

WOMEN'S  
EDUCATION  
DES FEMMES

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## WOMEN'S EDUCATION DES FEMMES

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### Editor's Note

We are now accepting poetry for publication. Please submit only previously unpublished work and include the usual SASE. Address submission to Poetry Editor, Women's Education des femmes, 47 Main Street, Toronto, Ontario, M4E 2V6.

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Special appreciation goes to Janet Patterson who served as Guest Editor of this special feature issue.

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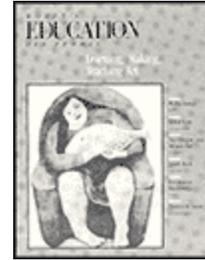


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## Cover

The cover this issue is a black and white  
reproduction of the painting Esmeralda  
and the Fish by Phyllis Serota.



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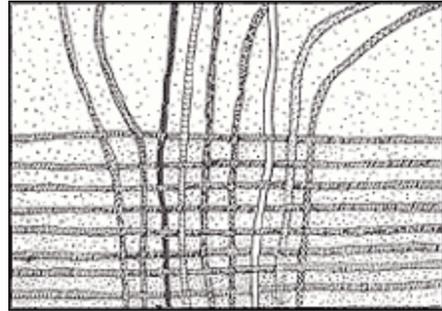
## EDITORIAL

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### *Learning from Artists* *Learning from Art*

JANET PATTERSON, GUEST EDITOR

This special issue is centered on women's experiences of the processes of learning about art and how to make it, of producing their personal voices and visions, of finding an audience, and of teaching others. While the authors comment in various ways on the opportunities and constraints they encountered in formal educational systems, they also offer important testimony about the powerful insights that emerge and the radical knowledge that we construct as we teach ourselves in the course of our own work.



Feminist artists (writers, sculptors, painters, graphic artists, musicians, architects, story tellers, film makers, dancers, actors, weavers, potters, and all the others) have used this radical knowledge, coupled with creative action, to confront social and economic discriminations based on race, class and sex within the established art systems. Over the past twenty years of the women's movement, they have produced witty and outrageous protests against bias and have forced changes in previously acceptable practices. Critics and researchers have built a large provocative body of feminist scholarship and created a new politically conscious critical discourse.

This expanding, exciting, juicy ferment is evident throughout this issue and provides a reservoir of strength for artists and non-artists alike. This strength is crucial. The article by Leona Gom explores the ongoing tension between the feminist poet and her critics and publishers; the Interview and Commentaries remind us that despite our achievements we are in a continuing struggle to dissolve discriminatory structures, practices and beliefs that still exist between societies, within societies and within ourselves.

Artists also introduce us to alternative methods of perceiving, speaking, doing, learning and knowing. Persimmon Blackbridge's sculptural installation *Doing Time* actively engages the viewer in a powerful collaborative re-visioning of institutional oppression; her article uses similar techniques to engage the reader. *Wives' Tales* show us the potential and authenticity of our mythic storytelling voice, affirming the importance of hearing each other's lives. Phyllis Serota captures the interplay between life experiences, self-direction and the fertile, ever-emerging unconscious. Judith Boël examines the emotional release and resolution of conflict that can happen as we use our individual creativity.

This use of creativity and of learning techniques drawn from art practices is a cornerstone of popular education (see "Theatre for Education, WEdf Summer 1987). Designing and leading creativity workshops have taught me about the deep learning that comes when we who are not artists allow ourselves to engage in making art. Planning and organizing this issue has been an exciting process. I found it particularly rewarding to work with and learn from the women you will meet in these pages. The other members of the Editorial Board gave valuable support and advice. Together, we've created a new adventure: Reader, I invite you to join us!

*Janet Patterson has degrees in social anthropology and has done extensive research and teaching in the area. She presently works in municipal social planning developing local cultural activities and services. She draws, paints, writes, reads, looks and listens.*

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## ÉDITORIAL

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### *Les artistes et les arts: des sources d'apprentissage*

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JANET PATTERSON, RÉDACTRICE INVITÉE

Ce numéro spécial est consacré aux expériences que les femmes vivent lorsqu'elles veulent parfaire leur culture artistique ou exécuter des oeuvres, se faire entendre ou projeter leur rêves, trouver un public ou enseigner. Les auteurs expliquent, chacune de façon différente, les occasions qui leur ont été données dans le système d'éducation et les contraintes qui leur y ont été imposées. Leurs propos témoignent aussi avec force de ce qui se produit en nous lorsque nous travaillons, tant au niveau de nos émotions profondes que des connaissances que nous accumulons.

Les artistes féministes (écrivains, sculpteurs, peintres, graphistes, musiciennes, architectes, conteuses, réalisatrices, danseuses, actrices, tisseuses, potières et toutes les autres) se sont appuyées sur ces connaissances et les ont conjuguées à leur force créatrice pour affronter les discriminations sociales et économiques, sévissant dans les milieux artistiques établis, selon la race, le sexe ou la classe sociale auquel l'intéressé appartient. Depuis une vingtaine d'années, les femmes se sont insurgées avec humour et férocité contre ces partis pris; grâce à elles des pratiques acceptables dans le passé ont disparu. Les critiques et les chercheuses ont formé un vaste groupe aux idées

provocatrices qui remet en question l'art tel qu'il était envisagé dans le passé et tient un discours critique empreint d'une nouvelle conscience politique. Cet effervescence d'idées, excitantes et riches, est évidente dans tout le numéro et donne aux artistes et aux autres un réservoir où puiser des forces.

Cette force est cruciale. L'article de Leona Gom analyse la tension continue existant entre une poétesse, ses critiques et ses éditeurs. L'entrevue et les commentaires nous rappellent, qu'en dépit de nos succès, nous luttons constamment pour faire tomber les structures, pratiques et croyances discriminatoires qui continuent à exister dans les sociétés, entre sociétés et en nous-mêmes.

Des artistes nous présentent aussi des méthodes de recharge pour percevoir, nous exprimer, accomplir, apprendre et connaître. La sculpture **Doing Time** de Persimmon Blackbridge nous force à réviser en profondeur l'atmosphère d'oppression qui règne dans les prisons. Elle se sert des mêmes méthodes dans son article pour pousser les lectrices à une remise en question. Nan Gregory et Melanie Ray nous montre le potentiel et l'authenticité de notre voix mythique lorsqu'on raconte des contes et insiste sur l'importance qu'il a à être à l'écoute de la vie des autres. Phyllis Serota a saisi l'interaction existant entre le vécu, l'autorisation et l'inconscient, très riche et faisant toujours surface. Judith Boël analyse le soulagement que l'on éprouve et le règlement de conflit qui peut se produire lorsqu'on fait appel à notre créativité individuelle.

Les méthodes que nous livre l'art à propos de la créativité et de l'apprentissage sont la pierre de touche de l'éducation populaire (consulter "Le théâtre: un outil éducatif, WEdf, Été 1987). Le fait de concevoir et de diriger des ateliers sur la créativité m'a appris que lorsque nous, les non artistes, nous nous mettons à créer des oeuvres, nous apprenons énormément. J'ai trouvé un immense plaisir à planifier et à organiser ce numéro. J'ai particulièrement apprécié de travailler avec les femmes que vous rencontrerez au fil des pages du magazine. Elles m'ont tellement appris. Les membres du Comité de rédaction ont apporté leur appui et ont donné des conseils. Ensemble, nous nous sommes lancées dans une nouvelle aventure. Chères lectrices, je vous invite à vous joindre à nous!

*Janet Patterson est diplômée en anthropologie sociale discipline dans laquelle elle a fait beaucoup de recherches et qu'elle a enseigné. Elle travaille à l'heure actuelle dans le domaine de la planification sociale au niveau municipal. Elle met sur pied des activités et des services culturels, Elle aime dessiner, peindre, écrire, lire, regarder et écouter,*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Dear **Women's Education des femmes:**

I am writing regarding your recent article entitled "The Privatization of Training, Women Pay the Cost" [vol.6, no.1].

The authors of the article imply that government directed purchase of training courses would pursue equity goals more persistently, and give more women the opportunity to learn the skills necessary for a well-paid job, than would a system where employers make the training decisions.

The question is which method holds greater promise of success: the one where the government makes the training decisions hoping that the private sector will hire those that have been trained, that is, hire more women because more women have been trained; or, the Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS) approach where the employer is encouraged, with the help of government funding, to train people, and train them for jobs to which they may already be linked through work experience on the job. Government funding in this case works as an incentive to produce job linkages for women; government is able to pursue equity goals much closer to real employment than is possible by the other route. In fact, the Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC) direct purchase route has been showing employment success rates that have put in doubt that non-traditional training in this form works well for women, as long as employers display the attitudes you describe. Whereas through the direct purchase route, 64.4% of participants were employed or in further training three months after completion, that rate stands at 70.3% for Job Development, 91.2% for Skill Investment's small business option and 89.8% for Skill Shortages' work-based element.

It is true that there has been a realignment of training resources. By the end of 1988-89, an amount equivalent to 40% (not 50% stated in the article) of the 1985-86 training budget will have been made available for indirect purchases. This reduction has been phased in gradually, over several years, to provide stability to public institutions while they adjust to the change. By adapting their curricula to employer training needs, many colleges have been able to gain access to the indirect purchase funding.

I am the first to agree, however, that the Strategy is not perfect and that we encountered certain difficulties at the start. Ms. Dance and Ms. Witter are correct in stating that a substantial lapse occurred at the end of the first six months of operation, but this was to be expected, given that we were introducing a substantially different approach from past programs.

Our data with respect to women training in non-traditional occupations is as follows: for 1986-87, 20% through Job Development, 13% for Job Entry, 39% under Skill Shortages and 22% for Skill Investment. I agree that efforts in this area must continue, but that they be directed to the occupations in demand. It makes no sense to train women for jobs that are not there, simply because they are non-traditional. This is why we cannot disregard the training of women in areas of demand even though they are traditional to women.

Only a slight rise in women's participation has occurred under Skill Shortages since its introduction. We therefore undertook to help women enter the program in demand occupations traditionally held by men. The proportion of women in apprenticeship is still unacceptably low. We have shared this concern with the provinces and are hopeful that corrective efforts will lead to improvements. In addition to this, CLOW is one of the groups that answered our call for innovative bridging projects for women with a project called "Women Interested in Successful Employment" [in Newfoundland]. The Canadian Construction Association, is developing an employment equity plan through Innovations Program funding. The Equal Opportunity Division of Toronto's Management Services Department is working on a program to help women enter non-traditional fields with CJS funding.

I agree there is still much to be done. We all must continue seeking change to entrenched attitudes and to end women's occupational segregation, whether we be government, employers, advocacy groups, educators or labour. I can only hope that collective effort will bring about real improvements in terms of equality for women in the labour market.

**Peter Hicks**  
**Executive Director**  
**Canadian Jobs Strategy**

[This letter has been edited for length.]

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# Touching Beauty

PHYLLIS SEROTA

## Une beauté émouvante par Phyllis Serota

En rédigeant cet article, je me suis rendu compte que la peinture m'apprend bien des choses selon des modes très variés.

Depuis que j'ai quitté l'école, je me suis cultivée en étudiant des oeuvres artistiques que j'admire, en lisant et en partant à la conquête de tâches que je me fixe. C'est de cette façon que j'ai appris à analyser les couleurs.

J'ai aussi appris à approfondir mon vécu et mes sentiments. August 1968 a pour sujet une nuit de protestation à Chicago. La violence des forces de l'ordre se déchaîna et un journaliste fut battu sur le capot de notre voiture. En peignant cette scène, j'ai réussi à comprendre la peur et la colère sourde que j'avais éprouvées ce soir là.

Aunt Molly est un tableau de la série s'intitulant Family Series qui m'a permis de replonger aux sources spirituelles de ma famille qui est juive. Je respectais et aimais tendrement ma tante Molly et je voulais transmettre la joie qui émanait d'elle lorsqu'elle dansait. J'ai découvert que je pouvais faire passer des sentiments très forts dans mes toiles.

Esmeralda and the Fish a été choisi pour la couverture de ce numéro. Le poisson est symbole de l'inconscient. La femme qui tient un poisson représente le lien intime qui m'unit à ma propre créativité. Quel luxe d'être en contact avec quelque chose d'aussi beau!

When I was asked to write an article about how I learn as a painter, I thought: OK, I'll tell the story of how I studied colour and some stuff about being in art school and that will be that. What surprised me about this process was that it brought up the question of what learning is and what I am actually learning when I am painting.

The ideas that initially surfaced in the process of writing the article all seemed to be connected with the formal aspects of painting, i.e. how I learned about colour, line, composition -- in



Self-portrait

other words, how I learned to make a product and make it something that works in its strongest sense. This realization awakened in me the protest that this was not enough! I wanted my work to bring me a more profound learning. I wanted it to teach me something and when I first thought about writing this article, I felt that it hadn't; that what I had been so busy studying had only helped me to be able to communicate a particular feeling, a particular time and a particular sense of light and colour or visual impact. But I have since realized that I have learned much more profoundly and in a variety of ways.

As far as my formal education is concerned, being in art school was an opportunity to concentrate on painting, thinking visually, and making visual images. I had four years just to concentrate on these things, rather than working full time or raising my kids. That, in my opinion, is the main function of art school.

That and coming to the realization that I do have the right to be an artist. I remember the moment I was painting in the large room that served as the painters' studio when the thought occurred to me that because I was a woman I couldn't be an artist. It was an important moment for me and one that many women artists share. This realization was the beginning of changing my consciousness.



A lot of my learning since leaving art school has come through intensely studying other artists' work. By doing this I've learned how to paint like they do, and I guess that's all come together and amalgamated into my own work. I've gone through periods when my work looks like John Paul Lamieux's or Chagall's or that of other artists I have admired.

The most intensive study for me was investigating colour. I was not taught colour at art school, but I felt that I had an innate colour sense, which is what I think everyone believes until they learn better. Once I went to a theatrical production and realized there was something happening with the - lights and colour that I didn't understand. A system was at work.

Very soon after that, I came across a book called The Art of Colour by Johannes Itten. It was a reference book, and the librarian kindly allowed me to take it out for just three days. That limited time turned out to be a very good thing because I forced myself to really study the book and write down the important points.

Over the next year, I set a schedule for myself. I tried out all of the combinations on the colour wheel that are considered harmonious. I set limits on subject matter in order to do this, using the same or similar black and white photographs in all the studies. I wasn't concerned about content but wanted to learn to use colour in new and more beautiful ways.

It worked! It was the most intensive study I had ever done, and it taught me that I could learn something from books on my own. I also learned a great deal from that experience about the emotional values of colour and most importantly, how to analyze. When I look at nature or other artists' work now, I know what colours I am seeing and I can understand by naming them aloud what particular combinations on the colour wheel they represent. Analyzing colour, in this way, led me to be able to analyze other aspects of art.

What I have come to realize since beginning this article is that I have indeed learned and grown in other ways through my work. One of them has been learning about myself.

Mostly I've done that by examining my past. The painting I did of the Chicago convention titled August, 1968 comes out of a traumatic experience in my life which became my reason for leaving the United States.

My then husband and I and some other friends had gone to Lincoln park in Chicago to be part of a huge group of people protesting the nomination of Hubert Humphrey. He was a candidate who had not taken a strong enough stand against our participation in Vietnam.

This was the first night and the Chicago police went on a rampage. People were tear-gassed and beaten just for congregating in the park and the culmination of the evening was that a reporter was beaten on the hood of our car. I was terrified and went down to the floor. Afterwards we took the bleeding man to a nearby hospital and later were called on to testify against the police department.

It was in 1984 that I decided to paint that experience. I had just found photographs of the incident that I had not known existed or that I had with me. I totally immersed myself in what had happened; it was a very emotional experience. I cried a great deal which helped me to get through a sort of catharsis. But painting the experience diffused the feelings so that I could understand them and put them into some sort of context in my life.

I later did a series of large paintings called The Family Series, in which I painted twelve scenes of from my childhood. I had grown up in a very large Jewish family in Chicago, and after being away for many years, I found that I missed some of these people very much. I painted them to keep me company here in Canada. The series evolved into paintings of archetypal figures with emphasis on light and shadow. Because light is so connected with spirituality, painting the series led me to reconsider my spiritual roots, and eventually led me into a more intense involvement with the Jewish community here in Victoria.



The Aunt Molly painting comes from that series. When I painted her, someone I respected and loved, I was very clearly feeling the ecstasy of her dance. By experiencing that while painting, I was able to communicate it strongly. That experience taught me a really valuable lesson: if I feel something strongly while painting, the feeling will be communicated. There is magic in that!

The major lesson and perhaps the most difficult for all artists, visual or otherwise, seems to be how to work with the creative process: how to access the unconscious and not get too upset when that access doesn't happen. I have been through many periods of time when I have lost my way and have been without relevant ideas or images. These are trying times when the best thing to do is relax and gather new ideas. Learning to do this has been extremely difficult for me, and it's an ongoing learning experience.

I have also learned through painting who I am as a human being: what my strengths are and what my weaknesses are; how I drive myself and how I don't; how I become a performer when I need to and a saleswoman when I need to; and how all these sides are interrelated. No other work I have ever done has allowed me this kind of exploration.

For me, learning and teaching are two sides of the same coin. What am I interested in teaching my students? Sure: everything I have talked about in the article and whatever else I'm sparked by. But the major lesson for them to learn is that they can make their own lives, their own futures. I was a housewife with kids who started out painting with a paint-by-numbers set. In the years to follow, painting was a way for me to forget the difficulties that developed in my marriage and a place to escape to away from these problems. I got very good at it.

Through all the changes that happened after 1968 -- coming to Canada, leaving my husband, having to earn a living -- I continued to paint. During that time I worked part-time, painted part-time and went back to art school, but I never envisioned that I could actually earn my living as an artist. Finally a friend suggested to me that I choose what I wanted, that I say to something "yes, this is what I want to be," and it would happen. And it did!

I really want my students to know that. If they're working for the government or cooking in an old people's home and have just picked up a paintbrush for the first time, and painting becomes something that is important to them -- something that gives them joy and the ability to work out life's problems -- I want them to know that it's an interesting and wonderful life and they can do it!

The painting reproduced on the cover of this magazine is called Esmeralda and the Fish and I connect it with another kind of learning that can come through a painting. I've painted many fish before but they were always on plates or in fish stores and no one ever physically touched them. That idea began the Esmeralda Series. In it the fish took on a new dimension, that of the unconscious. The image of a woman holding a fish represents an intimate connection to my own creativity. Really touching the deepest part of myself brings me a sense of comfort. It is a great luxury to be able to sit in that chair and touch something so beautiful.

***Phyllis Serota is a painter living in Victoria, B.C. She graduated with a B.F.A in visual art in 1979 from the University of Victoria. She has shown extensively in Victoria and in Vancouver, Island and in Vancour, Edmonton and Saskatoon. She is represented in collections through Canada and the United States.***

## Writing a "Feminist Tract"

LEONA GOM

### En écrivant un "tract féministe" par Leona Gom

Fin des années soixante. University of Alberta Edmonton. J'y découvrais un établissement d'enseignement et des programmes totalement masculins. Ce n'est que pendant mes études post-universitaires qu'on nous parla du féminisme et du livre de Kate Millet Sexual Politics.

Les éditeurs ne s'intéressaient pas à mes écrits féministes. En revanche, mes origines campagnardes les séduisaient. Land of Peace (auquel une association d'écrivains canadiens décerna un prix en 1980) et Northbound s'inspirent exclusivement de ce milieu. Private Properties recèle d'évidentes allusions féministes. D'ailleurs, à sa sortie, la critique, comme on aurait pu le prévoir, s'empressa de baptiser le livre "tract féministe". Mais, à l'heure actuelle, de plus en plus de femmes se consacrent à la critique littéraire et on compte de nombreuses auteurs brillantes, pleines de confiance que l'on pourrait difficilement taxer d'avoir une voix "aiguë" et "stridente".

J'écris aujourd'hui des romans, entreprise complètement différente que celle de composer des vers. Mon premier roman, Housebroken (1986, NeWest Press), a remporté le prix Ethel Wilson dans la catégorie fiction. Je me suis attelée à un deuxième roman dont la rédaction s'avère beaucoup plus difficile.

Le trimestre que je viens de passer à l'université de l'Alberta a été enrichissant et a confirmé ce que je pensais: il fait bon vivre en Alberta.

My first publications began when I was about ten years old in a wonderful children's section of The Western Producer, a Saskatoon farm newspaper. Aimed at giving isolated farm children the opportunity to write and to belong to a writers' club, it gave me my first taste of sharing my work with a supportive audience, and I published well over a hundred poems, stories and articles there. What I see now contributed so much to the success of this "Young Co-operators Page," as it was called, was that all contributors had to use pen-names. This anonymity insulated us to a large extent not only against our own egos but, more importantly, against assumptions based on a writer's sex. When I began publishing in a professional way, I realized that the sex of the writer is all too important.



Leona Gom

At the University of Alberta in Edmonton, where I encountered for the first time at age 18 such things as telephones and flush toilets, I encountered also the absolute maleness of the institution and its curriculum. Let me give just a few examples.

The women's residence was laden with repressive curfews and behavior codes, the breaking of which resulted in "grounding" on weekends or expulsion from the university. The men's residence had no such rules.

Of the more than 30 courses I took, from 1964 to 1972, only one was taught by a woman.

A professor in Educational Psychology (I took a B.Ed. program because the idea of education as anything but a means to an end seemed an impossible and expensive luxury for someone with my background) told us that he was well aware that the women in his class were there only to find a husband, not really to learn anything. But he expected us to "try" to do the work anyway.

So it became clear that women were not exactly welcomed as equal participants in the academic work. Still, I think of my university years as wonderful, rich and exciting, and perhaps it's only in retrospect that I can see the oppressiveness of those first few years. In graduate school I first heard the word "feminism," and first read Kate Millet's Sexual Politics, a book that changed my life with its analysis that named so perfectly my own experience and that of the "flawed" women in the literature I was studying.

In my own writing, however, I was beginning to see that the feminism that was increasingly interesting me was not what interested the publishers and reviewers. What they did seem to approve of was writing that dealt with my rural background, my growing up on an isolated farm 500 miles north of Edmonton. Since I'd spent many years at the University of Alberta embarrassed about this primitive background, it was exciting to discover that other people would actually find such a childhood interesting. In my third and fourth books, Land of the Peace (which won the Canadian Authors' Association award for best book of poetry in 1980) and North (both from Thistledown Press), I dealt exclusively with that background and with the pioneering experience in Alberta.

To people in the east, such experiences were already several generations removed and I suppose my narrative poems about farming with horses, about the poverty and isolation and extreme cold, and about my own struggles to leave, satisfied their ideas of what Alberta was all about -- a frontier. I guess I began to see, too, how quickly that way of life was vanishing. As the first settlers, my parents' generation, began to die, I thought I had an obligation to document that history, which is really what Land of the Peace and Northbound do.

What those books don't do, however, is include my specifically feminist poetry, because I was quite sure, from my earlier experiences, that it would "endanger" the books in the eyes of the critics. If I slipped in a feminist poem here or there (such as "Mother with Child," reprinted here), I made sure it was not a "threatening" feminist poem. I think

Northbound is probably the best book I've written, but I still feel uncomfortable with the way I edited and censored myself, although I believe, too, that a more overtly feminist tone would have meant less positive reviews.

Of such silencing and compromises I know many women writers have spoken. My last poetry book, Private Properties, is explicitly feminist ("Aprons" is from that collection), and, sure enough, there followed a predictable frothing review calling it a "feminist tract". The other reviews were reasonably positive, but it only takes one such attack to shake a writer's confidence.

Of course writers are supposed to ignore such critics and go on writing what they must, but that's impossible. I don't know of any writer who is impervious to them. I've read a great number of reviews over the years, and the attacks on women are outrageous. It isn't women per se who are attacked, only feminist women -- it seems to me that women's books are much more likely than men's to be judged on content instead of style and technique, and if that content is feminist the critic is much more likely to be hostile. Once I began clipping such vicious reviews for a talk on women's writing I was to give, and I was appalled at how many I found and how easily, and how vindictive and destructive they really were.

But the good news is that more **women** are doing reviews, and while that doesn't guarantee a favourable or a feminist perspective, it does even the odds a bit. Some of the best new poets in Canada now are strong feminists, and it's not as easy to dismiss these brilliant and confident women as "shrill" or "strident" or "boring" or "propagandistic".

## Aprons

are uniforms, we use them the way soldiers would, identity, excuses, maybe mostly as camouflage, to blend us like wallpaper into our kitchens. when we work, tools, weapons (sometimes we forget the difference) fit our hands like fingers. we are patriots, will see the last child evacuated safely to adolescence. we have the patience of light stored in stone.

some of us wait too long, will say we feel undressed without aprons, soldiers who wear their uniforms on the streets, never want to go back to civvies,

but then there are the others, those of us who take off our aprons and move among men like ordinary people. we are not innocents, we know what happens when someone gives us a recipe with ingredients missing, how to get out stains before they set into our personalities.

we have taken off our aprons, but our hands are full of memories. sometimes they twist on our laps, it is dangerous to ignore such need. they will close around whatever is put into them. be careful what you give us.

Reprinted from Private Properties (Sono Nis Press, 1986)

## Mother With Child

She rocks the jar of cream  
in her lap  
like a cranky child,  
tries to lull it  
to some expected form,  
as I see myself  
rocked so often  
on that tired lap.  
Finally, late at night,  
the cream thickens, clots,  
she pours off the buttermilk,  
gives me a glass.  
**Thank God that's done**, she says,  
and goes to bed.  
I watch the pale hill of butter,  
wonder if my own  
murky childhood's end  
met with such relief,  
a sudden falling together  
into one shape,  
no more weary rocking, rocking  
late into the night.

Reprinted from Northbound (Thistledown Press, 1984)

In the League of Canadian poets, I was founding member of the Feminist Caucus about ten years ago, and although I still wince when I think of the abuse we had to take, it does mean that now feminist women no longer feel like oddballs in the organization. In the publishing world, too, women are more visible than they used to be. When I was editor of Event, a literary magazine, a post I held for 10 years and resigned from in 1985, I remember noticing one year that among the fifty or so literaries in the country only two or three were edited by women. The situation is better now, although we're still far from fifty per cent.

In terms of my own writing, I find that after five books of poetry I'm turning now to novels, and I haven't written a new poem in years. I know a number of poets who are doing this-- maybe as we get older we lose interest in that lyrical intensity that lends itself to the poem. But of course it's impossible to generalize about other writers. For me, I find the novel a happy change and my first one (Housebroken, from Newest Press) has been quite successful. Prose requires a

completely different kind of discipline, though, a different kind of commitment. If a poem doesn't work, well, that's one piece of paper you can toss away; if a novel doesn't work, that's years of work, hundreds of pages to scrap. My second novel is proving much harder to write than my first, which surprises me, but I guess my expectations of it are much higher. It's distressing, too, to discover that practically none of "the tricks" of the first carry over -- the new novel is an entirely new beast and needs entirely different treatment.

Right now I keep trying to juggle my writing with a wage-earning job (teaching at Kwantlen College in Surrey, B.C.); like most writers I find it impossible to survive purely on income for writing. I have enjoyed this past year as writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta, my old alma mater, and it has reaffirmed to me that Alberta is a good place to be.

***Leona Gom, is the author of five books of poetry, one of which won the 1980 Canadian Authors Association Award for best poetry book of the year. Her first novel, Housebroken (1986, Newest press) won the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize. She has just completed a term as writer in residence at the University of Alberta.***

Housebroken (excerpt)

"One for me and one for you. Merry Christmas. "

"Oh, Susan, I don't think I -- I've never smoked any before. I don't know how."

"Well, good grief, then it's about time." She lit up one, inhaled deeply, and handed it to me, saying in a strange voice, "It's just like an ordinary cigarette. Inhale and then hold it.

" I did my best, feeling absurd, remembering the faces in the **Woodstock** movie, how this is what they were doing. The smoke was harsh and bitter in my lungs, and I coughed it out. I had never learned to properly smoke a regular cigarette before. I remembered an alarming film called **Reefer Madness** we saw in Guidance class in high school, but years later I saw students at the university were watching it as a joke. I hoped it was. Susan was lighting the second cigarette.

"What are you supposed to feel?" I asked nervously.

"You probably won't notice anything. You'd need more than these. It just relaxes you. And makes you want to fuck trees."

"Oh, wonderful."

But she was right. Not about the trees, but about not feeling anything. A vague dizziness, perhaps, but nothing more. It was quite disappointing. I couldn't imagine tossing people in jail for this. I've felt more intoxicated cleaning my oven.

Reprinted from Housebroken (NeWest Press, 1986)

# *In the Beginning was the Story*

NAN GREGORY AND MELANIE RAY

## **Au début était l'histoire** par Nan Gregory et Melanie Ray

Depuis quatre ans, deux femmes racontent ensemble des histoires dans les écoles, les musées, les galeries de peinture, les salles de concert. En fait, chaque fois que l'occasion se présente.

**Nan:** A trente-six ans, mère célibataire, je décidais de retourner à l'université pour faire des études d'art dramatique.

**Melanie:** Ma seule formation se limitait aux ateliers d'art dramatique et de lecture d'histoires auxquels je participais depuis une vingtaine d'années.

**Nan:** Raconter des histoires représente pour moi la combinaison parfaite: je joue des rôles et je suis indépendante. Je choisis mon matériel, je ne suis pas obligée d'auditionner pour des pièces médiocres et mon aspect extérieur importe peu. À mon avis, l'artiste exerce une profession de haut calibre puisqu'il ou elle ne peut travailler sans faire appel à son imagination. Mes histoires donnent aux gens un sentiment de bien-être et leur font comprendre que l'humanité forme une grande famille.

**Melanie:** Les histoires stimulent l'imagination contrairement aux autres divertissements préfabriqués de notre époque.

**Nan:** Nous enseignons l'art de raconter des histoires à des conseillers matrimoniaux, des psychologues, des grands-mères, des professeurs et des écrivains.

**Melanie:** L'art qui consiste à raconter des histoires est humain. Il séduit les gens qui ont un grand cœur et qui sont tournés vers les autres.

Wives' Tales Story Tellers is a partnership of two women who have been telling stories together for almost four years. They began working on a Canada Council Grant, telling stories to old people in hospitals and homes. Since that time they have been telling stories in schools, museums, art galleries at concerts and at celebrations of all sorts.

**In the beginning there was nothing and no one except Eurynome. Eurynome was a dancer and a dancer needs a place to tap her pretty feet, so Eurynome split the sky from the sea and danced naked on the surface of the waves.**

**NAN:** When I was thirty-six years old I was a single parent living alone in Kitsilano, in



Melanie Ray and Nan Gregory

Vancouver. I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. I had recently enjoyed putting together a skit for the Peace March, and I had a bit of money saved, so I went back to university to study theatre. I got my degree before the Bachelor of Fine Arts program was instituted, so my training was limited by the academic nature of the degree. I loved being back at school: the world was so small and comfortable, the goals so well defined, success measured by numbers on a report card. I always got good roles to play. It was a bit of a shock to find that the real world was not the same, that parts came hard, and seldom, and the plays one auditioned for were often mindless and depressing. I spent a year working in a second hand store, trying not to think that I had wasted my time going back to university.

**MELANIE:** The only training I have had in either theatre or storytelling has been in the form of workshops in which I have participated over the last twenty years. In that time I have been busy raising a child and acting in plays when I could, until 1984, when I began storytelling full-time. And storytelling makes use of everything I learned in those workshops. Like doing a lot of research on a character or a story, or the background to the story. Using my body and my voice to reinforce what I want to convey to the audience. Timing. The importance of warm-ups, and relaxation. The necessity for concentration, and connecting with the audience.

**Now the North Wind is a very fertile wind. You can ask any farmer how his mares like to stand out in the field with their backs to the North Wind and when it blows over their big buttocks they grow great with child even when no stallion is anywhere around.**

**NAN:** When Melanie first asked me to join her in a storytelling venture, I was very hesitant. It wasn't acting and I wanted to act. On the other hand, it was better than mending old clothes, so I agreed. Now I see storytelling as the perfect combination of performing and working for myself. I can choose my own material. I don't have to audition for plays I don't like. It doesn't matter what I look like.

I use all the skills I learned in university in my storytelling. My theatrical training helps me immensely. Mind you, I am learning all the time, mostly from watching other tellers. If I see something I like, I analyze it and try to incorporate it into my own work. I attend workshops so that I will push myself to explore new ways of telling. I don't consider any single person to be the perfect teller, but I learn a little from everyone.

**MELANIE:** Having a partner is a great way to learn. Nan has taught me to be more critical of my work, to have more sensitivity to the rhythms in a piece, and to analyze more carefully. I also learn by watching people whose work I admire.

**NAN:** In my personal hierarchy of occupations I have always considered the artist to be in the highest position. I have always considered it admirable to work in the imagination. Scientists do that, too. But scientific research can be used to make bombs. An artist can push and push and push the boundaries of her art and know it will still remain benign. I try to tell stories that make people feel good about themselves and one another that expand their awareness of all humanity as one family.

**Knowing this, it won't surprise you to  
learn that, dancing in Ophion's embrace,  
Eurynome conceived a child.**

**MELANIE:** Storytelling is a beautiful teaching tool. Listen to a half-hour of tales and you are bound to hear at least one that helps you understand how another being thinks or feels. Or one that gives you another perspective on an important issue in your life. Or one that reminds you of principles, or ideals that you hold dear, or at least want to hold dear. And the stories do this so simply, with laughter, tears, and strong imagery. They lead you gently to some truth concerning the human condition.

They also exercise your imagination. A listener is actively engaged in a story, recreating in her mind's eye the scenes the teller is putting in words, the actions, the feelings and thoughts of the characters. So often, the pre-fabricated imagery of our modern entertainment demands no effort on our part; our imaginations grow weak and limited in their ability.

**NAN:** Melanie and I teach storytelling to both adults and children. In our adult classes we have taught theology students, marriage counsellors, psychologists, grandmothers, teachers, writers, librarians. Stories are useful in all walks of life. We try to make people comfortable with the idea of themselves as tellers.

**The moment she felt that life inside her, Eurynome tamed into a dove, and she flew and she flew and she flew through the dark night with Ophion at her side, until she came to term.**

**MELANIE:** I definitely feel like a member of more than one group thanks to my work. A group of two first off. Nan and I have now got very intertwined lives. At one point it looked like her husband might get a great job in Victoria and we were trying to imagine how we would cope -- would I move my family with hers to Victoria? Or would I commute? Or would he? We try to consult each other on decisions of importance. We both sometimes feel hampered by the presence of the other. We have to pay attention to dynamics between us.

There are also the "group" of Wives' Tales, the larger group of our two families, and the loosely-knit group of storytellers and listeners. I feel connected not only to the people I know here through telling, but also to those in Prince George, Toronto, Seattle, and elsewhere. I belong to the Vancouver Storytelling Circle and I care about its continued vitality. Partly this is self-interest because I know it's a good way to build my audience, but a lot of it has to do with enjoying the people who enjoy storytelling.

**NAN:** Storytellers are mostly very nice people. I feel very much at home in the community of tellers, in a way that I never felt among actors. It is important to me to feel that I am a member of a group -- even a group of people whose interests are otherwise as diverse as storytellers.

**Then Eurynome laid a gigantic silver egg on the surface of the waters, and she said to Ophion, "You keep this warm." Ophion wrapped himself seven times around the egg and held it close until it hatched.**

**MELANIE:** Our audience is multi-faceted. Their ages range from children in their first school years to seniors in homes. I like to think they are people who look for more in life than the surface glitz the media say we want. People who like the sound of the language as well as the sense. Jolly people. People with feelings they like to know about. It is a very humane art and I believe it attracts people with large and questing hearts

**NAN:** My personal relationship with my audience is almost always very warm. I feel delighted when I know I have pleased an audience. I'm very fond of them. And more than once, a person in an audience has been a lifeline for me. The first time I told a story I'd written myself, I felt like a swimmer in the middle of a lake making for a shore I couldn't see -- the end of the story. The audience was small and scattered, and it was hard to gauge their reactions. But one little girl near the front was following every word, and the light in her eyes, the concern and pleasure alternating in her face, gave me the confidence to go on. Whenever I felt panic, I'd look at her. So you see, it can be a very intense relationship.

**When the egg broke open the sun and the moon and the stars come whirling out, and the glorious Earth herself, and the Earth was already perfect, clothed in growing green, and all the creatures that crawl and swim and fly and run and love were already living there, in harmony.**

**MELANIE:** We manage to make a very modest living as storytellers. And I am profoundly grateful to the universe that this is so. But I am also very tired of it being so very modest a living!

**NAN:** Everything seems to cost so much these days! But the work is growing, and we are getting better, and better known. Sometimes I worry about money. I say to myself. "Here I am, I am so and so old, I earn only such and such, I'm not famous, blah, blah, blah." But you see, I enjoy my work. Sometimes I sit back and think how lucky I am to be an artist -- the thing I have always wanted to be. My life is very good.

**In the beginning there was nothing and no one but Eurynome.**

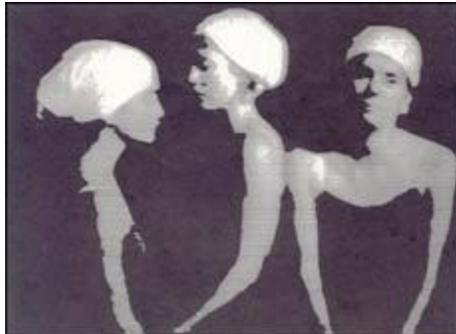
The quotes for **Eurynome** are from a story written by Nan Gregory based on a Greek legend.

*Nan Gregory heard her first stories from her father at bedtime. She is the mother of One and the Wife of another, and her favourite place in the world is Moresby Island.*

*Melanie Ray, has told stories since she and her sister were little and in bed too early to sleep. She lives in Vancouver with her teenaged daughter in co-op not far from the beach.*

## Women In Focus

INTERVIEWED BY GAEL McCOOL



Still from **Wallflower Order**, by Marion Barling

### **Women In Focus** par Gael McCool

Women in Focus par Gael McCool Women In Focus (WIF) est l'un des trois centres d'art à but non lucratif qui, au Canada, se consacre aux oeuvres que créent les femmes pour le cinéma, la vidéo et les arts visuels. Ce centre, fondé à Vancouver en 1974, compte plus de 200 membres dans tout le pays. Marion Barling en est la fondatrice, Sharon Costello en a assuré la présidence dans le passé et Sue Donaldson s'occupe actuellement de sa gestion.

WIF a été fondé pour donner une autre image des femmes, pour mettre en somme celles-ci sur l'avant-scène. En 1977, WIF est devenu une société à but non lucratif. Depuis, celle-ci ne se contente pas de produire et de distribuer des films et des bandes réalisées par des femmes, elle a accepté des oeuvres du monde entier. Dans ses bâtiments, elle abrite aussi une galerie de belle envergure où sont organisées par la conservatrice des expositions d'artistes connues et pour lesquelles on publie un catalogue.

WIF a dépassé la vision de sa fondatrice. Aujourd'hui, l'objectif est d'aider femmes et hommes à trouver et à exprimer une esthétique féministe.

Women In Focus is one of three non-profit feminist arts centre in Canada devoted to women's cultural production in the film, video, and visual arts disciplines. Based in Vancouver since its founding in 1974, WIF has over 200 members across Canada.

To obtain information about origins and operation of WIF I spoke with Marion Barling, the founder of WIF; Sharon Costello, past president; and Sue Donaldson, current administrator. All three women were generous with their time and information but the limits of space permit only a small sampling of the material covered in the interviews. To obtain more in depth information about the film and video collection, educational events, exhibitions, and screenings contact the WIF office at #204-456 W. Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1R3

**GAEL: Why did you start WIF?**

**MARION:** Essentially, I wanted to provide alternative images of women. In 1974 I was working on my MA at the University of British Columbia in Theatre and Film and I was very much at odds to know where to find images that reflected my own life as I knew it. There were no materials available. You were lucky to see one women in a hundred artists whose work was even represented in any collection. There were no tapes available on women artists, there were no books that represented women's contribution to the arts.

I wanted to see a women's aesthetic established: see a women's sensibility represented, understand what it is and what work comes out of it when you view the world through it. My general vision was to literally put women in focus.

In many ways the arts were the last to come to terms with sexism. There was a denial of sex as an issue in how the world was viewed, presented and controlled. In those days you were not a woman artist, you were an artist. Artists were not male or female. The fact that it was considered offensive or verboten to think of oneself as a woman artist says a lot.

There were new areas of aesthetic as well as social concern opening up for women and we had a huge amount of energy but no skills bank or financial resources to draw upon. I wanted to start a film and video production centre, so I got a group of women together and applied for funding. There were basically only two sources to draw upon: the Secretary of State Women's Program, and the Canadian Council.

The Secretary of State funds social issues not art, and the mandate of the Canada Council is to fund art not social issues. Eventually however we did receive a small amount of project funding and started working on productions.

**GAEL: What Type of productions were initially encouraged by WIF?**

**SUE:** At that point, in the first flush of the women's movement, there was a lot of work in issue-oriented productions. It was called deconstruction and it had to do with breaking down media images of women into their component parts and pointing out the sexism. We

were beginning to look at the things going on around us, what they meant to women, how women were being portrayed, and how we felt about that. There were close to 50 productions between 1974 and 1978 about these issues. Pornography, media images of women, alcoholism, transition houses, etc., were incorporated by women artists into their own background and experience and translated into their artwork. A lot of these were poorly produced technically, but they were very important in establishing a groundwork of personal and political art.

**GAEL: WIF expanded quite rapidly from being solely a production centre. When did the other facets of the organization develop?**

**MARION:** The distribution side of WIF was unavoidable because there were no other outlets established for our produced material. Distribution had the seed to become income-generating, but it required additional resources. In 1978 we held a Women's National Film and Video Festival in a community centre. We wanted to create an art environment so we displayed two and three dimensional works by women artists. We became acquainted with women visual artists who needed gallery space so we initiated discussion about providing a display area in the centre. We cleared a small room and started holding monthly shows. This provided a venue for women with first shows, emerging artists, space for installation and sculptural work as well as two-dimensional art. One thing led to another and it became necessary to obtain more funding.

Again, the demand and enthusiasm was there but we were operating with limited funds and a limited number of women who were skilled in business and administration.



Still from **Tatyana Mamonova: Russian Feminist**, by Amelia Productions

It was unrealistic to attempt to expand in response to the demand because the network of skills and resources didn't exist.

I guess there was an element of "fools rush in where angels fear to tread". Intellectually I understood the problems but I thought they would change within a year or two. Really what we needed was six paid staff to do the work involved, but what do you do? You can't stop dead in your tracks, knowing the terrible need for what is developing. If I did it over again, I would work more on the support side to develop a structure and slow down on the creative side.

The Women's Studies Program at the University of British Columbia developed simultaneously with WIF but because they were part of an established institution they had a structure and resources available. In fact, WIF became a resource for their students. We had a flood of phone calls and visits from students who were just beginning to develop their own knowledge and skills. It was extremely time-consuming to respond to this demand and it became a terrible drain on our energy and resources. Here we were providing an educational function as well; a non-funded group being used as a resource! Universities and colleges have funding and they could have been renting or buying our tapes to equalize the exchange.

**GAEL: What kind of organizational changes were put in place to facilitate the expanding role of WIF?**

**SHARON:** I became president of WIF after Marion. The only thing consistent about WIF is that it is in a constant state of flux. I think that a lot of women's organizations have that as their trademark. In the case of WIF it has been a matter of funding, board involvement, committee involvement, member involvement, specific issues, as well as the fact that we have tried to be all things to all disciplines. During the time that I was president we went from project-oriented funding to trying to build some degree of stability for the organization. We also investigated self-generating funding. That's when we split into two arms -- one for administrative functions and one for distribution.

The second, and probably more important structural thing that I tried to facilitate, was to get more active members involved in running the space, setting its policy. We set up approved committee structures so that for production there would be women producers involved, for the gallery committee other women artists involved, and so on. These committees would then present their plans and budgets to the board.

We were also under some scrutiny from the women's community as there was a sense that we were not as accessible as we had been. My personal mandate became to open the space up and say to women, "If you're not happy with what's happening here, then get down here and participate in changing it."

**GAEL: How extensive is the collection of work at WIF and who is your audience?**

**SUE:** In 1977 WIF incorporated as a non-profit society and we began distributing work that was made in-house, mostly to women's groups. Since then we have not only been a production and distribution unit of women's film and tapes but we have taken on work from women working in the media all over the world. We have a collection of 200 tapes and films, and our distribution committee is constantly receiving submissions for acquisition. Our audience is primarily educational institutions, social service agencies, government departments, and women's groups.

We take on experimental film, video art, documentary, feature and narrative work of good technical quality. Before, there wasn't a lot of attention paid to quality or marketability, but women who are submitting now have the capability. There is no handicap anymore in technical competence.'

In order for us to continue collecting experimental film and video art we have to have productions that are commercially viable and marketable to support us.

**GAEL: Has the gallery component of WIF also expanded?**

**SUE:** Before 1986 there were sporadic exhibitions that went undocumented. But our gallery committee decided to make the gallery a full-fledged exhibition venue with curreted, catalogued, professional exhibitions. Documentation of these is placing women artists within art history in Canada. The gallery has become a very high-profile focal point of our activities. In the last year and a half we have had one woman shows, international exhibits, and retrospective on a whole variety of women's work.

**GAEL: What needs to be done to ensure that the survival of WIF?**

**SHARON:** It is essential that there are organizations, to foster, develop and support the talent of women in the arts. Mainstream cultural organizations do not, financially or any other way. There is still a stigma against feminist resource centers in terms of funding and access to funds. It is a question of political priorities. There is a real need for women to acquire financial knowledge and to take a financial part, because no matter what kind of organization you have if you don't have knowledge of how to access funds you will fail.

**SUE:** In a presentation to the Secretary of State Committee last year, WIF was one of two women's cultural organizations (out of 200 women's groups) who demanded that women's cultural productions be considered a justifiable social development issue for federal government funding. Cultural issues have always been put on the back burner. I think that largely due to WIF's influence there is beginning to be a recognition that cultural issues for women are not peripheral -- they're integral. In order to survive we must continue to be active as a lobbying group on the national level. We need more staff positions and ongoing funding.

**MARION:** We need women with consummate skills in all areas, including business and management skills.

**GAEL: Has WIF successfully fulfilled your original vision?**

**MARION:** It has gone much farther than my original vision. We need a place where women can express their creativity, think things through, develop and produce their work. We need something to assist women and men in finding and expressing a feminist aesthetic. We need at least a decade and a volume of work to regard, to go back and reflect upon, to find out what goes on in women's heads when they are free, or at least conscious, of the dominant ideology. Then we can go on to the next step. Then we will

know what it is to have a feminist aesthetic.

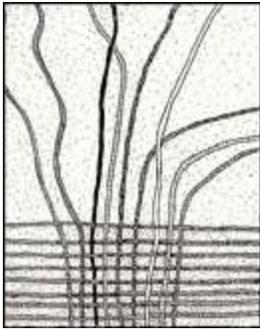
*Marion Barling is a curator and arts administrator with a body to work in both film and video. She has a Masters degree in Sociology and Film.*

*Sharon Costello works in mainstream media and has worked with women musicians for the past 12 years. She is part of Key Change, an all women band.*

*Sue Donaldson is currently the administrator at WIF. Her background is in print journalism and arts administration.*

*Gael MCool is a part-time therapist, and part-time prospector who is always searching for clues. She has been an active member of BC CCLOW for 2 years*

## *Visualizing Feminism*



FABRIC OF WOMEN

We present here the products of a co-operative art process. Initial sketches, resulting from a visual brainstorming exercise held during a BC CCLOW summer retreat, were translated into these drawings by E-Side Studios in Toronto. The brainstorming exercise involved relaxation and guided visualization processes designed to liberate the visual artists in all of us. Each woman was asked to draw her ideas of what feminism meant, and what a world would be like that was a realization of feminist ideals.





## Le féminisme en images

Nous présentons ici les fruits d'un effort artistique en groupe. Les premières esquisses, qui ont été exécutées au cours d'un exercice visuel de remue-méninges qui se déroula en été pendant la retraite du CCPEF de Colombie- Britannique, ont été confiées à une dessinatrice. Voilà le résultat de son interprétation.

Pendant la séance de remue-méninges, les participantes se détendirent et essayèrent de visualiser le processus à suivre pour que s'exprime l'artiste qui couve en nous toutes. On demanda à toutes les femmes de représenter graphiquement l'idée qu'elles se font du féminisme et ce à quoi ressemblerait le monde si les idéaux féministes étaient atteints.



## Turning Anger to a Song

JUDITH BOÈL

### Métamorphoser sa colère en chanson par Judith Boël

C'est en apprenant à jouer de la guitare dans les années soixante que j'ai découvert que j'avais quelque talent de composition et d'interprétation. Divorcée qui poursuivait ses études, je trouvais un peu de sérénité à jouer de la guitare tard le soir lorsque mes enfants dormaient et que j'avais fini mes devoirs de classe. Petit à petit, composer des chansons devint un moyen thérapeutique, une façon de transmettre des traditions orales et des messages politiques. J'étais étonnée de me rendre compte que de simples concepts exprimés sur une musique ordinaire pouvaient avoir une telle force.

Je compose des chansons en me mettant à l'unisson de mes émotions et de mes expériences les plus intimes. Pour ce faire, j'écoute de la musique et je tente coûte que coûte de me détendre. Je me rappelle de la fois où je pensais à celle qui fut pendant un temps ma belle-mère et où, sous le coup de l'inspiration, je composais une chanson sur elle que je devais interpréter l'année dernière au Festival de la journée internationale de la femme. La chanson s'intitule Kathleen et explique les frustrations de la protagoniste qui, contrairement à son rêve le plus cher, ne put jamais apprendre à jouer du piano. Paroles et musique sont reproduites dans ce numéro.

My mother remembers the thrill of hearing her mother sing beautiful Norwegian songs while doing housework. She tells me her mother's mother had a beautiful voice as well. I have precious memories of hearing my mother "singing away the blues" at the piano during times of family crisis and despair. It is no wonder that vocal music plays such an inspiring, joyful and healing part in my life.



Judith Boël

As I write this article, poignant memories crowd in on me. I see myself at twelve, singing joyfully in the church choir and I feel the sense of acceptance and admiration I received for my contributions. I remember myself at twenty-one, spontaneously making up children's songs for my three who giggled with pleasure. I recall the exhaustion of long car trips and marathon sing-a-longs with the children (who never seemed to tire). Then there are the joyful looks on the faces of my mentally handicapped students as I played my guitar and sang for them. I can still feel the excitement of singing at political rallies during the 1960s in the States and the fear I felt when our Peace Center was bombed. I still sense my grim determination as I sang on the street corners of Victoria in the '70s to supplement our welfare income. All of these experiences have a common thread: I'm using the music to help me through difficult times and as a way of communicating my values to others.

In the 1960s I discovered my working class roots as I learned the folk songs of the labour and civil rights movements. I was proud to take part in passing on these oral traditions. During this time I found my own voice and began to write songs which not only gave me a therapeutic way to express my personal pain and outrage, but helped to support and inspire others in our common struggle for justice and equality. It has always amazed me what power there is in the combination of simple concepts and ordinary music.

I've always preferred music to be a gift rather than a performance, but I've sometimes had to exercise my talents to provide for my family. I've never received much money in royalties for my songs, but I found that working as a street musician or "busker" was lucrative and instructive. Some people harassed me, were sexually aggressive and displayed a strong bias against seeing making music as work. The service I provided was seen as begging as often as it was seen as entertainment. Yet other people appeared to be deeply touched by my music and would applaud even if they had no money to contribute.

I consider my work as a street musician to have been a profound educational experience. I learned how to reach people with music in a way that went beneath prevailing social stereotypes, which I could not have learned in any formal training program.

I'm not sure why some people want to know how I write a song. It seems as if the creative process must be as unique as the individual applying it. Do I just sit down and start writing? The answer is both yes and no. I do sit down and write, but prior to that I'm not sure why some people want to know how I write. A lot of emotional processing takes place. Let me take you with me through a typical experience. This process actually led me to write the song that I performed at the *International Women's Day Festival* last year. (The words and music for the chorus follow).

This is a day when I know I need to cry. My chest is tight, my jaw is tight even my hair hurts as they say. I go to my tape collection and pick a piece of music that has moved me to tears before. Sometimes the piece has lyrics, but today it's purely instrumental. I turn on the music, lie down and begin to gently deepen my breathing. It feels to me as if each instrument is speaking to me and their voices are somehow familiar. My chest over my heart begins to feel warm. My jaw begins to relax. Not long after that I experience a shift somewhere inside. It is as if a door opens, and there is light and blue sky. The universe appears more negotiable and more spacious. There is a kind of eternity represented in this music that allows me to transcend my fear of deep unknown emotion. Now the feelings come. I'm surprised because what I thought would be pure sadness turns into anger and then fear. I try to ride gently with those feelings on the music. After the emotional releasing, another shift occurs. I am beginning to be able to explain my fears to myself. I am beginning to separate concepts which are false for me from concepts that have personal meaning. I have found my strength again.

Now I can contemplate all the anger I still hold for people who have hurt me, and I know I need to forgive them and to forgive myself, too. I begin thinking of my ex-mother-in-law, now dead, who was a tired, bitter and unempathic person by the time I first met her. I am overcome with a realization that I totally misunderstood her as a teenager married to her

son. Now I feel empathy for her, and it seems too late to do anything about it. I remember her story about having to go to work in a cotton mill at the age of fourteen because her father was a drunk and couldn't hold down a job. She had always wanted to take piano lessons so she could play country music and gospel music for her family and friends, but there was never any money. It occurs to me that since folk music is a way to develop oral history and give context to the lives of people whose efforts would otherwise have been forgotten, I should sing about Kathleen's life. As I meditate that evening in forgiveness, the words and music of the chorus of the song below came to me intact, and in a form which Kathleen would have loved -- country music .

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### Chorus :

Dear Lord, won't you buy her a piano  
like the one that she had in her dreams.  
And surround her up above with  
friends that she loves,  
who respect her and call her Kathleen.



(music notation by Amie Moore)

**Verse 1:** Kathleen was bright and her heart was full of love but her mama, she was tired and mean. She was down on her luck, cause she married a drunk and she sent her girl to work at fourteen.

**Verse 2:** Kathleen's Daddy was a bully, he was mean to his boys, they in turn needed someone to tease. Though her name was Kathleen, they called her Leena, pulled her hair, pushed her down to her knees. (chorus)

**Verse 3:** Every night, when Kathleen was asleep, she had the most amazing dream: she was playing the piano -- everybody loved her and her hands were soft and they were clean.

**Verse 4:** I never laughed at mother-in-law jokes, when she was mine, she was tired and mean. But I'm glad that I met her, and even better I'm glad I named my second girl Kathleen.

**(chorus)**

**Verse 5:** Oh, my Amy Kathleen she's a rock'n'roll queen. She plays, she sings, she steals the show. If her Grandma were here, she would see very clearly how far a poor girl's dream can go. (repeat the last two lines)

(chorus twice)

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I have gradually learned that every self-discovery, no matter how painful, every experience, no matter how intense, has a growing edge to it. I have found that in writing a song, I can transform the pain or sorrow or rage into a form that speaks to many people's experiences. In that process I also educate and heal myself.

I am now able to pass this knowledge on in my counselling practice. I meet women and men to whom the language of music is profoundly relevant. If it is appropriate, I share some of what I've learned about music as a gateway to the emotions and a source of empowerment. Some clients begin to give their own singing sounds permission to emerge and to open up tight places within themselves. Other clients choose music which has inspired them as a familiar background and support for exploring their "inner space" during guided fantasy and hypnosis, while others take up playing an instrument or singing again with renewed commitment and appreciation.

Although I am not a full-time musician or songwriter the central theme of music as a means for inspiration and communication continues to weave its way through my life and that of my family. Two of my children are professional communicators (linguistics, broadcast journalism) and one is a professional singer. The Goddess is good!

***Judith Boel is a feminist therapist in practice and an educational psychologist. She is currently working on a Ed.D in school psychology. She is the proud grand-mother of three granddaughters and a grandson, and is a singer and registered songwriter***



## *Prison, Art and Some Myths*

PERSIMMON BLACKBRIDGE,  
LYN MACDONALD ,  
AND  
MICHELLE CHRISTIANSON

### **La prison l'art et la légende** par Persimmon Blackridge

Persimmon Blackridge qui s'adonne à la sculpture en Colombie-Britannique, a collaboré avec Michelle Christianson et Lynn MacDonald à **Doing Time** : une sculpture commentée qui dépeint le vécu de femmes incarcérées, à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur des murs de leur prison. Cet article qu'elles ont aussi écrit ensemble, tente d'expliquer quelque peu ce vécu et l'essence de l'oeuvre d'art qui le dépeint.

**Lyn:** La réalité de la vie dans une prison contraste avec l'image qu'on en donne quelquefois au public, soit celle d'une existence de "camp de vacances".

**Persimmon:** On estime généralement que toute oeuvre s'inspirant de la politique est mauvaise. Mais je m'en moque. Le dogmatisme pose un problème dans ce genre d'art comme le sentimentalisme en pose un dans les oeuvres d'art destinées aux enfants.

L'art n'est pas une langue universelle. Il n'y a que 2% de la population qui fréquente les galeries de peinture. Pour moi, ce chiffre ne s'applique pas car je ne tiens pas à séduire le seul "monde artistique".

**Lyn:** La prison ne sert pas d'effet préventif contre le crime. Pour moi, la meilleure leçon fut d'être obligée de réparer les dégâts que j'avais commis chez quelqu'un. Depuis, je n'ai plus jamais cassé une vitre.

**Persimmon:** Une de mes amies m'a dit qu'après avoir vu Doing Time elle s'est rendu compte qu'elle avait toujours eu des idées erronées sur les détenues. Leur silhouette, leurs paroles l'ont touchée au plus profond d'elle-même.

**Michelle:** Je veux simplement que les autres sachent que nous sommes des êtres humains.

Persimmon Blackbridge, a BC sculptor, collaborated with Michelle Christianson and Lyn MacDonald on **Doing Time**, a work of sculpture and words depicting the external and internal experiences of women in prison. This article, also a collaboration, attempts to include some of those experiences as well as discuss the nature of the art that depicts them.

**Persimmon:** I do a lot of art that's collaborative. I like the intensity, and the complexity, and the company. Lyn and Michelle are two of the people I'm working with on the series **Doing Time**. We decided to collaborate on this article too.

#### **MYTH: WOMEN ARE REHABILITATED IN PRISON**

**Michelle:** BULL! I have been in jail and it just made me a better criminal. During my time there, I learned how to apply for credit cards on bank accounts of dead people. I also acquired a heroin habit. Some of my friends have been in and out of jail most of their lives. Jail doesn't rehabilitate -- it does the opposite. If women were really offered a different lifestyle, that would be a more successful rehabilitation program.

#### **MYTH: PRISON IS A HOLIDAY CAMP**

**Lyn:** One time, I was in a medium security women's prison. While I was there, we saw a T.V show. None of us could believe it because it was a current show about the very prison we were in.

It portrayed women strolling along grass lined paths, playing games in the gym, sitting in comfortable-looking areas playing guitars and singing, making different kinds of crafts, etc. Our living quarters were called "cottages". To the T.V. viewers, it must've looked like we were living on a college campus.

Reality was a contrast. Each of the five "cottages" had twenty-five women in it. We had a common room with hard chairs in rows. The T.V. was always on, usually at the same time as the radio. No one had guitars and I rarely heard anyone sing. The grass-lined paths were feet away from chain link fences topped with rolls of barbed wire. A guard dog and male guards with guns patrolled these areas. There was an art room, and a library, but getting access to either of them was often next to impossible.

#### **MYTH: POLITICAL ART IS BAD ART**

**Persimmon:** When I was in art school, gospel was that political art is superficial, dogmatic and that other word -- didactic. But I did it anyway. I had a great teacher, Sally Michener, and we used to argue about it. Sometimes she'd come around to my point of view which is truly great in a teacher.

Political art is trendy now. But I'll argue about that myth again, for old times, because trends come and go but myths die lingering deaths and stink up the landscape for years. OK, what about Picasso's **Guernica** (the obvious)? What about **Goya's Disasters of War** (a classic)? What about centuries of art commissioned by the Church for its greater glory (propaganda)? What about scores of contemporary artists? Lisa Steele, Kim Tomczak, Carole Mosevich, Jeff Wall...



Lyn, Michelle, Persimmon

Dogmatism is a problem artists have to solve in making political artwork. Sentimentality is a problem in art about children. Boredom is a problem in minimalist art. Ok?

### **MYTH: WOMEN EARN MONEY AND GET JOB SKILLS IN PRISON**

**Michelle:** People on the outside believe that we are making money doing things like making license plates. In 1979, I made \$2.35 a day mopping floors and out of that money, I had to buy cigarettes, stationery, shampoo and stamps. Good Luck!

As for job skills, if I could find a job mopping a floor for \$6.00 an hour that I didn't have to be bondable for, I would be working right now.

### **MYTH: ART IS A UNIVERSAL LANGUAGE**

**Persimmon:** Only 2% of our population goes to art galleries. So much for universal. For most people, what the art world calls "fine art" is intimidating, annoying, or worse, boring. The art world is not a world. It's a room, with no windows. It's a small-town bridge tournament.

I want more than 2% and well-heeled smiles. And I get it, too. Not because I'm the great hot-shot artist, but because the art world isn't my only (or primary) community.

June Jordan, writing about contemporary black poets, says, "I would suggest that for us the implacable operating premise of our poetry is political, is reciprocal, is a bond we

embrace as morally binding: we are the poets of our people or we are nothing."

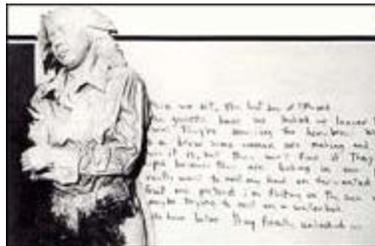
For white lesbian artists (like myself) the premise is not so implacable. If we are discreet, Canadian society will tolerate us. If we are discreet, we cannot be the poets of our people. We have that choice.

Ah, but indiscretion has its rewards. Break the 2% barrier! Win fans through indiscretion! As Jordan says, the bonds of community are reciprocal. People will support art that in some sense "belongs" to them, that reflects their experience rather than shuts them out.

### **MYTH: PRISON IS A DETERRENT**

**Lyn:** I was caught mostly for property damage during my early twenties. I'd get drunk, upset, and break warehouse windows. Time after time, I'd get caught, jailed, etc., and when I got out, I'd be right back at it. No deterrent.

I broke the window of someone's place once, thinking that it was an abandoned building.



### **Doing Time**

He ran out and caught me. He recognized me and knew where I lived, so I agreed to come back the next day with a pane of glass if he wouldn't phone the cops.

I bought the glass and carried it to his place. We were going to replace it together. The glass slipped as he was pushing it in and badly cut his arm. He had to go to the hospital.

I never broke another window after that. Direct, reasonable deterrent, and rehabilitation. It was very clear to me that my actions had hurt someone, both physically and in terms of time and aggravation. Jail never had anything to do with action and consequences. If I had to clean and replace every window I'd ever broken, it would have made sense. I would've been held responsible for my own actions. Jail just furthered my isolation and anger -- it became a vicious cycle.

### **MYTH: WOMEN IN JAIL ARE CALLOUS, VIOLENT, RACIST**

**Michelle:** This is the stupidest myth I have ever heard. I have never seen so much compassion in my life as in jail. On my first bit, I was scared and crying. A repeater who was with me in the sheriff's van comforted me and let me know she was supporting me and would help in any way she could. And she did.

Women in prisons are not generally violent. If you step out of line, someone will tell you that you did. There's violence sometimes just like sometimes there's violence on the streets or in the home. But it's not the vicious place it's made out to be.

### **MYTH: WOMEN IN PRISON ARE NOT REAL PEOPLE**

**Persimmon:** Lyn was the first person I was ever close to who had been in jail. Jail is frightening. "Don't think about it. Those people are frightening, keep away from them." They are kept away from us.

A friend of mine (a smart woman, a woman like you and me) told me that seeing pieces from **Doing Time** made her realize how she had unconsciously thought of women in prison as "other", "different", not women she could know or be friends with. But reading their words broke through to her. She couldn't distance and de-humanize them any more. She's a good woman, very honest.

This series is education, my education passed on. I asked Michelle to imagine this stuff in a fancy gallery, because that's where it's going to be. I said, "What do you want those people to know?" Michelle answered, "That we are human beings ." I wonder if people will really understand what that means.

**Michelle:** I want to tell you as women that I am a woman too, who wants to be accepted for me, not judged for what I have done or may do.

***Persimmon Blackbridge is a graduate of the Vancouver School of Art. Michelle Christianson is a graduate of Lakeside Women's Correctional Centre. Lyn Macdonald is a graduate of Madame Vanier Women's Correctional Centre.***

## Reviews/Critiques

Inuit Annuraangit: Our Clothes

**REVIEW BY JILL OAKES**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** In our Reviews this issue we asked women who are artists to review or talk about a work of art by another woman or women that has significant meaning for them or from which they have learned something valuable.

Les critiques dans ce numéro spécial de Women's Education des femmes ont été rédigées par des femmes artistes qui ont vu les oeuvres créées ou qui y ont participé, celles-ci ayant eu une influence sur leur travail ou leur vie.

### **Inuit Annurangit: our Clothes** **par Jill Oakes**

Dans le cadre des recherches qu'elle effectuait pour sa thèse de doctorat, Jill Oakes a appris à tailler des peaux et à confectionner des vêtements. Sa façon à elle de remercier les couturières Inuit de lui avoir enseigné leur art fut de planifier et de diriger une exposition itinérante de vêtements de peau qu'elle accompagna d'un livre Inuit Annuraangit: Our Clothes. Celui-ci fourmille de photos de femmes en train de confectionner des vêtements et d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants les portant fièrement.

De nombreux Inuit qui ont participé à l'exposition ont éprouvé un respect et une admiration comme jamais auparavant pour leur culture. . Ils ont remarqué les mêmes sentiments chez ceux et celles qui venaient à l'exposition.

Le livre est un outil pédagogique idéal qui réchauffe aussi bien le coeur des Inuit que de nous tous.

On peut se procurer Inuit Annuraangit: Our Clothes dans presque tous les grands musées canadiens au prix de 5,00\$ (25 pages). On peut également s'adresser à Jill Oakes, Faculty of Human Ecology, Department of Clothing and Textiles, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2.

How do you say thank you to a large group of Inuit teachers spread across the entire Canadian Arctic? Since 1983 Inuit seamstresses have patiently and painstakingly taught me how to prepare animal skins, develop patterns and construct skin clothing. These skills were acquired as part of my Ph.D. research. Women saw me grow from a naive university student to a dedicated caribou skin seamstress as a direct result of their expert tutoring. I expressed my sincere appreciation throughout the learning process, and I searched for a way to give back some of the personal growth they had given to me.



Since the seamstresses were fascinated with styles made in other Arctic regions I began planning a traveling show of skin clothing. The collection would include garments from each region and would travel to each area. A catalogue, loaded with photographs of women making and using caribou skin clothing, would accompany the show. The seamstresses eagerly supported the idea and I stumbled into the world of finding funds from government, corporate and private sources.

Sally Karetak, museum development officer at the Inuit Cultural Institute in Eskimo Point, became my assistant co-ordinator. We discussed possible ways of presenting the clothing and decided that a live show would be most effective. It would eliminate the need for costly mannequins and reduce shipping costs. It would also reinforce the fact that caribou skin clothing is a practical, vibrant part of contemporary Inuit culture.



Sally Karetak models a parka made by June Klengenberg in Coppermine.

The first show was in Eskimo Point. The audience appreciated our efforts but after it was over we had a thousand ideas for improving the performance. During the next two months Sally and I traveled with the clothing to each Canadian Arctic region as well as to Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. In each community we contacted Inuit who volunteered to model the clothing. Finding models was not always easy. For example, in Rankin Inlet, our show was held on the same night as a hockey game and it was impossible to find a male volunteer. Luckily an elderly man came in to watch and we begged him to join us on stage. He soon became the star performer. With a twinkle in his eye he said the next time he was having tea in an igloo with his hunting buddies, he would have a good story to tell. Joachim Ayaruak stole the show in Winnipeg.

Joachim answered many questions from the audience and at the end said, "Today I feel like a real Inuk (Eskimo). I feel really good about in my way of life." Joyce

Komaksuitiksak agreed: "The main reason I want my daughter, Jamie, involved in this show is so she grows up feeling proud about her culture." Micheal Haqpi, from Baker Lake, planned his holidays around modeling when the show was in Winnipeg. Afterwards he said, "At first I was nervous, but once I began to answer peoples' questions I started to feel good about myself and my culture. Now I feel like this was the best day of my life." Similar comments were repeated by Inuit models in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Iqaluit, Eskimo Point, Cambridge Bay and Yellowknife.

We were invited to perform at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary during the Winter Olympics and at the Winter Cities '88 Conference in Edmonton. Joachim came to Calgary to model in the show and said, "Inuit Annuraangit provides a great opportunity to meet people from other cultures, to see new places, and especially to share our culture with people from allover the world."

Joyce Ayaruak summed up the feelings of many models when she talked about what she and her children had learned by participating in the performance. She said, "The audience really likes us. That has helped us develop poise, confidence, pride and an ability to answer questions on stage. This hands-on type of training is the best kind of education."

The most rewarding part of the performance, from my perspective, is seeing audiences share my admiration for the exceptional skill of Inuit seamstresses and seeing the model's pride glow from their eyes as they answer the endless stream of various questions. Skin clothing not only keeps hunters warm in one of the harshest climates of the world, it is an ideal educational tool that has warmed the hearts of many Inuit and non-Inuit who have participated in **Inuit Annuraangit**.

**Inuit Annuraangit: Our Clothes** is available at major cultural institutions for \$5.00, or contact Jull Oakes, c/o Department of Clothing and Textiles, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2.

***Jill Oakes recently moved from Eskimo Point to Winnipeg and is completing her Ph. D in caribou skin clothing. She lectures at the University of Manitoba and coordinated Inuit annuraangit:***

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# Exploring New Places

Heather Scott, sculptor and painter

REVIEW BY BRIGID TOOLE GRANT

**Exploring New Places: Heather Scott, sculpteur et peintre**  
par Brigid Toole Grant

New Places est le titre de l'exposition qui a eu lieu en novembre 1987 à Fredericton à la Gallery Connexion. L'artiste y présentait dix grandes toiles et une vingtaine de dessins qu'elle avait peints pendant les voyages d'étude qu'elle effectua en Extrême-Orient, en Nouvelle-Zélande, au Mexique et dans les provinces Atlantiques. Les thèmes, les couleurs, les reflets métalliques et les personnages de la mythologie reflètent l'influence qu'ont exercée sur l'artiste les lieux où elle se rendit.

L'oeuvre de Scott est de façon voulue irrationnelle. De nombreux personnages semblent vulnérables, anxieux, érotiques. Scott remet aussi en question ce qu'on accepte de façon conventionnelle comme du grand art, soit la représentation des fantasmes érotiques masculins dont le maître fut Picasso. New Places: une exposition qui donne à la fois une impression de chaos et d'espoir.

Heather Scott est représentée par la Gallery Connexion, 204 Fulton Avenue, Frédéricton, N.B.

After graduating from Mt. Allison University in 1981 with a B.F.A. with Distinction, Heather Scott lived in Fredericton, often exhibiting both sculptures and drawings in many parts in New Brunswick and elsewhere in the Maritimes. In 1985 she received a Commonwealth scholarship, and has since traveled through the Far East, spent two years in New Zealand where she had a one-person show and received a M.F.A., and has lived in Ottawa, New Mexico, New Brunswick and Newfoundland. Her recent exhibition, **New Places**, shown in November, 1987, at Gallery Connexion in Fredericton, contained ten large canvases and more than twenty works on paper all made during these peripatetic years.



**Breath of Reason,**  
by Heather Scott

Parts of the exhibition show the influence of place. Geography suggests the subjects and colours of the New Mexico paintings; the Far East may have contributed the metallic gleams in some pieces; and contemporary New Zealand art contains mythological figures similar to the winged creatures in the large canvases.

Underlying the exhibition as a whole is the influence of travel itself. Scott's work is intentionally irrational. Starting from a spontaneous gesture made in response to the figure, or from the process of painting, she finds suggestions of emotionally potent images, and embeds but never explains them, in re-worked layers of paint and charcoal. Many of the works in the exhibition evoke the emotions of a traveler: uprooted, surprised, concerned, and made sensitive and self-aware by the stranger she sees reflected in the eyes of the natives. Among the New Zealand drawings are: a huddled female torso touched pink at breasts and genitals; a seated figure, quivering, hands raised to ribs; a partial figure, torso and legs upside down and emerging from translucent white. All of them are vulnerable, anxious, erotic.

Most of the large canvases clearly show elements of animals and figures that can be named; elements unevenly translated into form, no longer closely attached to the gesture, and literary rather than mysterious. These images, self-aware, anxious and openly sexual, invite interpretation as symbols. When Scott gives us phalluses, feathers, body parts, teeth, wings, female horses, female unicorns, antlered carnivores, and horned herbivores, she challenges the conventional view which accepts as high art the male erotic fantasy of Picasso's artist and model series but rejects winged unicorns as the clichéd preoccupation of pubescent females.

That women can master the techniques of drawing and sculpture has been widely accepted for more than a generation; that serious work can be made from women's view of herself and her world, in a form new to art history, is not yet generally acknowledged. Sensitive, risky, suggesting many new directions which have not yet been woven into the central stream of her work, the overall feeling of *New Places* is both chaotic and promising. I hope Heather Scott stays in touch with her emotional, irrational self, and I look forward very much to her next exhibition.

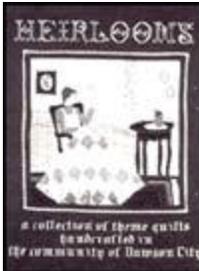
**Heather Scott is represented by Gallery Connexion, 204 Fulton Avenue, Fredericton, New Brunswick.**

**Brigid Toole Grant is a painter and printmaker who lives in Fredericton New Brunswick.**

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## Heirlooms: A Collection of Theme Quilts Handcrafted in the Community of Dawson City

REVIEW BY KAREN DUBOIS



Dawson City is a community of 1000 people in Canada's Yukon Territory. Eight years ago, a group of women in Dawson made a quilt as a gift for a new-born baby. A theme and a colour scheme were decided on collectively, each woman contributed a quilted square, the squares were sewn together, a backing and binding were added, and the gift was given. The concept of community quilting had arrived.

Group quilting is not a new idea; subscribers to craft magazines will have seen examples of it, often called friendship or theme quilting. However, the idea of making these quilts for special occasions caught on in Dawson and to date over 180 women have contributed to over 55 quilts in this small northern town. These quilts have become known collectively as community quilts and visitors to Dawson's Museum last summer were treated to an exhibition of 40 of these quilts. The Museum Society also produced a catalogue of the quilts to accompany the display, and called it **Heirlooms**.

**Heirlooms** is a small, thin book that contains colour photographs of the quilts, close-ups which illustrate various techniques, and a text which tries to convey the pride of the community. Those of us who were involved in the production of the book and who have contributed squares to the quilts cannot view the book objectively. We can trace our own progress over the years, from simple shapes and stitches to more complicated designs and techniques. We have learned much from each other. We have shared resource books, materials, hints and ideas.

Newcomers to Dawson rarely last a winter before they are involved in making a quilt. Many have said that these quilt squares were their first attempt at handiwork. They like the idea of only being individually responsible for one twelve inch square that once combined with other squares makes a unique and useful handmade gift.

Many techniques such as trapunto, embroidery, hand and machine appliqué, silk painting and beadwork were used in the quilts.

The design was only limited by the theme of the quilt and the charm of the finished works comes from the different interpretations of a common theme.

As important as the beauty of those quilts to us who made them and who own them is the spirit of love and friendship in which they were made and given. To us, they illustrated what is best about our lives in this tiny northern town.

Copies of the book **Heirlooms** are available for \$12.00 from the Dawson Museum and Historical Society, Box 303, Dawson, Yukon, Y0B 1G0.

*Karen DuBios is a teacher, craftsperson, mother and a fourth generation Dawsonite. After contributing squares to over twenty group quilts she finally received on the occasion of the birth of her son, Nicholas.*

## Resources

Resources Organizations / Centres

### **Celebration of Women in the Arts Society**

191, 10136 - 100 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
TSJ OP1 403-424-0287

CWA offers support and promotion to Alberta women artists. They research statistics and grants available to women artists and offer advice and sometimes administrative support for events. CWA produces two shows annually: a multi-disciplinary showcase for emerging artists and a large visual art exhibit in conjunction with "The Works" festival.

### **Baffin Women's Association**

Box 1079  
Iqaluit, NWT  
XOA OHO 819-979-6033

BWA hosted a celebration of Women in the Arts for International Women's Day. Some photos and/or videos of the activities, which included an exhibition of Iqaluit women's art work, a concert/celebration introduced by Barbara Frurn, and a slide show on Northern Women, are available. Margaret Atwood is tentatively booked to speak to the community on September 19th.

### **Banff Centre for Continuing Education**

School of Fine Arts  
Box 1020  
Banff, Alberta  
TOL 1C0 403-762-6100

Residential summer (May-August) and winter programs are offered. Auditions are in February of each year. Costs vary and scholarships are available.

## **Women's Art Resource Centre**

183 Bathurst Street  
2nd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5T 2R7 416-368-3475

WARC's objectives are to: collect information on women's art and cultural activities and make it available to the public; generate a feminist aesthetic; provide a support structure to women artists; and encourage contact between women's art groups and other ,community organizations.

All women artists are invited to submit material to WARC's slide registry. Send slides (indicating date, medium and size), resume, biographical information and support material (reviews, etc.) to the slide registry at WARC.

WARC's materials and slide registry are available to administrators, curators, educators, researchers, writers, etc.

## **Organization of Saskatchewan**

### **Arts Councils**

600,4010 Pasqua Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4S 7B9 306-586-1250.

OSAC is the umbrella organization for sixty-five arts councils in Saskatchewan and specifically promotes performing and visual arts in rural areas. Through conferences and provincial touring exhibitions, OSAC strives to aid the creative development of emerging Saskatchewan artists.

The majority of people involved in the programs are women.

## **Grants**

The Canada Council  
99 Metcalfe Street  
P.O. Box 1047  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 5V8 613-598-4365

The Canada Council's grants and services are available to Canadian professional artists and arts organizations. The Council will consider applications from all fields of art including music, dance, theatre, visual and media arts, film and video, writing, architecture, art criticism, curation and performance. Explorations, multidisciplinary and project-oriented, is a program to meet the needs of artists, professional or non-professional, whose projects don't fit the traditional art forms. The Council accepts station-to-station collect calls.

## Books

**Bibliography on Canadian Feminist Art** by Janice E. Hayes. This book provides information on Canadian feminist art and artists generally. It includes briefs, reports and criticism, surveys, collective biography, galleries, exhibitions, visual and applied arts, journal titles and author and title indexes. 43 pp. \$5.00 (\$5.50 US). Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, McGill University, 3459 MacTavish Street, Montreal, Quebec H3A 1Y1.

**Images in Actions: A Guide to Using women's Film. and Video** by Ferne Cristall and Barbara Emanuel. This is a primer on how to show, critically view and build new audiences for women's works. Includes lists of distributors, cineographies, a bibliography and where to get films at low cost or free. 112 pp. \$8.95 paperback, \$22.95 cloth. Between the Lines, 229 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1R4. Make cheques payable to DEC Book Distribution.

**Gallerie** is a new annual book devoted to women's art and women artists. Published once a year with the first issue appearing in June 1988, **Gallerie** will be filled with photographs featuring the portfolios of about 40 selected artists ranging from famous to unknown. Announcements from organizations that promote and encourage the work of women artists will be published. Submissions from artists regardless of media are welcome. For guidelines and subscription information write Gallerie Publications, 2901 Panorama Drive, North Vancouver, B.C. V7G 2A4.

## Film and Video

**Images of Women in National Film Board Films 1945-1987**, is a video compilation created for a workshop "Transforming Myths: Using Film to See Ourselves in New Ways". Designed for workers in Women's Studies, the workshop offers an opportunity to view the sexist myths which film has historically reinforced and to transform them into positive images. To book the workshop contact: Marian Dodds, #4, 31 West 11th Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5Y 1S6 or Rosemary Sullivan, 1965 St. Armand Rd., Pigeon Hill, Quebec, JOJ 1Y0.

The following films are available from the School of Continuing Education, 302 Administration Building, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6:

**Women and Creativity -- An Overview**, written and narrated by Pat Smart, Professor of French, Carleton University. An introductory analysis of women's contribution to culture and the creative arts in the western tradition. Pertinent questions and recurring themes are explored through an illustrated commentary, dramatized readings and interviews with Canadian women artists.

**Canadian women's Artists**, written and narrated by Natalie Luckyj, Professor of Art History, Carleton University. An illustrated history of Canadian women's art featuring works by indigenous women, pioneer women and 19th and 20th century painters and sculptors. Critical commentary describes the obstacles that women artists have faced, the acclaim several have earned and their influence on the development of Canadian art.

**English Canadian Women's Writers**, written and narrated by Barbara Godard, Professor of English, York University. A concise examination of English Canadian feminist writers, focusing on their distinctive literary themes and genres, institutional barriers they confront, and the lessons of their historical successes and failures. Renowned women authors are interviewed.

**Canadian Women Composers**, written and narrated by Valerie Verity King, lecturer on women and music, Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University. An historical survey of Canadian women composers from the mid-1800s to the present. Performances of illustrative compositions, informative brief biographies and an interview with the Association of Canadian Women Composers.

## Calls for Submissions

### **Quilting Exhibition**

Mount Saint Vincent University

August 10-September 10, 1989

Open to all residents of Nova Scotia

Bed quilts, wall pieces, clothing and small articles may be submitted. Traditional and original designs will be accepted but works using pre-printed blocks or stencils may not be entered. The jury's selection will be based on technique and workmanship as well as design, variety, originality and creativity. Quilts entered must have been completed since January 1984. For entry forms and further information send your name, address, telephone number and 55 cents postage to: Dorothy Johnston, Exhibition Committee "Quilt 1989", 541 Colby Drive, Dartmouth, NS, B2V 1Z5.

## **Canadian Woman Studies**

"Women and Literacy" Fall/Winter 1988

Canadian Woman Studies is a feminist journal, planning a special issue on women and literacy. If you are a learner or tutor in a literacy program, we would be interested in a short account of your experience as women in the program. Your article should be typed and double-spaced. Please send two copies with a brief note about yourself. Photographs and/or graphics are welcome. Submit to: Canadian Woman Studies, 212 Founders College York University, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario, M3J 1P3. Deadline **July 1st, 1988**.

## **Women's Press**

Lesbian Writers

Women's Press is looking for manuscripts for a second anthology of writing by Lesbians about Lesbian experience. Submit fiction, non-fiction, erotica, poetry, experimental work to: Women's Press, Lesbian Manuscript Group, 229 College Street, Toronto M5T 1R4.

## **Resources**

### **Organizations/Centres**

#### **Women's Art Ressource Centre**

183 Bathurst Street

2<sup>e</sup> étage

Toronto, Ontario

M5T 2R7 416-368-3475

Les objectifs du WARC sont de: rassembler des renseignements sur les oeuvres d'art et les activités culturelles des femmes et de les divulguer au public; faire naître un esthétisme féministe; fournir un service de soutien aux femmes artistes; et stimuler l'établissement de liens entre les groupes artistiques féminins et d'autres organismes de la collectivité.

Toutes les femmes sont invitées à soumettre du matériel au service des diapositives du WARC. Envoyez des diapositives (en indiquant la date, le médium et les dimensions), un curriculum vitae, quelques renseignements biographiques et du matériel de soutien (rapports, etc.) à ce service.

#### **Galerie sans nom**

700 Main Street

Bureau 305

Moncton, Nouveau-Brunswick

E1C 8N8 506-854-5381

Un centre que dirigent des artistes. Leur mandat est de présenter dans tous les médias des

oeuvres contemporaines et expérimentales, dont des créations d'arts visuels, musicales, de danse et littéraires. Si on désire exposer ses oeuvres dans cette galerie, il faut faire une demande avant le 15 février, le 15 juin et le 15 octobre. Directrice: Hélène Laroche.

### **Les femme et les arts**

265 Portage Avenue  
Bureau 512 Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3B 2B2 204-947-1390

Organisme à but non lucratif représentant les femmes artistes, nous voulons donner à celles-ci des occasions de s'exprimer et faire prendre conscience au public du rôle important que les femmes jouent dans les arts. L'organisme, qui a été créé en 1983, compte à l'heure actuelle quelque 200 membres. (Consultez l'agenda.)

### **Subvention**

#### **Le Conseil canadien des arts**

99 Metcalfe Street  
C.P. 1047  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 5V8 (613) 598-4365

Le Conseil prendra en considération des demandes en provenance de tous les secteurs artistiques: musique, arts visuels et médias, films et vidéo, littérature, architecture, critiques d'art, spectacles et musées. Le programme Explorations est un programme pluridisciplinaire qui est axé sur les besoins des artistes, professionnels et amateurs, dont les projets ne trouvent pas leur place dans les formes d'art traditionnel. Le Conseil accepte les appels à frais virés de numéro à numéro.

### **Film et vidéo**

#### **Femme en Focus Inc.**

Production-distribution  
films & vidéos  
C.P.865  
Petit Rocher, Nouveau-Brunswick  
EOB 2EO 506-783-8434

Femmes en Focus est entourée d'une équipe dynamique et professionnelle ayant l'expertise pour produire des films (16 mm) et vidéos, documentaires et fictions, à caractère éducatif, culturel, social, artistique et publicitaire. Le groupe assure la distribution de ses productions dans les provinces maritimes

COMMENTARY

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*Let's Not Forget Our Kin  
in the Country*

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BY PAM PATTERSON

**N'oublions pas nos soeurs des régions reculées  
par Pam Patterson**

Les femmes des régions rurales ont tous les jours à faire face à l'isolement et au stress que celui-ci occasionne. Pour les artistes s'ajoutent d'autres handicaps: elles sont loin des galeries de peinture et des spectacles des centres urbains, elles ont des difficultés à se procurer du matériel, elles ne peuvent pas profiter des ateliers qui se donnent ou d'une certaine aide financière. En outre, en tant que féministes, elles craignent la critique de leurs soeurs des villes qui, dans l'ensemble, tiennent des propos plus durs.

En revanche, la vie dans les régions reculées permet de mener une existence plus saine, moins cher. Les femmes artistes de nos campagnes ne devraient donc pas se sentir désavantagées par le choix qu'elles ont fait. Un dialogue doit s'établir entre les artistes des villes, les galeries de peinture, les critiques et les artistes des régions reculées. Les principales revues d'art et les galeries de peinture des grandes villes devraient être accessibles à ces dernières.

Toutes celles qui s'efforcent de percer en tant qu'artistes professionnelles doivent trouver le moyen de poursuivre ce mouvement pour que naisse une collectivité où règne la coopération

The traditional rural woman is hard working, responsible, honest and a great family supporter. But she also faces the realities and stress of isolation, financial hardship, low paying or few jobs, lack of daycare and minimal support network. For women who add to this the job of independent professional artist the situation is even more complicated.

Simply being unable to run off to a film or an art show can unnerve the newly arrived rural woman. Winter can be especially traumatic and, as contact with other artists becomes minimal, occasional visits to urban art events begin to feel like trips to another planet.

Materials, supplies, books are difficult and expensive to acquire. Advanced workshops and classes are often found only in larger centers. If you are able to get a gallery show, you will have to cope with the expense of crating and shipping your work since funding from the arts councils doesn't always cover the cost of transporting and insuring the artwork, or of the artist's travel, accommodation or other expenses involved in just leaving home for a few days.

As a committed artist living in Banff, Alberta, I'm lucky to have contact with the larger art community but it still isn't enough. For some, leaving Toronto or Montreal can end our careers. We lose our urban contacts and stand faced with the need to convince the city galleries that our work will still be strong. We start to wonder if we have similar aesthetics. We may see ourselves and our work as feminist but fear recrimination from our hard-line urban sisters.

So why do artists continue to live and work in rural areas? Why do urban artists such as me keep attempting to make it in the country? The rural life has much to offer: fresh air, a slower pace and fewer environmental stresses. Studio and living spaces are affordable and the distance from the sources of mainstream trends in art can leave the artist free to pursue her own directions without the pressures of the city's art community.

In some communities, cooperative galleries (such as Gallerie 96 in Stratford, Ontario) or small groups (such as the Fine Arts Guild, in Mitchell, Ontario) are beginning to bring rural artists together. Regional galleries in centers such as Kingston and Calgary help provide a transition between the rural and urban worlds.

I feel the work of women artists in the regions needs to be more visible. Most major art magazines and galleries present the work of urban artists. Let them look into the work of artists in the country. Bodies such as Visual Arts Ontario and the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils are improving the sensibility of rural women artists. But more must happen. A dialogue must start. Urban artists, galleries and critics need to be more open to the directions of those artists working in rural Canada. Rural artists also need to rise the urban challenge in order to keep their work on the cutting edge. They should show their work in larger centers and enter into discussion no matter how frightening that might be.

We have a common starting point: we are all women. The fact that we are all artists gives us a focus for discussion. Openness, acceptance, curiosity of each other's work, living situations, commitment to feminism, will keep the lines open. We have so much to share and build on. Let's not split and isolate ourselves, but as women striving to be accepted as professional artists, let us find a way to continue the movement towards a greater cooperative community.

*Pam Patterson just finished a term on the faculty of the Banff Centre. She has been making performance art for the past eight years and is an Equity actor and director. Recently she co-ordinated a Celebration of Women in the Arts at the Banff Centre*

## COMMENTARY

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### *Art/Craft* *High/Low*

BY ANN MacGILLIVRAY

Art/ Artisanat  
Noble/Commun  
par Ann MacGillivray

Est-ce que c'est de l'art? On se pose cette question depuis la Renaissance, époque à laquelle l'"art" et l'"artisanat" étaient respectivement séparés en académies et en ateliers. Ce n'est que dans les deux dernières décennies que la situation a quelque peu changé. Les féministes ont mis en évidence le concept erroné selon lequel une forme de créativité a moins de valeur qu'une autre.

Les artisans du Tiers-monde, qui comptent surtout des femmes travaillant dans l'industrie textile, ont également pâti de cette discrimination et ont été exploités. Toutefois, on accorde de plus en plus de valeur aux oeuvres d'art que les femmes créent. La question qui se pose à l'heure actuelle est de savoir si nous voulons vraiment être reconnues par des personnes dont l'échelle des valeurs nous est étrangère.

Is it art? The enduring question has been asked since the Renaissance, when, explains Parker and Pollack in their book Old Mistresses, high art began to take place in the academies and decorative art was relegated to craft workshops. The academies eventually banned women from learning in their patriarchal halls claiming they could not be exposed to nude models; but as history has shown the truth was a much more complex matter.

The divorce between the creative forms of art and craft became complete in the mid-nineteenth century and thus was established the hierarchy in the arts. This division endured with few exceptions until recent times; only the last two decades have seen some breakdown of the structure. As the history of women artists is recorded, reasons for the art/craft division have come to light in such books as Lucy

Lippard's From the Centre and Get the Message, and Hess/Bakers' Art and Sexual Politics.

The result of these studies and the evolution from the patriarchal titled "modernist" to the "post-modernist" period has brought change. The once insignificant has become significant and slowly the art/craft quandary is recognized as a matter of culture. Feminism has exposed the prejudiced historical concept that one form of creativity is less valuable than another.

Women artists recognize the importance of craft that has been relegated to the decorative and domestic. Their art has slowly been raised from the floor to the walls, taken from the home/ studio and placed alongside "high" art in the gallery context. As with other issues under patriarchal constraint, the change is taking years to achieve. We are fighting battles in all arenas that still discriminate against women and their art: gallery and museum spaces, art colleges, grant agencies and in the public domain.

This discrimination lends itself well to continued division by the capitalists. Mass production of crafts by Third World artisans, mostly women in the textile trade, is only one example of discrimination for imperialistic profits. High art at high prices is still the code entrenched by a large number of male executors and consumers. The calculated promotion of ethnic values and goods encourages a desire for the more intriguing "high" art and incites a fantasy that can be satisfied with affordable "decorative" art products.

The inherent contradiction of the affordable and available ethnic crafts is a matter of economic hierarchy. Eskimo carvings and African artifacts are examples. When a creative product is manipulated by the entrepreneur to be "original" (i.e. controlled quantity), the price is raised and the product then enters the high art forum of gallery or museum. Culture determines artwork's place and, as in the original dilemma, the patriarchy excludes/ includes whatever/whomever it desires.

The importance of the art created by women, while having been excluded from the "higher institutions" is presently being acknowledged. An example is the recent research and writings that have brought rich sources of needlework to the forefront and given them overdue recognition. Articles of decor and ritual now in museums are breaking the boundaries once imposed on them and the post-modern discourse, recognizing interrelationship of art and craft, has discarded many of the distinctions made by its predecessor, the modernist movement.

As a woman artist who began twenty years ago as a weaver of functional articles and who continues to use textiles in my work, it occurs to me now to question the value of being allowed to play with the "big boys". As Lucy Lippard states, "Some women, however, have realized how unsatisfying success can be in an alien world with an alien value structure."

***Ann MacClivray was a production weaver in Nova Scotia before going back to school. Much of her art centers on feminist and political concerns in Central America where she spends much of her time. She has just completed her Master of Fine Arts degree at York University***

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Please return form and payment to the Canadian  
Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women,  
47 Main Street, Toronto, Ontario M4E 2V6.

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Veillez renvoyer le formulaire avec votre paiement au bureau national du Congrès canadien pour la promotion des études chez la femme, 47 Main street, Toronto, Ontario M4E 2V6

## Agenda

### **Community Resources and Initiatives "No More Secrets"**

May 24 - 27, 1988, Toronto, Ontario

A conference for adult survivors of child abuse and professionals in the field of child abuse. General and registration enquiries should be directed to: Trish Caverly, Community Resources and Initiatives, 150A Winona Drive, Toronto, Ontario M6G 3S9, 416-658-1752.



### **Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils "Saskatchewan Showcase of the Arts 88"**

June 10 - 12, 1988, Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan

OSAC conference and annual meeting, the event will feature showcase performances, visual arts exhibits, workshops, contact room, dance and reception. Contact: Barbara

Flaten, Executive Director, OSAC, 600, 4010 Pasqua Street, Regina Saskatchewan S4S 7B9, 306-586-1250.

### **3rd International Feminist Book Fair**

June 14 - 21, 1988, Montreal, Quebec

The fair brings together editors of books, magazines and newspapers with writers, translators, distributors and booksellers from around the world. The conference will be held in English and French and possibly some Spanish. A special invitation is extended to women of Latin America. Contact: 3rd International Feminist Book Fair, 420 est, rue Rachel, Montreal, Quebec H2J 2G7, 514-844-3277.

### **Women and the Arts/Les femmes et les arts "Spotlight 88"**

July 27 - 31, 1988, Winnipeg, Manitoba

More than 30 female artists from across North America and Europe who work in dance, theatre, music, fine crafts, visual arts, film, literature and environmental arts will be featured. Women and the Arts/Les femmes et les arts is a non-profit organization representing women in the arts and designed to increase public awareness of female artists. Contact them at: 512, 265 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 2B2, 204-947-1390.

### **National Coaching School for Women Basketball and Volleyball**

August 21 - 27, 1988, Halifax, Nova Scotia

This week long school provides opportunity for female coaches to participate in an intensive course covering a wide variety of areas and topics. The primary focus is on enhancing the skills and knowledge of college and university level women coaches. The deadline for registration is June 1, 1988. Contact: National Coaching School for Women, c/o CIAU, 333 River Road, Tower A, 11th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario K1L 8H9, 613-748-5619.