in vain for Immigration to attend to their refugee claims or to grant them permanent resident status in time for the conference.

We were certain that Bianca, one of our members, would be able to go. Then, at the last minute, she had to be left behind, "immensely frustrated and like a prisoner in Canada." Immigration, which had already accepted her refugee claim, emphatically refused to give her a Minister's Permit so that she could return to Canada after the Encounter in Argentina.

We thought of Bianca while we were in Buenos Aires. The group felt indignant that she could not attend the Encounter, that in her case the Immigration Act, which grants refugees the right to leave Canada for seven days without forfeiting their claims, had not been respected. It is an incredible act of violence that Bianca arrived in Canada in 1987 and still does not have her resident's papers in her hands. There was not, certainly, physical violence or usurping of lands in her case. Rather the government stole from her an opportunity for emotion, celebration and fantasy.

Canada. It is not unusual that in this country dreams are frustrated. The reunification of family is the central axis of the Canadian Immigration Act. Even so, family encounters are impeded. Bianca has a little girl, six years old, in Guatemala. What of her legitimate desire to bring this child to Canada? How much longer will she have to wait before she can embrace her daughter in Toronto? Between Bianca and her daughter Jacqueline there are no barbed wire fences, no tear gas bombs, or marauding tanks. But, since January 1, 1989, there has existed in Canada an inept and degrading system for determining refugee cases. The inefficiency of the system is obvious. Today there are more than 100,000 cases accumulated in Immigration. More than 100,000 people living in limbo. More than 100,000 dreams deferred.

Inefficiency and discrimination, however, are not confined to Canada. Dialogue generally requires a defined space. Spread out among 21 hotels between San Bernardo and Mar de Ajo, some conference participants had difficulties arriving at the

locations assigned for the diverse workshops. In short, what was lacking in San Bernardo was a spacious and integrated conference area where all the activities of the Encounter could be centralized. Nevertheless, the talks took place. They took place on the beaches, in the squares and in the bars and cafes of San Bernardo. They took place on the buses and while in line waiting for lunch or dinner. The talks also took place in Buenos Aires.

Of the almost 3,000 women convened in San Bernardo, very few of us were Black, Native, of the popular sectors or of the third age. A few mothers arrived at the Encounter with children. To our — and their — surprise, this feminist congress had no daycare facilities. The majority of the participants in the Encounter, white professionals, came from the large cities of Latin America; only a few were from the provinces. Furthermore, few women from the Caribbean were at the Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Encounter. It is an abuse that the organizing committee of the Fifth Encounter demonstrated itself to be initially indifferent to the conflicts of Indigenous and Black Latin American women. Rosalia Gutierrez and Carmen Cobello, the only two Aboriginal Argentineans present in San Bernardo, had been invited to the Encounter at the last minute. Adding insult to injury, the committee left talks on the specific problems of Native women out of their original program. This was a hateful act of negligence.

Triggered by this abuse, the courage to put an end to the situation surges. "What kind of feminism is this, that doesn't consider us?" protested Sergia, the Black sister from the Dominican Republic. Lucia, a Native woman, asked for a profound and honest dialogue on the Aboriginal Peoples. Beginning on the third day of the conference, the Black women, the Native women, the mothers who had brought their children, the Central American women, the women of the third age and others, began to inundate the hotels of San Bernardo and Mar de Ajo with their posters and their flyers. They were uniting to create their own workshops where they could reflect creatively among themselves and with others. By making it more theirs, each group gave to the Encounter, enriching it and transforming it.

We spoke with Rosalia Gutierrez and Carmen Cobello in the Capital of Argentina, sitting on the

sidewalk in front of the Hotel Presidente. Perhaps one of the most emotional moments of the Encounter, we told them, was during their part in the closing ceremonies. Rosalia, in the name of Native women, proposed a "continent-wide march on October 11 to commemorate the last day of liberty of the people of America." Rosalia and Carmen, both members of the Coya nation and members of the Community of Native Students of the First Peoples of America, have lobbied in Buenos Aires for the recovery of 150,000 hectares of land, property of the Indigenous Nation, that the government of Argentina had promised to return in a resolution in 1929. Our friends, who curiously enough had the opportunity to speak with a Native Canadian in San Bernardo, were aware of the recent rebellion of the Mohawk Warriors in Oka, and of their struggle against the invasion of their lands in Canada.

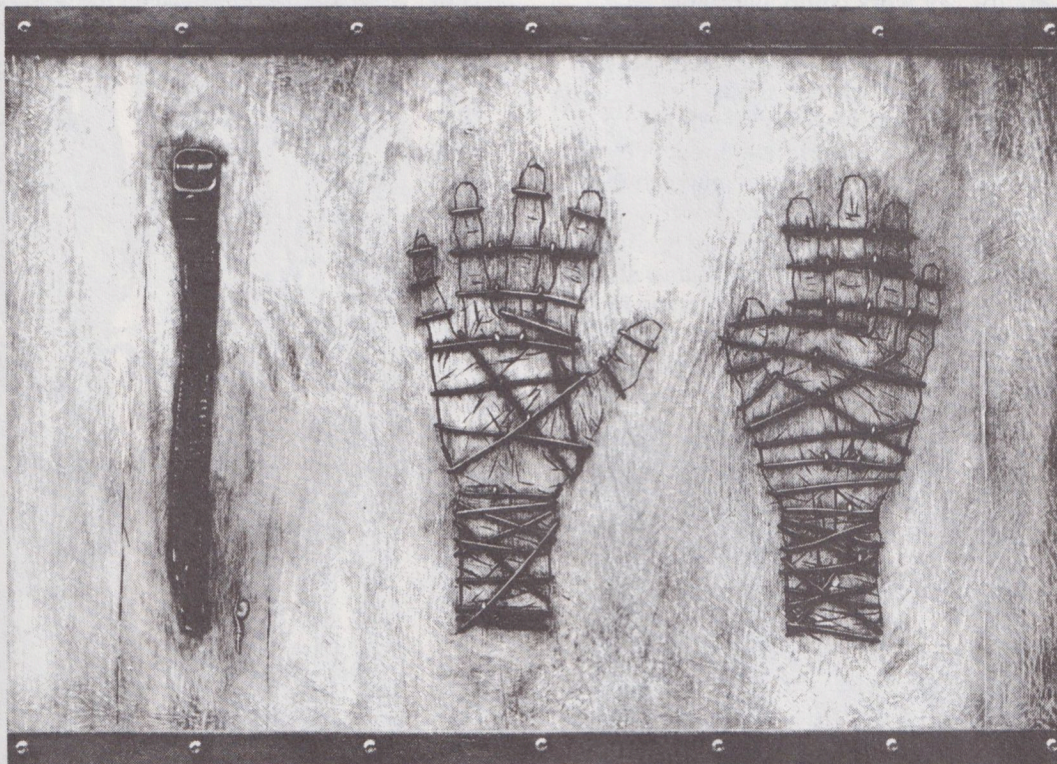
The systematic discrimination, the usurping of lands, the isolation of the Aboriginal Nations, the indifference of European settler governments, the lack of possibilities for self-development; these are common denominators that unite the First Peoples of North, Central and South America.

On the sidewalk in front of the Hotel Presidente, we spoke of another transformation. It is urgent, we said to Rosalia and Carmen, that we change the custom of celebrating the colonization of America solely as it is expressed by the paternalist-patriarchal perspective. The Flora Tristan Federation of Women's Associations of Madrid, present in San Bernardo, pointed out that this perspective neither explores the consequences that the Conquest had in both worlds, nor takes into account the role of women in this historical event. Since October 11 was the last day of freedom for the Native Peoples of America, we, the Women of Courage, promised to commemorate this day in Toronto.

While we chatted outside the hotel, Teresa Canaviri, a Native friend from Radio San Gabriel of Bolivia, approached us. Toronto, La Paz, Buenos Aires — October 11, 1992. Excited, we began to visualize the continent-wide march that the almost 3,000 participants had agreed, during the closing ceremonies, to carry out. A Native woman from Central America, hurrying towards the hotel, stopped briefly in our group. Enthused by our planning, she presented us with a postcard of women combatants of Guatemala.

Diana Thompson

ARTIST STATEMENT



Punishment #1, steel, wire, belt, acrylic on plywood

The work depicted here began in December 1989 following two events, one widely reported, the other personal. Both events were tragic. Something had, in both cases, gone terribly wrong. I was left struggling to understand and to speak about why they had occurred. In the Montreal Massacre, fourteen young women were killed by a man who was (to put it in simplest terms) "angry at feminists." Soon after, I found out that a dear friend had died as a result of the chronic anorexia and bulimia from which she had suffered for ten years.

I felt that the events were connected. I saw them as reflecting a similar notion of punishment, a certain blind and dogmatic concept of right and wrong and the common misconception that violence can be a solution. The events also shared the same conclusion: the ultimate fragility of the human body when subjected to force. The thoughts and emotions that these events stirred up inside me came together in this

work. Collectively, the drawings serve as an exploration — a method of deciphering and questioning the values of our society, our conception of punishment, our acceptance of violence and the states of victimization that can result from these ideas.

The work has not been easy to produce. Often, the pieces I was working on sickened me. There were times when I would feel such extreme revulsion that I would have to cover up the work and go on to something else. The viewer may react to some of these pieces in the same way. It hasn't been my intention to shock. Rather, I have tried to examine something, and the examination has led me to connect ideas and images that I had not realized were implicitly linked. In describing anorexia, for instance, the degradation of body-image by pornography became glaringly obvious, and there are allusions to that here.

My work is intentionally explicit. I have attempted to dissect romantic notions of

the victim, the hero and the martyr. I have attempted to portray cruelty, terror and punishment in a light that strips away any glamour, excitement or veneer of acceptability. My work could justifiably be criticized for overstatement; my response is that, feeling what I did "the tumult of emotion which created the work" I could do nothing else. My blunt method of exposure could also be questioned. Why did I not decide that there were enough violent images in our daily lives and choose to create more positive imagery? My reply is that, while I agree that there is and always will be a need for loving and caring imagery, I could not turn my back on the severity of the issues raised by the events last December. I could not avert my eyes.



Untitled

I was terribly shaken by the self-destruction of my friend. She was an artist, a young woman with a lot of verve and talent. She also had a desperate need to please. By slowly and painfully tracing her history, by bringing it into the open, I am attempting to bring what happened to light. I'm attempting to understand the problem at its roots and begin a discussion around issues of violence. This discussion may become heated, we may realize that there are many ways to look at things. But, such dialogues might have prevented someone like Marc Lepine, or my friend, from believing that violence "whether it is directed outwards or inwards" can ever be a solution.




Punishment #2, rope, nails, acrylic on gouged plywood



Captive #1, graphite on paper

THE GRANDDAUGHTERS OF IXMUCANE

The following is an excerpt from "The Granddaughters of Ixmucane", a collection of Guatemalan women's testimonies on their struggle for survival and change. As told to Emilie Smith-Ayala. Published by Women's Press.

 Women organizing in Guatemala face serious challenges. They are living in a society caught in a cycle of violence. Economic, political and military power are profoundly out of balance. Guatemalans at the top of the scale are unmoved by the misery and deaths of thousands. Guatemala is also deeply patriarchal. The subordination of women goes almost unquestioned.

Guatemalan women meet violence in the home, on the street and on the narrow paths winding through the countryside. Violence is the man in Quetzaltenango who murdered his wife when she burned the rice. It is the soldiers who raped eight hundred women in one region, most of them minors, leaving five hundred pregnant. It is the soldiers who slice open the pregnant wombs of Indigenous women. It is the factory boss who beats a pregnant woman. It is the measles, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, polio and starvation that kill children every hour.

In the past 30 years, under brutal military dictatorships, and shadowy, puppet civilian presidents, one hundred thousand Guatemalans have been killed outright, and more than one million twenty five thousand, have been uprooted from their communities of origin.

Guatemala has been under civilian rule since 1986, when military governments came to the conclusion that they could no longer continue to carry alone the country's mounting political and economic crisis. Unfortunately in these past six years, human rights violations, militarism and terror have continued, as it becomes ever more evident that those who control power in Guatemala behind the scenes remain the same.

Women continue to be targets of government repression. Since 1986, several new women's groups have formed, women from unions, feminists, and widows, who have come together to form Guatemala's largest women's group, CONAVIGUA,



which represents more than 8000 widows. In April 1991, Dinora Perez, a union activist and founder of a women's group, was machine-gunned to death as she left her car to enter her home. Maria Mejia, a leader in CONVIGUA, was killed in 1990. In September 1990, Myrna Mack, a well-known anthropologist was killed.

For women, violence from the dominant sectors quickly blends into family violence. Violence in the streets and violence in the home become similar expressions of a generalized situation.

Testimony of:

A woman in San Marcos, Guatemala, October 1991.

"Before the army and the so called civil self-defense patrols came, my husband and I shared all our ideas and dreams. Now everything's changed. Now he doesn't share anything with me and when he talks to me he yells. He's always depressed. The children are afraid of him because he hits them, even if they just ask him something. Yesterday my mother told me that it was my husband who denounced our neighbour Tomas Macnac because he didn't want to patrol. They found Tomas' body on the side of the road with his hands cut off. I don't know my husband anymore."

Testimony of:

Juana Vasquez, member of the Campesino Unity Committee (CUC).

"The army doesn't look to see who's who. They sweep through, taking women, children, old people — it doesn't matter. It was horrible to see bodies everywhere. It doesn't matter who you see lying there: he's your brother, she's your sister. To see women torn to pieces, without being able to bury them. You couldn't bury them, first because there were so many, second the army won't let you — they're right behind you. Then, as we fled, we had to go right over the bodies. That's how we got

out. How can people do this to other people?

We, the Indigenous people, value life very deeply, not only human life, but plant life, animal life. When I went to take the animals out to pasture, all of a sudden, I'd feel like pulling a branch off a little plant. My grandmother would say: "What are you doing, Juanita? What did that plant ever do to you? It would hurt you if your arm was torn off. It hurts the plant to have a piece torn off it. It's not right. If it's for your firewood, okay. If you're going to build something, okay. But you never tear it up just for something to do."

Respect for life is deep inside us, and after seeing so many bodies, my heart was paralysed. I wanted to curse the soldiers but I couldn't find words ugly enough to describe such cruelty. When they really wanted to hurt the parents, they would round up young children and newborns, put them in the house and set it on fire. The children screaming, the mothers crying. What could the parents do? They screamed outside the houses while their children were being consumed by the flames or suffocated by the smoke. Soon everything was ashes. Then came the women's turn.

They rape women in public, in front of their husbands. They swear at the women, make fun of their dignity as women.

You have to ask why. The only conclusion you can come to is that they're giving the soldiers drugs, brutalizing them, making them crazy. They do whatever they feel like. They're crazy. They grab children by the legs and break open their heads against a tree trunk. I saw all this. Sometimes you don't know if a village will be there tomorrow.

In a village between El Quiche and Alta Verapaz people were sleeping peacefully. At five in the morning, soldiers surrounded them. One circle, then another, and then a third — so nobody could escape. They woke people up and brought them together in front of the school and the health centre. First they burned the

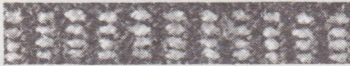
children. When people saw this, some went running. Other soldiers were ready and rounded them up. Bodies were everywhere. They killed everybody. One man had animals. He got up very early to see to his animals. In a village of two hundred, he was the only survivor — his wife, his children, his parents, his relatives. It was so horrible there are no words to describe it.

We aren't going to forget. And when Lucas Garcia left and Rios Montt came in — that cruel man was far worse. He said he took power because God gave him the presidency. He was leader of the fundamentalists. He went so far as to condemn all Indigenous peoples. He went on television, saying that we were dangerous, that we should be killed.


Like our ancestors, we began to defend our land and our lives. They went up in the hills, into caves. That's what we did in 1981. I left the convent. I joined thousands of others. It was something to see: children, newborns, pregnant women, old people, age people hiding under the trees, up in the hills, under rocks, in caves.

We left taking nothing. I was standing there, with my arms crossed. My only clothes were the ones I had on. It was like that for many people. You eat wild fruit. In the beginning, the fruit was big and ripe. But there were thousands and thousands of us, so it quickly ran out. At first, people went to get corn they'd hidden. But that was running out. That's why we began to plant corn in the mountains. But as soon as the ears formed, the army would come in and cut it down with machetes. It was enough to make you lose all hope.

You feel as if your heart's stopped. But now, in the mountains, you hoped that at least they would leave you in peace. Then they began to send in planes. They'd circle



*"Respect for life
is deep inside us
and after seeing
so many bodies,
my heart
was paralysed."*



overhead and then nose-dive. "Oh Lord, what's going on?" people would wonder. Then the bombs began to fall.

They dropped bombs carrying a milk-coloured liquid — probably with chemicals to make us sick. People got skin diseases, with pus and boils, blisters that came out under the arms, little bumps. We'd never seen anything like it. They grew bigger and bigger. I had one on my leg.

Unless we lanced them with a razor, people died. And then there were ordinary sicknesses too.

But people have held up, despite the bodies, despite the cruelty. On the one hand, it's really been sacrifice and suffering; on the other hand, it's a struggle for life. This sharing between many different peoples from many communities is really something special.

I'd had a chance to study, but to see my people working there — pregnant women there in the mud, giving birth in the bushes — has been the best school in my life. The struggle for survival, seeing that old man, that pregnant woman. Mothers would tell me, "Look at my breasts. I don't have any milk. Nothing to give my child." There they were with cold water and a cloth, feeding their newborn children. That's how women are. You don't see them whining; you don't see them sad, complaining. On the contrary, they're saying, "How are we going to work this out? What are we going to do?" Somebody gets an idea, and then another thinks of something.

*Testimony of:
Marta Gloria Torres,
Labour Lawyer and member of the United
Representation of the Guatemalan
Opposition (RUOG).*

"When we left, Yoly took over our cases, including the Coca Cola workers. It



was just after they killed Pedro Quevedo, the General Secretary of the Coca Cola Workers' Union. She survived two group kidnappings in 1980, the first at the CNT offices on June 21st, and the second at a religious retreat centre in August. Between the two, forty-four labour leaders were kidnapped.

Then Yoly's daughter was kidnapped. She was held for two weeks and she was tortured. She was sixteen and she was raped by thirty policemen. The first was Manuel de Jesus Valiente Tellez, the chief of the judiciales. Something that struck me deeply was that one week after having raped this girl, he walked down the aisle with his daughter: she was dressed in white — she was getting married.

While Yolandita was being held, the International Solidarity Movement organized a major campaign for her release. There were thousands of telegrams. That's what finally brought her freedom. When she was released she was blind. They had tortured her with the notorious "capucha de gamesan", a thick rubber hood with no opening, filled with dangerous chemicals. They hold that over your head and you have no choice but to breathe in the fumes. While she was still blind, a group of workers from the south coast, had collected, at tremendous sacrifice, two hundred "quetzales" and sent it to her so she could buy a braille watch. Yolandita thanked them and told them she wasn't going to buy the watch. She was determined to regain her sight and she gave the money to continue union work. She did get her sight back.

While Yoly's daughter was being held, Yoly kept working with unions. After her release they worked together. In March of 1983, while General Efraim Rios Montt was in power, Yolandita disappeared. We still don't know what happened to her. There are rumours — some saying that she was killed and others saying no. Only the army knows the truth.

Of the whole family only Yolandita was left. She wanted to find her mother, and

she contacted international organizations, but nothing could be done.

I remember at the time of Yolandita's disappearance, we received a tape that Yoly had made, where she condemned her daughter's kidnapping. She finished with: "We have reason to hate the army, but the love we feel for the people keeps us struggling and because of this love, we're going to keep on fighting."

Women have always participated. It's difficult for a woman to make that decision, but when she does, she doesn't hold anything back. Guatemala is a sick society, a society that doesn't care about the sick, the children, the poor. It's a society based on destruction and death. In the end, this destroys everything. This has made us understand that now is the time for women to accept responsibilities. We can no longer remain victims, passively suffering the consequences. What's happening is that different women, in different areas, are coming to the conviction that we have the power to change this society.

But it's important to mention that women haven't participated on a wide scale, especially during the 1970s. One characteristic of the women of Guatemala has been to be part of the infrastructure of an unjust society, to suffer the consequences and to have little or nothing to say in decisions that affect us. What's most important about this period is that we're taking initiatives and participating with more awareness. What's motivated this? I think for most women it's because they have been directly affected by institutionalized violence. We see this with the widows and their organization, CONAVIGUA, and with GAM, where most members are women. Just the name of these organizations says a lot about a country. It's amazing that women have had to come together around these acts of violence. My hope is that someday we'll begin to come together to build something new.

Right now the struggle for the women of Guatemala is a struggle for survival, for



life, for our children. It's a very difficult struggle, with many obstacles. We have much in common with the women of North America, but we have different ways of doing things, different social contexts and different priorities. It's important to make an effort to understand not just the situation in our own countries, but to see how they are connected at a global level. In our country there's profound injustice, and this has consequences for women. But there is also tremendous injustice at the international level and that's the way that industrialized countries act towards developing countries.

We have much in common, like the search for peace, but I think we're all coming to understand, in North America and in Central America, that the search for peace isn't something abstract. We're also coming to the conclusion that individually we aren't going to find a solution, that this has to be a collective task. But we can't say we're going to all think the same way or act alike.

We have to learn to maintain mutual respect, searching for understanding, informing ourselves about the different contexts in which we move. We need to have a mature relationship, not a paternalistic one. There are often paternalistic attitudes about the situation in countries like Guatemala, or about other Central American countries, or about the Third World. We can develop on our own, but we can't do it if our hands are tied. We're going to do it, and we are doing it, but the situation in our country is the product of centuries of injustice.

It's going to be our responsibility as women not only to search for peace, but to work for the environment. We really are at the threshold of a crisis, an economic crisis mixed with an ecological crisis, because of the abuse and irrational use of both natural and human resources. And when we speak of peace, we're not speaking of peace where poverty and misery are the rule. We're talking about a different kind of peace, something much more than the

absence of violence. We're talking about a peace where human beings can live with dignity, to develop themselves as people. In this light, it's important that women in North America not only move forward in their struggle but that they defend their gains because when these gains are lost, we all go backwards.

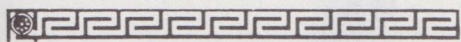
Right now the women of Guatemala are trying to withstand the repression. The Guatemalan Army looks strong, but in reality it's weak; it's weak because it carries within itself its own destruction. It's dedicated to destruction, but it's also looking at its final days. This makes it all the more dangerous. It's to finish off the workers and campesino organizations. But in the end it's going to destroy itself.

It's a privilege to be living in these times because we're creating the basis for collective work in future. In Guatemala, in El Salvador, in Nicaragua — in spite of all of the difficulties — one of the most positive things has been the strengthening of relations between people. This brings me great hope — it's the hope. I think we're going to be forced to create new ways of relating, very positive ones. It's true we have a long way to go, but we are going to get there, that's certain."

** Yolandita Urizar, Labour lawyer
kidnapped and disappeared in March 1983.*



MURDER OF ROSARIO



In the late morning of Thursday April 4, 1985, a Guatemalan woman named Rosario Godoy de Cuevas left her home to go shopping. Along with her were her two-year-old son Augusto Rafael, and her younger brother. She was in a hurry because she had a twelve-o'clock appointment and because she had made plans with some other women to take their children swimming. She knew something was wrong that day though: the phone had rung 15 times and each time she answered, the caller had hung up.

Rosario was familiar with strange circumstance. Her husband, Carlos, was a disappeared person. Not knowing whether he lived or died at the hands of his abductors, she worried constantly for his safety. Soon she became obsessed with finding him. While his disappearance agonized her, it also politicized her.

To disappear in Guatemala is to vanish without a trace. It means to be there one day and gone the next, as if you had never existed. Families of the disappeared began to see each other over and over, in the police stations and the morgues, searching for their relatives. They decided to join together. In June of 1984 they formed The Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo por el Aparacimiento Con Vida de Nuestros Seres Queridos (in English: The Mutual Support Group for Families of the Disappeared), also known as GAM. Rosario secretly became a member of GAM. A letter written by Rosario, dated March 30, 1985, shows her anguish and desperation for Carlos' return.

Earlier that same month, a friend of Rosario's, a GAM leader, was murdered. Moved by the injustice of his death and the disappearance of so many Guatemalans (reports suggest as many as 40,000), Rosario spoke out at his funeral. When she left the service, drivers of an unknown car tried to harm Rosario by staging an accident. That attempt was unsuccessful. However, shortly after that — on the day Rosario went out to go shopping — they succeeded. She was found in a ravine near her home along with her brother and her son. The three of them had been tortured and murdered. She had bite marks on her breasts. Her underpants were covered with blood. The baby appeared unmarked, but at the funeral it was noticed that his fingernails were missing. The government report said the deaths resulted from injuries suffered in the accident.

By Ingrid Macdonald

The following images and text are taken from the exhibition RECUERDO ROOM by Toronto artists Amanda Hale and Lynn Hutchinson.

Guatemala,
March 30th, 1985.

Dear family:

I'm taking advantage of this opportunity to send you letters and some news. I hope you're all well, especially Gabrielita. I want to tell you so many things, and I'll try not to let anything escape my memory.

On March 19th I got more news of Carlos: they tell me that there is a special group of ten people being kept together, but they didn't tell me where they are. One of these is Carlos, they didn't tell me who the other nine are. Apart from this I hear that the government has some sort of surprise for us. The worst of this is that we don't know if they're planning to return people or just eliminate all of us, the whole leadership of GAM.

I'm about to go crazy. Now after ten months of this I am ready to shoot myself. It doesn't occur to me what else to do. The days pass so quickly and the nights so slowly, I only want to disappear, I wish I had never been in this nightmare.

What is happening now is so dreadful that when I look at Augusto Rafael my despair grows even worse. His eyes cry out to me for tranquility and a happy stable family life. I've become a social misfit. I am able to think only about Carlos and how to get him out of there. This is my obsession.

I really believe that either they'll return him to me, alive, or they'll take me too, really, Ruth, I will never ever rest until I find my Gordo. Believe me that all the threats the police send us don't matter, they've already promised to fill us with lead if we keep on persevering. Either they give me back Carlos or they'll have to take me, too...

I'm sending Gabrielita a present, something small, but with all my love. I'm also sending another file about Carlos, with the licence number of the Department of Technical Investigation (panel truck, brown, licence number P78517, and the green Mitsubishi, licence no. P78485).

I wait for your letter and any news.
I await them anxiously.

I love you.
Rosario



Lynn Hutchinson & Amanda Hale, Recuerdo Room, 25



Guatemala,
30 de marzo, 1985

Querida familia:

Aprovecho esta oportunidad para enviarle noticias y algunas cartas. Espero que todos se encuentren bien, especialmente Gabrielita. Quisiera contarles tantas cosas, y trataré que no se escape nada de mi memoria.

El día 19 de marzo tuve nuevamente noticias de Carlos, me cuentan que hay un grupo especial de 10 personas que las tienen concentradas juntas, el lugar no me determinaron; al parecer están ya recuperados estas personas, de las cuales una de ellas es Carlos, los otros 9 no me dijeron quienes eran. Aparte de esto se rumora mucho una sorpresa por parte del Gobierno, lo malo es que no sabemos si se refieren a devolver gente o a eliminarnos a la directiva de GAM.

Estoy para volverme loca, ya 10 meses es para tirarme un balazo, no se me ocurre más que hacer; los días y las noches pasan tan rápido y tan lentamente que quisiera desaparecerme y jamás haber estado en esta pesadilla. Miro a Augusto Rafael y mi desesperación se vuelve mayor, esos ojitos que me piden a gritos tranquilidad y un hogar feliz y estable, es algo horrible lo que me pasa ahora. Soy una inadaptada social, solo en Carlos pienso y actúo como poder sacarlo de ahí. No tengo más tema que eso. Pero creo seguramente que o me devuelven a Carlos vivo o me llevan a mi también...

Críame que no me importa todas las amenazas que nos han mandado y que nos prometieron echarnos plomo si seguimos insistiendo. Pero no voy a continuar, o me devuelven a Carlos vivo o me llevan también.

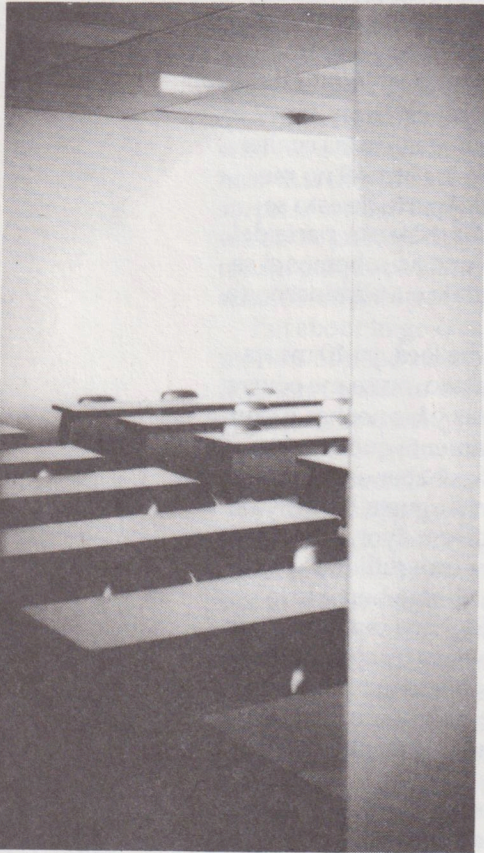
A Gabrielita le mando algo insignificante pero con todo mi amor. Ahí le mando otra ficha de Carlos con los números de placas del D.I.T. [panel color café, placa P78157 y le Mitsubishi verde, placa P78485].

Bueno espero su carta y noticias, ansiosamente las espero.

Los quiero.
Rosario

MARC LEPINE THOUGHT HE WAS A HERO IN A UNIFORM

By Elaine Carol



After the massacre, no one at L'École Polytechnique spoke about the horrific incident. Silence descended upon the school. Women started writing and drawing angry graffiti on the washroom walls at L'École Polytechnique.

I went back home to Montreal last July. Université de Montréal is situated ten minutes from where I grew up, two minutes away from the hospital I was born in. I had to go to the school. I had to see the place where it had happened.

I got there on the hottest day in July. The cafeteria had been gutted. The south wing was closed off for renovations. There was a bulldozer in front. The women's washrooms had an overwhelming smell of fresh paint. The men laughed at me and my camera. The women turned quickly down the halls... their eyes... filled with fear.

In the classroom

In their cars

Homes

Bedrooms

No woman is safe

Offices

Parking lots

Elevators

No woman is safe

Marc Lepine thought he was a hero in a uniform

Green beret

Epaulets

Semi-automatic machine gun

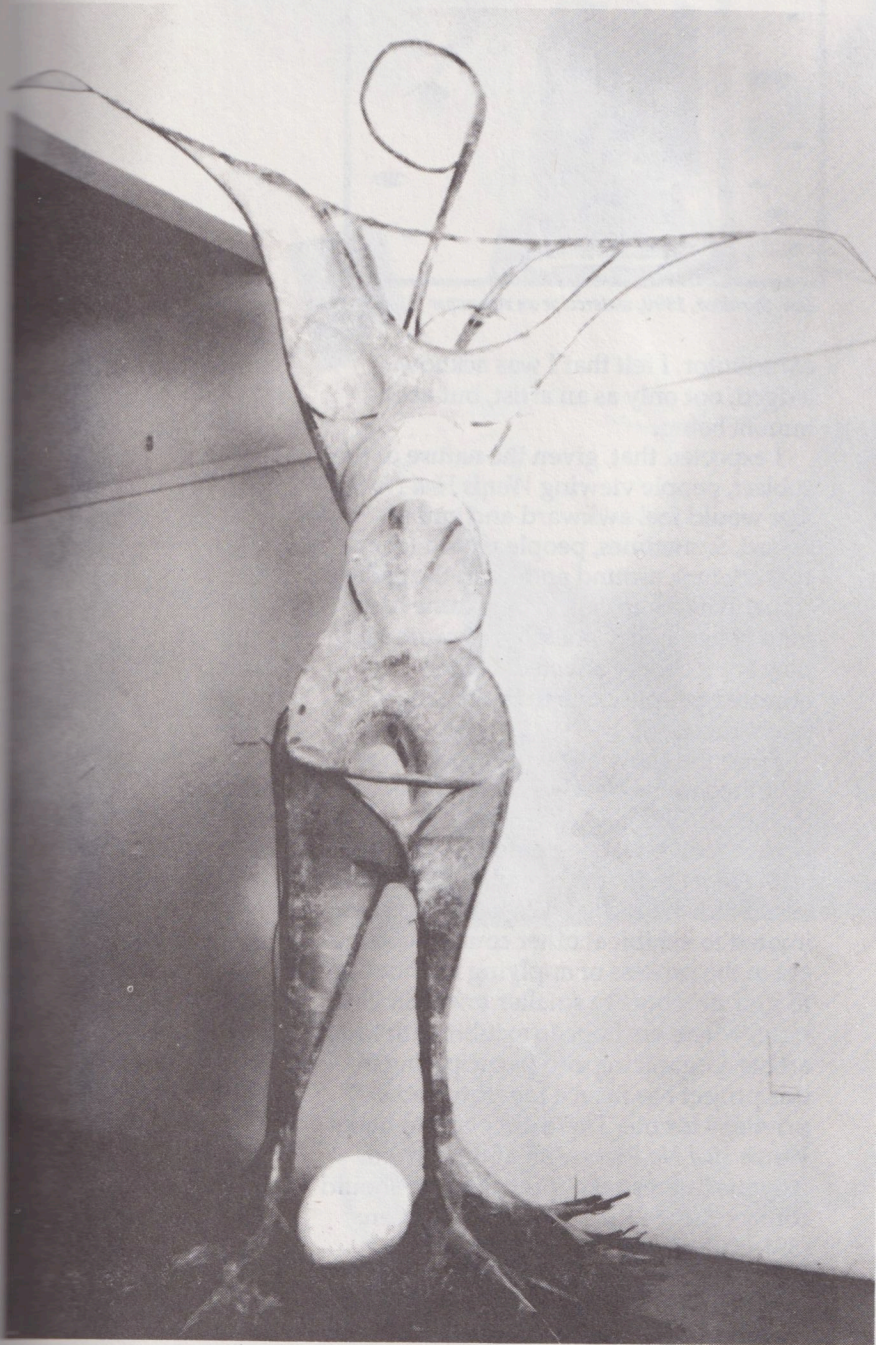
Khaki battle dress

Reference to excerpt from performance script

By Elaine Carol

Words Had No Passage: Art About Incest

Curatorial Statement by Robin Pacific



Maureen Morris, *The Survivor*, 1991 branches, parchment, ceramic

As children we are either coerced or terrorized into silence; if we do speak; directly or indirectly (through dreams, sexual precocity, drawings, etc.) no one listens, no one sees. This is the crisis of silence experienced by incest survivors. Some of us, through splitting, leaving the body or creating multiple personalities, don't/can't speak out because we manage to convince ourselves that it is not happening while it is happening. The repression of our reality, through silence and forgetting leaves us in a spiritual coma and stunts our creativity. When the truth of our experience is finally confronted, revealed and spoken of, the works which we create are intense and passionate.

For the incest survivor, creating art is part of the transformation from victim to survivor, integral to survival itself. Speaking out about incest requires great courage and strength. Speaking out, strengthens the speaker. It also blazes the trail for others and alerts society to the fact that women (and those men who are part of the survivor movement) will do everything in our power to prevent childhood sexual abuse. Art about incest is thus, by its very nature, political. Silence perpetuates; expression heals the victim and says NO.

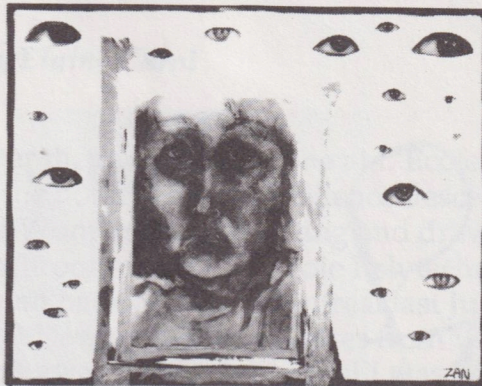
The art of the incest survivor exposes the inner self. It breathes life into the artist's soul, heretofore cauterized by pain. This art, for all its divergence of style, medium and level of skill, is essentialist; its bold demand for the truth is a demand for the essential self to be seen and acknowledged. In its rawness, its direct communication of powerful emotion, this work defies academicism. Both the making of the work and the way it is received by the viewer are emotionally raw and unmediated.

Last winter, I approached the Partisan Gallery to do an exhibit of my work and

that of two others on the theme of incest. Partisan accepted the proposal, whereupon the other two artists backed out. In lieu of a formal call for submissions, I placed an ad in *Now Magazine* and invited anyone I happened across to submit work to the exhibition. I also encouraged as many poets, singers and actors as I could to participate in an evening of performances. The exhibition was entitled *Words Had No Passage: Art About Incest*. Some of the respondents were professional artists who exhibit their work in mainstream galleries. Their work about incest, however, was displayed here for the first time. Others were people who became artists as part of the process of healing and recovery. One of the two men in the show produced his first piece for *Words Had No Passage*.

Although I viewed the work submitted to the exhibition, in advance, I saw my role as that of a facilitator (not a curator) and maintained an open-door policy. Anyone creating work about incest was eligible. Given the diversity of form and style, the occurrence of similar themes and images in the artists works was revealing: probing or groping hands, the theme of vision (eyes displaced, eyes with forks stuck through them, a piece called *Blind Art* made on window blinds), eggs, fetuses, babies, children and, through all the pain, anger and grotesquerie, the artists emerging courage, strength and joy.

There was an attitude of profound respect and support both among the artists and later among the people who came to see the show. Although, for the most part, we were a group of strangers, the commonality of our experience provided a rare atmosphere of understanding and cooperation. There was a quality to the way the viewers received the work which also seemed unique. As a



Zan, *Survivor*, 1990, watercolor on rice paper

contributor, I felt that I was acknowledged, not only as an artist, but as a human being.

I expected that, given the nature of the subject, people viewing *Words Had No Passage* would feel awkward and embarrassed. Sometimes, people would take a cursory look around and leave the gallery "but, in every instance, they came back for a better look. Generally, viewers said they were deeply affected. Over a hundred people came to the closing celebration.

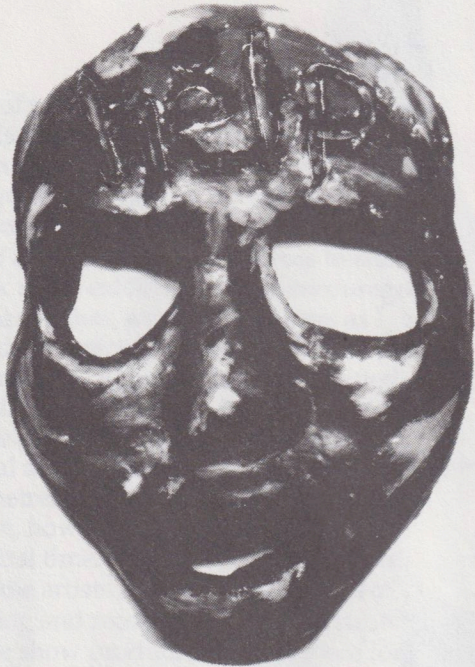
Since the show our work has been re-exhibited at the *No More Secrets* conference at OISE and some of the performances were repeated at the *Aftermath Forum* held in November at the Ontario Hydro Building. We have also been invited to exhibit at other conferences and are in the process of applying for funding to tour the show to smaller towns in Ontario, where we hope to exhibit with local artists. Organizing and participating in this project has been a pleasure and a privilege for me. There are plans to make *Words Had No Passage* an annual event. Anyone interested in participating should contact Samera (508-5831) or Maureen (391-0095/533-4655).



Suzanne Mogensen, Untitled, 1986, pencil crayon on paper

SURVIVING RITUAL ABUSE

BY CHERYL WATERWOMON



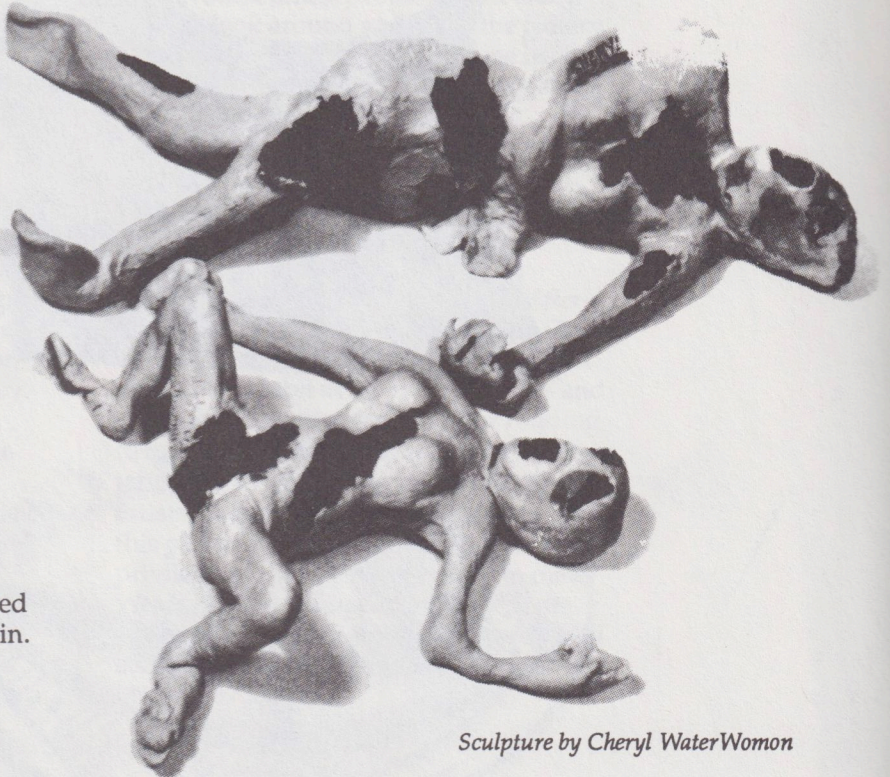
Mask by Cheryl WaterWomon

The moan of the dead is
long and warbling,
many young voices blending together.
I know their sound well,
calling for help help help me
blood dripping from their groans.
I can feel it splashing onto me;
so many killed through torture—
killed before they even knew what the word
death meant.

*Cheryl WaterWomon
May 14, 1990*

He treats me as
a rabbit for eating
a slit by the neck
then down the stomach
one at the feet;
a few swift movements
and my denuded body
lies, bloody beside my crumpled
skin.

*Cheryl WaterWomon
February 26, 1989*



Sculpture by Cheryl WaterWomon

ORANGE POPSICLES

I remember orange popsicles,
Wrigley's Spearmint, chocolate bars, bubble gum, candy
necklaces and bracelets, all the things my mother
wouldn't let me have

I remember orange popsicles
the way he
broke them in half for me
and how they melted
messily

I remember
the back seat
 of the car
black Comet
red interior
 upholstery dirty vinyl plastic bumpy
as the back of a toad my fingertips memorizing
the heat of sunlight, its square
outline, the dust in the air and my head filling up
a balloon out the window and up and away
from the pain
of his fingers
jammed up my anus
from the stubs of his fingers and my hand pressed over my
 mouth to keep
my insides from lurching all over the seat I memorize
this patch of sunlight so I don't have to know what my
 daddy
is doing to me

I remember
orange popsicles

Karen Fogg, 1991

THE MISSIONARY PERFORMS AN EXORCISM

Drinking, we send missionaries to ourselves,
a quick conversion:
new language's exhilaration,
re-writing superstition and history.
We are suddenly tall and white and
filled with a numb genius —
we have The Answer.

You drank too much
teetering on your fat beast's legs
you smelled like fat and grey hair
hair in your ears and nose and on your
fat bubbly hands trembling towards me
I'd never screamed before and could only think
my throat is too small so small
He will snip off my head with the scissors
before you slipped on the linoleum,
toppled like a bull shot in the skull
and I ran.

You were always sorry
but no wine will ever forgive you.
They're right, you know: It's contagious.
Now when I drink too much
you're there in the dark kitchen
waiting for me again.
I could yell now.
Throw things too.
I speak in your low cruel voice
and I taste your breath in my mouth.

When I drink too much
like I will at your funeral
(when you finally wrap your car
around one of those trees
I keep wishing in your path)
I stagger, and my lips
swell up to twice their normal size.

And I'll waddle to the coffin
holding big white fat and ugly you
With swollen lips
you won't have to worry about me screaming
and I wouldn't speak or apologize anyway,
let alone kiss you.

Kathy Shaidle

FOCUS ON

WARC

FACILITY UPDATE

OUT OF THE DRAWER EXHIBITION

From December 21, 1991 to January 25, 1992, the work of 21 Canadian women artists from WARC's Slide Registry will be on exhibit at A Space gallery in Toronto. The exhibit *Out Of The Drawer* represents over six years of documenting and collecting information about Canadian women artists.

The objective of the exhibition is to present work that is politically engaged and of a "feminist" perspective. The term feminist in this context refers to work which deals with the struggle to end sexist oppression and the cultural bases of domination. The work on display addresses social/personal issues representing the range and diversity of women's experiences. Marginalization of women is not solely determined by gender. Issues of race, class, sexual orientation, violence and isolation are part of the complexity and diversity of female experience and form the theme of this exhibition. WARC thanks Coordinating Committee member Agatha Schwager for suggesting that WARC mount this exhibition.



Noreen Tomlinson, *Rock Bearer*, 1990, oil on canvas



Skai Fowler, *The Female Nude*, 1990, black & white photo

AN INTERVIEW WITH CAROL LAING

Mimi Stables is one of the organizers of the exhibition *Out Of The Drawer*.

Carol Laing is an artist and teacher at the Ontario College of Art. She was responsible for establishing a women's file at the OCA library. In 1990 she arranged for these files to be incorporated into WARC's Documentation Facility.

Mimi: Carol, what is your involvement with WARC's Documentation Facility?

Carol: When I started teaching at OCA, I didn't have a lot of documentation of my own, so I came to WARC. I will always remember how generous WARC was to me, opening the files and saying, "Take what you need." From there I went on to establish a women's file at the OCA library. It was inspired by the need for information and the realization that it had to be a collective enterprise because it was a bigger task than I or any other individual could fill. It involved compiling lots of information about what women were actually up to in art production. I had trouble getting the books in the library that I felt my students needed and the women's file was a solution. We could put text in the file and it would then be accessible and easy to find. I think a lot of visual arts students are intimidated by archives and libraries and the idea of a women's file was that it be user-friendly and serve as a first step in learning to do research.

M. How vital to a history of women's art and the creation of feminist aesthetics is a documentation facility and slide registry?

C. It's important to have a history of women's work. Even as we work, sort of between the gaps, to compile these resources, we find that it is difficult to integrate them with the larger mandate. I know that the head of the library at OCA is a woman who is very positive about women's issues and women's work but she is working within her own mandate as a librarian and her views don't always line up with how I see things as an artist. For example, one of the suggestions for the women's file was to actually remove information on women artists and interfile it with the libraries

own vertical file so that women were not always segregated. I was very supportive of this plan but my problem was that the file was going to be sifted through by someone who didn't have the expertise to know what to keep and what to throw out. So we decided against it. The women's file has now been transferred to WARC.

M. Why is there so little information on women artists in public libraries and academic and research centres?

C. A lot of the information that is available out there hasn't risen to the level of actual book format. Largely it comes out in newspapers and periodical literature that doesn't have large distributions. So, we've got a kind of information that is, in some ways, already fragile and hard to find. The first generation of women who have come through women's studies still don't have the placements in institutional bases that would make it easier to produce the books we need.

M. WARC is having an exhibit of work by Canadian women artists from the slide registry. Do you think images have the potential to alter the lives of women?

C. I really do think images have the potential to alter the lives of women, especially images that offer alternatives to those that we see in the incredibly sexist dominant culture that we live in. It's pretty hard to feel that we're succeeding in combatting this flood of sexist images. We need a space to represent ourselves as we see ourselves within our experience. It's very complicated because of what contemporary art and contemporary culture has become. We often view images without the ideological information to understand how these images are working. We need different sites like WARC where we can easily access work that provides this information. For me, because of what I teach, as a woman artist, it has been a real pleasure to watch WARC grow and expand into publishing an art journal like *Matriart*. Congratulations.

By Mimi Stables

WARC

BOOK REVIEW



**THE CONFESSIONS OF
WANDA VON SACHER-MASOCH**
V. Vale and Andrea Juno
Re/search Publications, San Francisco
1990, 127 p.

The Confessions of Wanda Von Sacher-Masoch, first published in Paris in 1907, was recently reprinted in English by the California-based Re/Search Publications. From the very opening chapters, Wanda is defined by her relationship with her husband; by his worldly accomplishments and notoriety. This was the way a vast majority of women, living before the late twentieth century, claimed their identities. That Wanda Von Sacher-Masoch succeeded in old age, through the writing of her autobiography, in establishing relative autonomy, speaks of a significant accomplishment.

Married to Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch, a Polish/Austrian writer from whose name the word "masochism" is derived, Wanda relates a life of pain and servitude. Coerced into living out the sexual fantasies of her husband, she was cast into the undesirable role of a stereotypically "evil" and domineering woman, equipped with an array of props, whips and written contracts outlining Leopold's emotional and physical servitude. In economic and legal terms, however, it was clearly Leopold who held the dominant position in the relationship. When his sexual fantasies were not met Leopold simply ceased his labours as a writer, plunging the Von Sacher-Masoch family into dire financial need. Living as they did, one step ahead of their creditors, Leopold's strategy quickly achieved the desired results. Wanda not only had her own physical well-being to consider, but those of her three children.

The pain caused to Wanda by Leopold's obsessions is irrefutable. This is made repeatedly clear in the text. To Leopold, the pinnacle of physical and emotional humiliation, for instance, involved forcing his companion to take a lover "a male figure known in Leopold's vocabulary as 'the Greek'." Once this triangle was established, the lover was to treat Sacher-Masoch as his personal slave. Wanda had no interest in fulfilling her allotted role in this scenario, but nevertheless endured the posting and

answering of personal advertisements in search of "the Greek."

The reader may be puzzled by some of the details in Wanda's account: her considerable, if not complete, premarital knowledge of Sacher-Masoch's sexual preferences, for instance, or her initial adoption of the pseudonym "Wanda de Dunaiew," the name of the dominatrix heroine in Sacher-Masoch's novel *Venus in Furs*. It is only when these events are seen in relation to issues of class that we can begin to understand her actions. Wanda's willingness to take the name of Leopold's fictional sexual fantasy may very well have been motivated by her desire to abandon a previous life of economic and social oppression. The authors own account of her first twenty-six years (prior to her association with Sacher-Masoch) reveals little — not even her given name. By referring to Sacher-Masoch's biography however, we hear of Wanda's true identity and of her early life as Aurora Rumelin.

Aurora Rumelin was a seamstress of limited education who's family lived in great poverty, exacerbated by the desertion of her father. Her parents had, at one point, known more prosperous times and no doubt as a young woman Aurora longed to achieve the protection, security, prestige and respect that the wife of the somewhat aristocratic, and by then famous, Sacher-Masoch could expect to enjoy. Added to this allure was Leopold's initial encouragement of Rumelin's thirst for education and self-development through his sponsorship of her career as a writer. (This later proved to be a favourite strategy of Leopold's in wooing potential sex partners.)

Aurora/Wanda escaped a life of poverty and hunger, only to find herself trapped in a marriage fraught with worry, servitude and mismatched desires. Wanda's anger at her predicament was directed firmly at the institution she had once thought could be her salvation. She wrote:

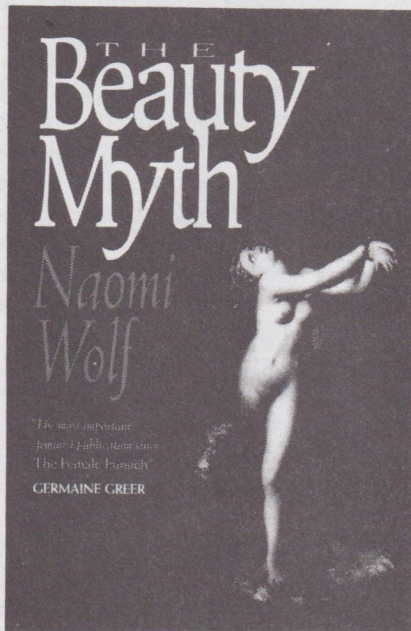
"Why does the feminist movement not intervene here? Why does it not advance to the root of the evil, so as to sweep away all of this rotten institution of marriage so contrary to our modern thoughts and feelings? Or if it can not sweep it away, then ignore it?"

Throughout the *Confessions* Wanda displays her talent for keen observation and presents the reader with portraits of a number of unorthodox and intriguing individuals, many of whom are women. The book might simply serve as a historical document if parts of Wanda's life did not seem so contemporary. This is especially true of the passages which describe the acrimonious dissolution of her marriage which involved among other things, Leopold's kidnapping of his favorite child.

Though much of the book deals with sexuality, the text of the *Confessions* is not erotic. This is not surprising considering that Wanda found Leopold's sexual interests tedious, at best. Re/Search Publications' presentation of these "Confessions" may however, lead the unsuspecting reader to think otherwise. Large, vaguely distorted, black and white photographs designed to look as if they dated from that era "illustrate" episodes from the text. Models appear in Victorian underwear, in various states of undress. A painted photograph on the cover shows "Wanda" wielding a bloodied cane. Although one may appreciate the publisher's decision to bring this text to an English readership, the "titillating" packaging is misleading and sadly ironic given Wanda/Aurora's intentions in writing her autobiography. Intentions which included a desire to shake off the "Venus of Furs" persona and to tarnish the allure which so often surrounds sexual cruelty.

By Julie Arnold

FOCUS ON
W A R C
BOOK REVIEW



**THE BEAUTY MYTH —
DEMOLISHING THE IRON MAIDEN**

Naomi Wolf
Vintage Books, Toronto
1990, 1991, 348p. pb. \$13.50

The Beauty Myth, by Naomi Wolf, is a strong, well-written argument for the addition of “lookism” to the unholy trinity of racism, classism, and sexism. Lookism is discrimination based on blaming women for failing to meet the prevailing fashion in female beauty. Wolf cannot be credited with being the first to discover or discuss the cruelty of society to women who do not fit the five foot ten, hundred and ten pound, flawless cover model image. Since the late seventies, books such as *Shadows on a Tightrope* or *Fat is a Feminist Issue* have maintained that women have the right to respect whatever the shape of our bodies. These and other books have also detailed the ways that the medical and diet industries are responsible for severe mental and physical abuse of women.

Wolf’s analysis is based on statistical analysis and rigorous research. She starts with a brief study of the historical expansion — through mass media and advertising — of the power of a few to dictate proper appearance. She then examines the effectiveness of this form of anti-woman discrimination in keeping women out of positions of power. In chapters entitled “Work”, “Culture”, “Religion”, “Sex”, “Hunger” and “Violence”, Wolf delineates — in graphic detail — the omnipresent power of the “myth of beauty” to control women’s lives. The “Iron Maiden” forces women to attempt to conform to a standard, impossible for most women. It endorses self-mutilation, surgical experimentation and starvation, to the point of malnutrition or death, in pursuit of that standard.

URE HUNGER VIOLENCE

Although *The Beauty Myth* cannot be faulted on an analytical basis, Naomi Wolf makes the same mistake as many of her white feminist forebearers. She claims to speak for all women, to know what all women should or should not do, despite the fact that she does not include any personal accounts of societal obsession with appearance. Nor are the experiences that are written about and analyzed, the experiences of all women. It is true that the cult of beauty affects all women living in North America. It is also true that with the expansion of American television and movies, North American ideals of appearance are spreading around the world. Despite this, there are still cultures which hold alternate views of what is attractive.

Even within North American culture, standards of beauty affect women differently. In discussing the distortion of images of women in the media, she asks, "what if images of blacks were systematically lightened." Here, Wolf is evidently ignoring the specific effects of the elevation of the white model to sanctity, on the consciousness of women of colour. Images of black men and women systematically lightened by the mainstream media, and cosmetics purporting to whiten black skin or straighten kinky, curly, black hair abound. White women striving to fit ideals of beauty struggle with their body types. Women of colour are told that to fit in, we must also shed our skins.

Likewise a women's physical capabilities affect how she is perceived. A high fashion model may starve, vomit and/or purge her body to collapse, just as long as she does it off the runway. She is not, however, allowed to use braces, wheelchairs or canes. Women who need to use such devices are not allowed to be models. Like an Elizabethan

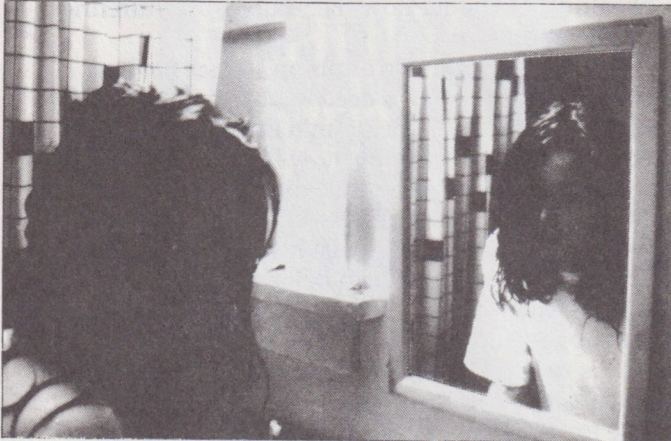
noble whose face gradually rotted beneath her makeup, today's pulchritudinous elite must appear "healthy" no matter how their bodies are suffering under the strain.

The Beauty Myth also omits an analysis of how class affects a woman's need or ability to fulfill the dictates of the myth. Being thin used to be a sign of poverty and malnutrition, now it is a sign that a woman can afford expensive diet foods, fitness clubs and spas. The gulf between women who wear polyester and women who can afford natural fibres is often as great as that between black and white women. And only one side can make it into the "appearance nobility."

It is painful to find such major flaws in so important a work. Looksism remains a socially acceptable form of discrimination, and, as a result, few theorists have tried to challenge it. Like *The Feminine Mystique* or *The Female Eunuch*, *The Beauty Myth* will likely become the main reference of a new movement, and like them it may condemn that movement to being seen as important only to the white middle class. As well as stating that all women need to cooperate to overthrow the rule of the Iron Maiden, Ms. Wolf could have done the feminist community a valuable service in examining how the myth affects women who are not professionals and women who are not white.

By Anne Vespry

Anne Vespry helps people communicate effectively in writing — as an editor. She moonlights as a teacher, instructing people who need to use computers, the most efficient ways to do so. She has heard that self-promotion is the key to success, and can be reached at (416) 461-5117.



NEW SHOES

Directed by Ann Marie Fleming

Canada, 1990, 80 minutes

Colour/16 mm

AMF Productions/Sleepy Dog Films

If I were to compile a list of promising young Canadian film makers Ann Marie Fleming's name would surely be on it. Her latest work, *New Shoes*, is Fleming's first attempt at feature length filmmaking. Although the movie has its moments, *New Shoes* shows that she still has much to learn about working in an extended form.

Her first film (*Waving*, 1987) is a five minute gem. The single image which makes up the bulk of the film is that of a woman in a white gown moving gracefully under water. The woman appears to be a symbol of death, of repressed desire and possibly of peacefulness. In the voice-over, Fleming talks about the life and death of her grandmother, the intensity and fragility of her connection with the old woman and the inadequate, fragmentary nature of what she has learned of that matriarch's unusual life.

You Take Care Now (1989) is more ambitious. This film relates two separate incidents. Fleming is raped while on vacation in southern Italy and is hit by a car upon her return to Vancouver. The rape, as described by Fleming, seems no more personal than the traffic accident; she was simply a woman who found herself in the way of a marauding male.

New Shoes: An Interview In Exactly Five Minutes (1990) is part of Studio D's anniversary compilation film, *Five Feminist Minutes*. In this work, a woman describes being harassed and eventually shot by a boyfriend who couldn't accept the break up of their relationship. After firing at her, the young man turned the gun on himself.

In the feature length version of *New Shoes*, Fleming attempts to flesh out some of the issues presented in the five minute film. Two women meet for lunch. One, played by Valerie Buhagiar

of *Road Kill* and *Highway 61* fame, describes in more detail the incidents recounted in the first film. The other woman, played by Fleming herself, is having a hard time breaking up with her insistent boyfriend.

In the short version, we hear only the woman's perspective. In *New Shoes*, the feature, an attempt is made to explain (but not excuse) the vehemence of the young man's reaction. The severity of his actions is not, however, given the social and political context necessary for us to understand the path from neediness to murder. Also the Buhagiar character is off-putting, crass and insensitive which may simply be a defence mechanism, but nevertheless fails to inspire the viewer's sympathy.

Through the use of several layers of sound, Fleming tries to relate individual acts of violence to the institutional violence of the world at large. As Fleming goes about her business, her musings and conversations are interrupted and framed by violent news reports, aggressive sports casts and fierce domestic disputes. Nothing new here. Fleming offers no concrete explanation of how public and private violence interrelate.

In several of her films, *New Shoes* included, Fleming uses idyllic pictures of medieval fairy princesses. These are images of romance and safety which lie in stark contrast to the rough realities of most women's lives. Thematically, they make sense but within the structure of the film, their interjection seems haphazard and arbitrary.

There are two unsuccessful set pieces involving elderly women. One is simply banal; the other attempts to introduce issues of racism but falls flat, since these issues aren't touched on elsewhere in the film.

Much of *New Shoes* is enacted through voice overs. At times, Fleming speaks through the character she plays; at times, she speaks as the director. Sometimes, she discusses the characters in the film; at other times she discusses the actors who play them. The intent is to make us think about the relationship between artifice and reality, but the ef-

fect is to make us wonder which of two or three films Fleming is actually making.

You Take Care Now ends with a comment on how photographs distort and falsify reality. This idea is repeated in *New Shoes* when Fleming (in character) refers back to her car accident. The borders of a photograph hide her crutches and the presence of cherry blossoms sweeten the image in the same way the fairy princess distracts us from the darker context of medieval life.

New Shoes is alternately frustrating and tedious to watch. It's obvious that Fleming has plenty to say but this film is scattered and lacks polish or focus. It seems to have been rushed into production before it was thoroughly thought out. Still, with her short films, Fleming has shown she has talent. I look forward to her next effort.

By Randi Spires

Randi Spires is a writer who lives in Toronto and has written for Broadside, The Toronto Star, Now Magazine, Matriart and other publications. She is now researching and writing a film on the eroticization of violence in popular culture.

LISTINGS

Call for Submissions

At the Crossroads is a brand new visual, performing and literary arts journal for women artists of African descent. Arising from the virtual absence of documentation of Black Canadian women's art, and the apparent need for a cultural and political magazine encompassing a wide range of issues, ATC aims to become a creative outlet for artists here and abroad. Submissions of written and visual art are wanted. Please include bio, brief statement about the work and any other relevant information. At the Crossroads is especially interested in receiving submissions from women in the Maritimes region and writers who have not yet been published. Send to: At the Crossroads: A Journal for Women Artists of African Descent. P.O. Box 317, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S8 Canada.

Sensoria from Censorium, an international anthology of independent culture featuring diverse articles, art, interviews and contacts. If you are involved with Agit-prop actions, experimental music, cassette culture, comix, mail art, performance art, experimental writing, small press publishing, or other independent alternative activity contact: Sensoria from Censorium Box 147, Stn. J, Toronto, Ontario M4J 4X8, Canada.

Definitely Superior - Remote Control, a quarterly arts publication is 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, drawing, and photographs that will reproduce well in black and white. Send to: Remote Control c/o Definitely Superior, 12A South Court St. Box 3701, Thunder Bay, Ontario. P7B 6E3. Ph: 807-344-3814.

Native Artists & Writers: Journal of North American First Peoples invites submissions of artwork (B&W graphics only) and writing by First North American writers. En'owkin Centre, 257 Brunswick St. Penticton, B.C. V3R 2R2

Resources for Feminist Research: Accepting submissions of feminist art and illustrations. Contact: Resources for Feminist Research, OISE, 252 Bloor St. W. Toronto, Ontario.

Film/Video Canadiana: The Moving Image & Sound Archives, the National Library of Congress, the NFB, and Cinematheque Quebecois invite video makers to participate in their nation film/videography. Contact Moving Image & Sound Archives of Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ontario. K1A 0N3. Ph: Anne Marie Walling (613)996-3414.

Artist's Catalogues: PADAC has been awarded a grant to fund the publishing of approx. 60 catalogues on Canadian Artists. Catalogues may be on artists with dealers and those without. Proposals to receive support should include 6 slides indicating work to be represented in catalogue, bio and budget. For details contact: PADAC, 296 Richmond St. W. #502, Toronto, Ontario. M5V 1X2, Ph:(416) 979-1276. April Deadline.

Art in the Heart: Juried Art Show in Guelph. The theme is "Beyond the Mask", drawings, watercolours, oils, acrylics, pastels and original prints are accepted. A fee of \$20 for up to two slides applies, maximum size of the work is 38"X38". Entry deadline: Feb. 17/92. For information on submissions contact: Jofriet Studio and Art School, 105 Wyndham St. Guelph, Ontario. N1H 4E9. Ph: (519) 767-2411.

Paper Show: Please send 10-15 slides of your work, resume and artist statement to Theresa Morin, 117 Spruce St., Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. P6B 2G8. Deadline: March/92.

Taboo Newsletter provides a forum for survivors of childhood sexual abuse and supporters of survivors. Send life histories, non-fiction/fiction stories, poems, letters, comments and other written contributions to P.O. Box 381, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2S9

Forbidden Subjects: Self-Portraits by Lesbian Artists. Please send self-portrait(s) (slides or black and white photos) along with statement (1-3 pages) discussing the process and importance of making a self-portrait. Include some biographical information and an

SASE. Deadline: postmarked June 1, 1992. Mail only to Gallerie Publications, Box 2901 Panorama Drive, North Vancouver, BC, Canada V7G 2A4. Phone (604) 929-8706.

Arcadia Gallery: Located in the Arcadia Artists' Co-operative, the Gallery exhibits contemporary art, presents performances, film, lectures & readings. Emerging artists are encouraged to make submissions by sending a least 10 slides, resume & SASE. 680 Queen's Quay W., Toronto, ON M5V 2Y9.

Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto: For those interested in developing a co-op housing project. Of special interest to illustrators & graphic artists (or artists who require a small work space). For info call Gail Geltner at (416) 977-0839 & leave message

Exhibition Assistance Grants

The Women's Art Resource Centre is a third party recommender for the Ontario Arts Council's Exhibition Assistance program. Grants of up to \$1000.00 per year are made available through WARC to artists residing in Toronto, Halton, Peel, Durham, York Region, Simcoe and Muskoka. The purpose of these grants is to assist in the financing of materials, framing, crating and transportation costs for confirmed exhibitions scheduled within one year of the date of application. WARC encourages applications from Native women, women of colour and women who are currently under represented and or under-funded. Priority will be given to women artists making innovative and politically engaged work. Applications should be made directly to WARC and include: 10 clearly labelled and numbered slides of current work relevant to the proposed exhibition. Slide list: title, dimensions, media and year of each work. Artist's statement., C.V. and Budget (\$ amount requested and breakdown of costs). Letter of confirmation from the exhibition gallery. Self-addressed stamped envelope. Deadline for applications: February 3, 1992. Send all materials to: Exhibition Assistance Committee, Women's Art Resource Centre, 394 Euclid Ave. Suite 308, Toronto, Ontario. M6G 2S9 Tel: (416) 324-8910

Workshops

Black History Month: Workshops throughout the month of February with Ayanna Black, Winsom, and Nikiru Nzegwu. Call WARC for more details. (416) 324-8910.

Women At The Edge Spring of 1992, Jenny Holzer & Jana Sterbak. Ontario College of Art, (416) 977-5311 ext. 257.

Kodak Chair Lecture Series On Photography Martha Langford, curator, Friday, February 7.

Javier Vallhonrat, photographer, Friday, March 20.

Abigail Solomon-Godeau, critic, Friday, April 10.

Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Film and Photography Department, Learning Resources Centre, Room L-72, 350 Victoria Street. 7:30 pm Tel: (416) 979-5167.

Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography

The Calotype, February 8 & 9, Instructor Byron Bignell, Fee: \$85.

Cyanotype, March 1, Instructor Leonard Schlichting, Fee: \$65.

Photo Etching, March 28 & 29, Instructor April Hickox, Fee: \$90.

Van Dyke, April 5, Instructor Sally Ayre, Fee: \$70.

Portfolio and Box Making, April 11 & 12, Instructor Peter Sramek, Fee: \$85.

Infrared, May 9 & 10, Instructor Simon Glass, Fee: \$85.

Health & Safety in Photography, May 16, Instructor Ted Rickard, Fee: \$25.

For info contact Carmen Perrier at 363-5187

Exhibitions

WorkSeen

Ivonne Singer Jan 7-25

Sheila Gregory Feb 18-Mar 7

Dorrit Yacoby Apr 21-May 9

Diane Pugen May 12-30

Tel: 362-7548

A Space

Annie Sprinkle, February.

A Space Video Retrospective,

February 1- March 7

Birth Tales, March 14- April 25.

Artists For the City Collective Presents 2 group shows of Contemporary Art.

Jan 14 - 26, T. Bowen, T. Geldart, C. Lewis, D. Lingenfelter. Opening Jan 14.

Jan 28 - Feb 9, J. Adeny, A. Binder-Ouellette, S. Dhaliwal, H. Fronas, J. Gervasio, M. White.
Opening Jan 28.
Cedar Ridge Studio Gallery,
396-4026.

Tasse Geldart Solo Show, Mar 20 -
Apr 18, Hamilton Inc.

Other

The Company of Sirens
Presents "Whenever I Feel Afraid", a
performance on Domestic Violence
for high school audiences. For more
information on bookings contact:
The Company of Sirens, 296
Brunswick Ave., Suite 212, Toronto,
Ont M5S 2M7. Tel:(416) 975-9642.

The Womyn's Coffee House meet
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M5W 1N7 (416) 978-8227.

Native Women's Resource Centre of
Toronto Inc. The following is the
price list for the centre's newest
publication and newest video. All of
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Native Women's Resource Centre:
Sewn-bound Almanac \$11 ea/
Spiral-bound Almanac \$12 ea/
Wall Calendar \$11 ea. "Towards
1992" video \$25 for Native groups/
\$35 for non-native groups. The
Almanacs and Wall Calendars can
be purchased at the Toronto
Women's Bookstore and at other
similar bookstores. The videos are
only available here at the Native
Women's Resource Centre.245
Gerrard St. East, Lower Level,
Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2G1. Phone
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We welcome artwork. Send slides, black and white photos and an artist statement. Deadline for articles & artwork: 14 February 1992. Please contact our office immediately if you'd like to contribute: phone (416) 736-5356 or fax (416) 736-5700, indicating ext. 55356 on your cover sheet.

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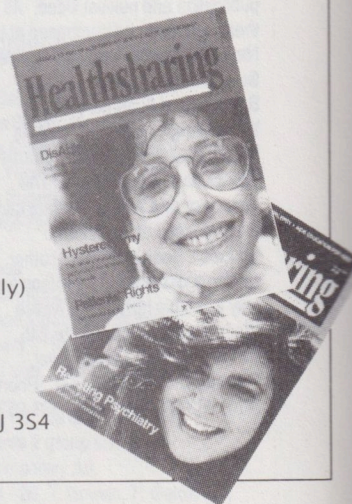
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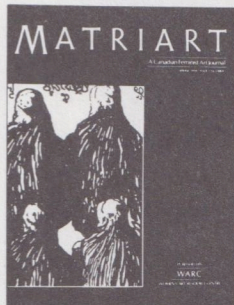
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"Beyond 1992: ..." is envisioned as a "process" exhibition which will take shape during the months leading up to October 1992. Both the actual interdisciplinary/collaborative works produced, and/or the documentation of the working process, will form the content of the exhibition to be shown concurrently at A Space and a number of other galleries and art spaces in Toronto.

The focus of the exhibition "Beyond 1992: ..." is on new beginnings, on strength and survival after 500 years of immigration and colonization on the American continent. While many events are being planned for 1992 to celebrate the claims of people of European ancestry since the arrival of Columbus in 1492, other groups would rather aim to commemorate First Nation's resistance and survival, as well as popular liberation struggles throughout the Americas.

The "Beyond 1992: ..." project is calling on artists and cultural workers to work together with people from communities and/or cultural backgrounds other than their own, and to collaborate in a number of disciplines. Submissions should be in the form of a written proposal describing a project that would involve at least two participants from distinct backgrounds. We also welcome proposals for workshops, lectures, artist talks and other events.

If you have any questions please call A Space at 364 3227.

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