

BAAWA Inc.

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Vol. 3 No. 2

Spring 1991

CENSOR Inc.

Woman Twice Closeted: A Personal Response To An Act Of Censorship.

by Vera Dernovsek

Every exhibiting artist knows the humiliations suffered at the hands of the managers, directors, curators or owners of galleries. Whether these galleries are commercial, public, or parallel, these people parade as the "knowers-of-what-is-art". Once again, as so often before, the all powerful hand of these measurers of the "quality of art" and the "assumers" of the knowledge of what is good for the public, have struck to modify, mollify, castrate, and destroy the original vision of the artist. However, this time the powerful hand of the art/manager has reached too far.

The ECCENTRIC FURNITURE SHOW travelled from Hamilton Artists Inc., Hamilton; Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant, Brantford; Lindsay Arts Centre, Lindsay; and then to the Lynnwood Arts Centre, Simcoe. Each gallery was carefully selected for its historical significance to the content of the show - each had previously been a private residence. Jane Gordon, Curator of the exhibition, had intended to arrange the "furniture/objects" in such a way as to re-create a feeling of the original atmosphere of the home while, at the same time, breaking away from what she envisioned as the sterility of the "professionalism" of art in an art gallery.

The works of Donna Ibing, a Hamilton feminist artist of some notoriety were censored, that is, removed from The Eccentric Furniture Show shown in the Lynnwood Arts Centre by Centre Director, Ellen MacIntosh. Moreover, MacIntosh took the liberty of rearranging the exhibition, disregarding completely the specific intent of Gordon.

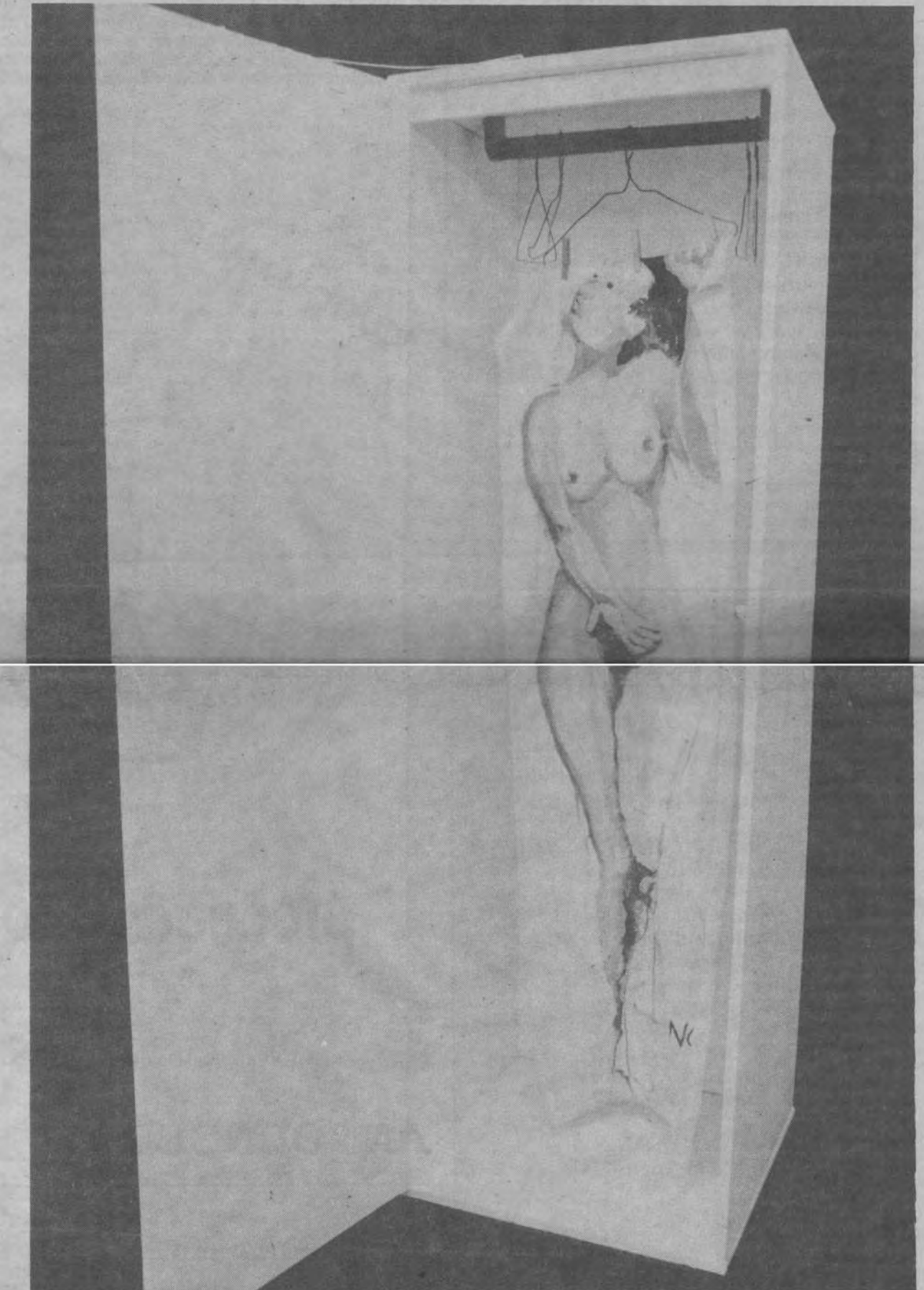
Since from its conception, the show has assumed a feminist tone, it was perfectly fitting for Gordon to invite Ibing, along with Jane Adney, Dawn Beatty, Vera Dernovsek, and Pam Patterson to contribute her work to the exhibition.

Ibing set to her task, true to her never faltering conviction that the sadistic tendency of our patriarchal/phallogocentric society is dangerous, indeed detrimental, to the well being of women. Ibing contributed two works to the show. MEN'S RUG in which an abused woman is depicted with heavy man's workboots along her side (to make no mistake by whom she has been abused); and THE WOMAN IN THE CLOSET, a painting of a nude woman on an unstretched canvas hanging limply on a hanger in a barely opened closet. Both these works indicate her position as a staunch feminist, not hesitating to depict those hideous aspects of the cohabitation of women and men.

Alas! Such horrific images remind us of "distasteful" situations. They are unpleasant to look at. Perhaps MacIntosh assumed, and probably correctly, that the supporters of the Arts Centre (the comfortable ones who face no visible oppression) would not approve of Ibing's provocative work hanging in such a lovely and tasteful place as the Lynnwood Arts Centre.

To rectify the inopportune impression Ibing's work might have had on MacIntosh's "public", the works previously described were removed from the gallery after the official opening of the exhibition. By doing this, MacIntosh violated the exhibition rights of the artist and the copyright of the show, as well. Furthermore, Ibing and Gordon were not notified of the removal, nor was the issue properly tabled. In fact, MacIntosh attempted to keep the issue hidden from artist and curator. The result was an undoing of Gordon's intended theme of domesticity.

Now MacIntosh's gallery retains its "professionalism". Now no one can complain of a distasteful display. Upon inquiry about her reasons for taking such high-handed liberty, MacIntosh answered that she did not like the way Ibing's work was executed, and that she knows her



THE CLOSET by Donna Ibing
Photo by Cees Van Gernerden

community!

Needless to say, the artists involved were shocked, hurt, and outraged at MacIntosh's deed. However, they kept their heads, and searched for underlying causes of MacIntosh's actions. What they discovered is interesting, though not surprising. It appears that a tongue-lashing, local journalist, Ron Kowalsky, of the Simcoe Reformer, makes it his habit to attack art which expresses the concerns of women. Case in point: his article of March 1988 in the Simcoe Reformer titled, "Checking Out The Latest Lynnwood Exhibit - If scouring pads, toilet brushes work how about". That exhibit was an installation by Toronto-

based artist Clarisa Inglis. Kowalsky crudely profaned and poked uncalled-for fun at issues raised by the show, which evidently meant nothing to him, while also implying that the management of the Arts Centre was choosing non-art for display. It appears that MacIntosh was (and is) profoundly affected and motivated by media opinion. However, this does not justify her actions. She showed an inexcusable lack of integrity.

Clearly, once an exhibition has been accepted by a gallery, unseen or not, installed and officially opened, it is inexcusable to tamper with its contents, thereby altering the theme and impact of the show.

Pen and Inc. is published bimonthly by the Hamilton Artists' Inc., 145 James St. N., Hamilton, Ont., Canada L8R 2K8.

If you would like to advertise in Pen & Inc. Please give us a call at 529-3355. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily shared by the H.A.I. membership.

Please address letters to the Editor at the above address. Writers in Pen & Inc. must be H.A.I. members. Deadline for next edition submissions is November 8/90.

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The Hamilton Artists' Inc. Gallery is a charitable non-profit artist run centre which belongs to CARO and ANNPAC. Membership is open to artists and patrons alike.

We now are operating 900 square feet of exhibition space as well as general office space and The Printmaking Studio one door north on James Street, Gallery hours are Tuesday to Friday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Hamilton Artists Inc. Exhibition Programming Schedule

"KID INC"

Marilyn Lemon & Violet Costello
March 22 to April 20

16th ANNUAL MEMBER'S SHOW
April 26 to May 18

FLOWER SHOW -

Reclaiming and Renaming the
Flower Image
(Jane Gordon, Curator)
May 24 to June 22

ON BEING MALE

(Jim Riley, Curator)
June 28 to July 27

CLOSED

July 28 to August 31

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Full Page: \$400.00
 1/2 Page: \$200.00
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 1/8 Page: \$50.00

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POLEM Inc.

A Modest Proposal For A Solution To The Dilemma Surrounding Censorship.

by V. Jane Gordon

Feminists, male and female are disturbed - even incensed by the power-over-politics of pornography. The exploitation of women and children and the accumulation of power and wealth by the exploiters are pervasive. If there was ever an issue that justified the use of the "white glove" of censorship to muffle the mouth, close the ears, and shield the eyes, this is it.

I am an artist of liberal leanings, however. I accept the right of no one to muffle me as a cultural speaker.

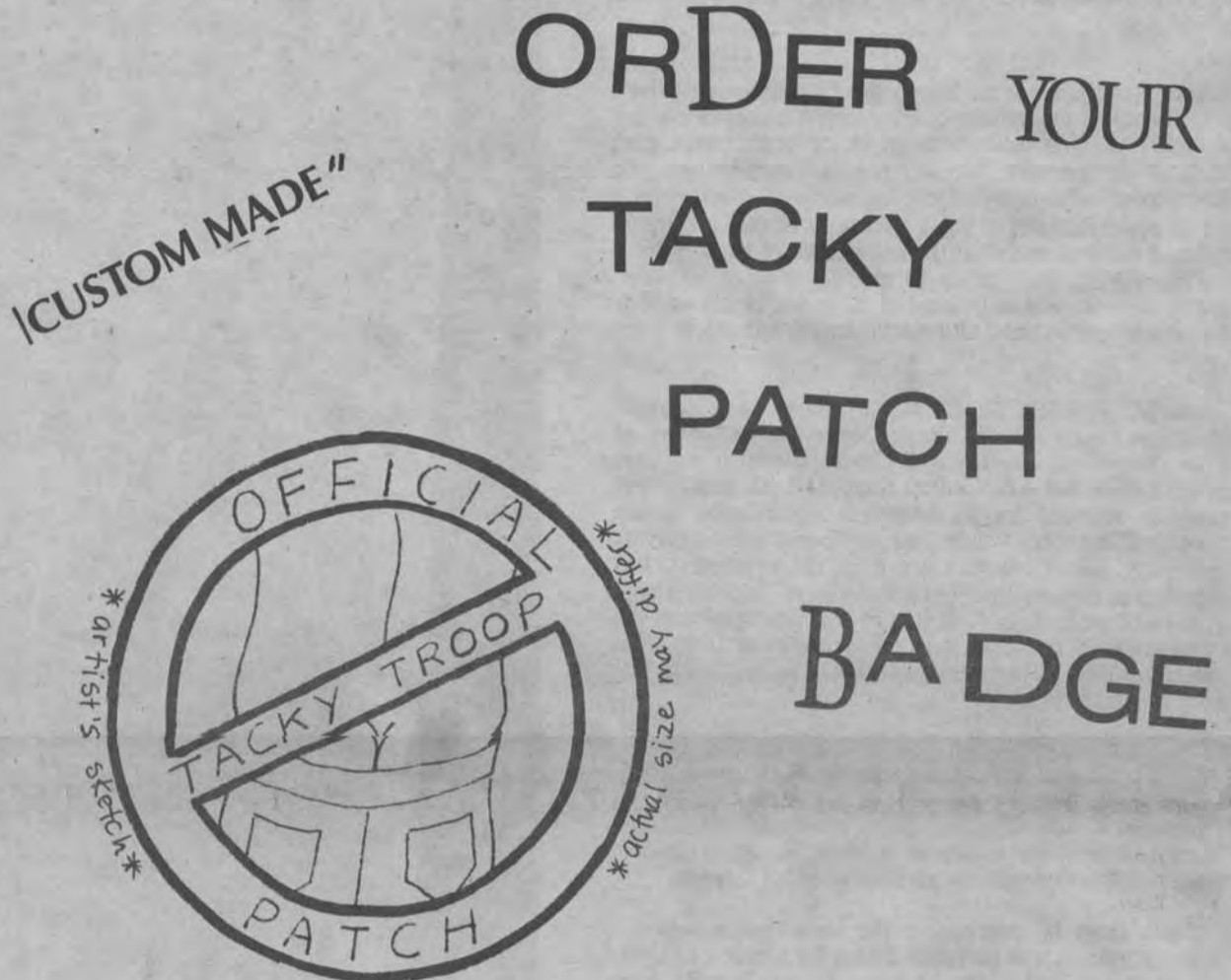
The solution to the problem of censorship is economic. Pornographers have a never ending source of revenue to finance the production of material. Those cultural voices which would provide balance in our society are impoverished. Every week another alternative publication dies for lack of funds. Without the balance provided by

alternate voices, an ideal society can never evolve. "Bottom-line mercantile sadism" will be the ethos of our community.

My proposal is the institution of an Osmotic Tax, i.e. a tax always flowing from the dominant discourse to the subsumed discourse (similar to tax on cigarettes). This tax, applied to the pornography industry and funds transferred to feminist organizations would create a new and balanced alternate voice that would render the 'dominant discourse' hard pressed to over power the feminist voice. This economic scheme, based on the simple idea of balance, could literally save the world.

Should we stop here? Don't we have a responsibility to work toward a world order of a certain quality? Dare we tax the "tacky"? The revenue potential is limitless.

As with any innovative scheme, ironing out the bugs involved in implementation is the major hurdle to overcome. It is proposed that an "Exploratory Implementation Unit" be created. By purchasing a TACKY TROOP PATCH, you can indicate your support for the proposal of taxation on sexism and pornography.



proceeds to BAAWA

Send cheque or money order for \$5.95 (includes GST & PST) to BAAWA, c/o Jane Gordon, Hamilton Artists Inc., 143 James St. North, Hamilton, Ontario, L8R 2K8, or

order you patch directly from any BAAWA member. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope to ensure quick delivery.

ANNOUNCE Inc.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

SECOND INTERNATIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE: Requires volunteers. May 17-21, 1991, at Glendon College, Toronto. Women playwrights from around the world will gather for this conference. Be a part of it! Be A Volunteer! Contact: Canadian Stage Company, 26 Berkely Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 2W3 or Phone Francine Volker at 964-7324, or Laurie Fyffe at 266-8863.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

CONTROVERSIAL ART SYMPOSIUM: Friday, March 22nd at 7 pm. at the Burlington Cultural Centre, Shoreline Room, 425 Brock Avenue, Burlington, Ontario. FREE ADMISSION but with limited seating. Please call the Cultural Centre to reserve your seat. 632-7796
PURPOSE: To consider the rights and responsibilities of the public, artists, art galleries and others when art objects and/or events become the centre of controversy. Presentations will be made by Judy Major-Girardin, Artist and Assistant Professor at McMaster University; Ihor Holubizky,

Acting Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Hamilton; Kim Ness, Director and Curator of the McMaster University Art Gallery; and Ted Pietrzak, Director of The Burlington Cultural Centre.

CONTROVERSY: VIEWS AND STATEMENTS

Why must Women Artists be assigned the marginal realm of the Colourful and Eccentric? Welland's elder woman artist, FRANCES TURNBULL, is only getting recognition after a fiery death at 89 years of age.

Although her work spanned a 75 year career, only now has the Welland Historical Museum on Hooker Street arranged an exhibit of her work. Curator, Mac Swackhammer says, that she "didn't flout convention, but she was an unconventional person." The things she saved in her home were an "archive of images and memories" that she used in her work. She was dedicated to her work and committed to encouraging other artists. So Why Has She Been Hidden Away? The exhibit will continue until June 2nd, 1991.

BAAWA Inc.

How To Join.

: B. A. A. W. A.



BAY AREA ARTISTS FOR WOMEN'S ART is a program of Hamilton Artists Inc., and modelled on Manitoba Artists for Women's Art, a program of Plug-In Gallery, Winnipeg. Members aim to promote the professional development of women artists and to promote the exhibition of women's art. It is a network which encourages the professional development of women in the visual arts; it provides opportunities for dialogue on contemporary issues through programming which includes visiting artists, educational workshops, exhibition projects, and a mentor program. The group welcomes new members, suggestions for programming or any other offers of support.

B.A.A.W.A. encompasses many feminisms; 'we want to encourage inclusiveness and the acceptance of difference, recognising the experience of exclusion suffered by many women in society.'

To become a member of B.A.A.W.A. (we welcome both genders) please fill out this form and return to BAY AREA ARTISTS FOR WOMEN'S ART, c/o Hamilton Artists Inc., 143 James Street North, Hamilton, Ontario L8R 2K8 (416) 529-3355

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
POSTAL CODE _____ TELEPHONE _____

CORRECT Inc.



The window of the Hamilton Artists Inc Gallery set up as a memorial to the 14 victims of the Montreal Massacre, December 6, 1990. Initiated by the Bay Area Artists for Women's Art (BAAWA), the project encouraged individuals to mark the 1st anniversary of the massacre by placing objects and statements in the window.

The Mentor Program - A Grant Application.

The Mentor Program formally establishes a relationship-based educational process for women artists. Emerging or re-emerging women artists often work in isolation and have little access to role models when making career choices or developing professional skills. The Mentor Program will pair a mentee (an emerging artist with strong technical abilities and basic level of skill) with a senior working woman artist in the community. During at least five hours per month, over a period of nine months. The mentor will discuss works in progress, resources, technical processes and the financial arts establishment. This program supports both the mentor and mentee at different stages of their careers and promotes the notion of artists not competing against each other, but working to support each other. Today, the Mentor Program is an application to the Canada Council. If funded, it will be an important program in the Bay Area. Watch future newsletters for grant application results.

V. Jane Gordon (co-applicant, The BAAWA Mentor Program).

DIAR Inc.

The Third Space

by Dawn White Beatty and Catherine Beaudette, Curators.

The mandate of the Third Space has birthed a new idea -- DiarInc. -- a collective 'member's diary' which will take physical form in the gallery and extend into Pen & Inc. A place to speak of work in progress; a place to ask questions and make observations; a place to begin a dialogue with other members of Hamilton Artists Inc.

What direction is your work taking? What are your artistic concerns, here and now? What are you thinking reading seeing doing?

We need to create a dialogue among members; a cohesion of individual and collective visions. We need to speak to each other.

When you are at the gallery take time to use DiarInc. Record your place and space as you see it, or indicate that you'd like to speak in the newsletter. Read the other entries in the diary and respond to them. This journal will become a resource for all. For contributing artist members it will be a necessary place of communication, resource/receptacle for personal journeying. For the Inc. archives it will be a useful historical reference to the particular concerns of artists of the region. For interested observers, curators and critics it will show connecting threads of ideas, and directions of thought; a window on the creative process; and accounting of our concerns as artists; a resource for the development of shows and critical writing.

LYNNWOOD ARTS CENTRE • 21 LYNNWOOD AVENUE • BOX 67 • SIMCOE • ONTARIO • N3Y 4K8 • (519) September 14, 1990

V. Jane Gordon
P.O. Box 1273
Waterdown, Ontario
L0R 2H5

Dear Jane;

In reply to your letter of July 7 regarding the Eccentric Furniture exhibition, the Board of Management of Lynnwood Arts Centre regrets the circumstances under which two of Donna Ibing's works were removed from the exhibit.

Yours Sincerely,

Sarah Brown for John Brown
Dr. John Brown
Chair, Board of Directors

cc: Sarah Brown
Director

20 AVA ROAD • BRANTFORD, ONTARIO • N3T 5G9 • (519) 758-5932
February 5, 1991

glenhyrst art gallery of brant

V. Jane Gordon
40 Mill Street
P.O. Box 1273
Waterdown, Ontario
L0R 2H0

Dear Jane:

In reviewing our exhibition schedule for 1989 The Eccentric Furniture Show stands out as a high point of the year. Each of the participating artists contributed thoughtful, well-executed works which intrigued visitors. Rather than moving silently and quickly through the gallery spaces, the majority of more than 430 viewers discussed, questioned, explored and very much enjoyed each piece. Many visitors to the show, including gallery volunteers and board members, returned for subsequent visits in order to share their experience with friends, students and fellow artists. Our audience was remarkably open to and enthusiastic about ideas expressed in the exhibition. Although the performance and video presentations were the first such programming to be offered at the gallery in recent years, even uninitiated viewers were supportive of these non-traditional media and found them to be fascinating.

Although I may have anticipated a debate or two during this installation, in fact, visitors were open to all aspects of the project and responded to the whimsical nature found in many of the pieces. Indeed, any preconceived notions I may have had about viewer responses were dashed when one of the most enthralled groups to tour the show turned out to be a number of students from a local Catholic school and their teacher. The Eccentric Furniture Show was judged by all connected with Glenhyrst to be a most positive event. The show got people looking, talking and excited about what was happening at the gallery.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Vesely
Carolyn Vesely
Director

Cultural Volunteers: The Next Generation?

by Dawn White Beatty

Many cultural organizations are struggling with a volunteer problem that threatens their day to day operations. Large or small, the problems are similar; lack of funds, not enough volunteers to look after the workload. As a consequence the "faithful few" are overworked and burned-out. The missing volunteer is most often targeted as the problem -- unreliable, disinterested, lacking in commitment. But is the problem really with the worker, or should we be examining the concept of volunteering itself?

Volunteer positions have been filled, in the majority of cases and places, by women -- the worker bees; the doers of good deeds, industrious and anonymous in their work, knitting together the structure, getting the tedious job done, filling in and filling out the form that the organization takes. They are seldom visible, indeed, the non-specific title of 'volunteer' suggests anonymity. The visible links of the chain are most often salaried employees and more often male. As our society evolves, this old order of cultural structuring is increasingly unacceptable.

Recognition nights and lapel pins do not meet the realistic needs of most community workers in our modern times. Self-satisfaction is a luxury that often has to be put aside for economic or other reasons. Volunteers, like everyone else, struggle to balance the budget, the family and self-esteem. Increasingly, they do not wish to waste valuable volunteer time mired in frustrating bureaucracy or building someone else's career. This is not selfish. It is a survival tactic in real life.

Most volunteers today do not approach their work in the perceived ecstatic of 'giving unselfishly', as if this would absolve them of sin and open the gates of artistic heaven to them. Rather, they are pushed to a place of commitment by a personal vision. The belief in the necessary presence of the arts in a life arouses feelings of strong obligation to support organizations that strive toward this objective.

Media personnel do a great disservice when they do not seriously consider the true motivation behind the volunteer system and blithely spew incorrect stereotypes instead of facts. John Bentley Mays, writer for the Toronto based-Globe and Mail, speaks of the "large number of commuter widows looking for personal escape from suburban loneliness" as the motivation for the female cultural worker/volunteer. His misguided vision is so removed from reality that it reminds one of Nero fiddling while Rome burned. It would be slightly amusing if not for the dangerous fact that readers sometimes believe what he writes. In reality, these volunteers are in closest touch with the problems within the arts and cultural industry; the changes happening and needed still. They are concerned enough to give their time and energy to shore up foundations. What Mays identifies in his mysoginistic vision as 'commuter widows' are a figment of his imagination. Cultural workers (women mostly, but men in small percentages), to do

their jobs for little or no monetary reward, and sometimes at a great personal expense. They know from remarks, such as those made by John Bentley Mays, that they are not valued or taken seriously in their work. Thanks, in part to this attitude, volunteers are becoming a disappearing species. The new cultural volunteers are arriving with more realistic expectations and louder voices. They recognize that the imbalances and misconceptions of the system need to be, and can be, corrected.

To some these changes will be a tragedy; a disintegration of "Christian" values of charity and goodwill; sign of crumbling society, but implementation of these values seems so often to fall more heavily onto the shoulders of women. And the fulfillment of these expectations keeps them in a desperate place of dependence. Financial dependence and its accompanying loss of authority and voice are often the sacrifices made for their 'free' services in the name of volunteering. More and more women cannot, and will not, accept this situation.

Volunteer work has become a luxury commodity. It has ceased to be a consideration for so many people for so many reasons that we must re-examine and restructure its place and form. Our challenge is to rethink, reshape, and re-distribute; to shake loose new ideas, to fulfill our cultural needs as a society.

Validation and redistribution are perhaps two good starting points. Concepts that can be applied to develop the valuable resource of cultural workers. Validation, tangible recognition and reward for services rendered (a pat on the back is no longer enough) in the form of some payment, or educational opportunities and credentials. A fact of life is that our society understands and values most that which it pays for. To do battle with this concept the enemy must be identified, its language learned, and demand a fairer distribution of rewards.

In an ideal situation, all jobs would be paying jobs. If there is no monetary transaction possible there should, at the very least, be trade-offs, such as access to training and information; opportunities for workers to acquire meaningful skills and titled positions that validate their experience, for future use. Women particularly need to learn how to access information, accredited educational opportunities, and to develop the skill of networking. (Male-centered organizations have always existed as a way of combining social responsibility with business interests. Groups, such as Masons, Shriners, Optimists, etc., have benefitted from their chosen causes while developing invaluable business and social connections; the famous male-bonding strength in numbers.) Most women are very new to this concept and could be encouraged to acquire the skills, within the cultural framework, as a representative of an organization. I am not advocating a mirroring of the male institutions, but rather an examination of their networking skills and a appropriation of the ideas of value.

Specific sponsorship by organizations and their patrons (in the form of bursaries, scholarships, etc.) or project grants from government and business for cultural workers to attend conferences, workshops, courses, etc. related to their jobs, could be implemented as payment for services. Financial credits toward memberships, workshops, travel opportunities, grants for specific jobs, short-term funding programs and paid positions for some jobs requiring specialized skills, business sponsorships for specific short-term projects (eg. the setting-up of a resource centre) - are all ideas for investigation. Co-operative programs that make use of cultural volunteers connect the arts in various ways with business and educational sectors would in turn give volunteers the opportunity to acquire relevant credentials and contacts. All these possibilities would provide tangible validation for volunteer workers imparting skills that help build careers outside of the volunteer sector while maintaining incentive to continue as cultural workers.



COMMUTER WIDOWS LOOKING FOR PERSONAL ESCAPE FROM SUBURBAN LONELINESS

Redistribution, restructuring - perhaps it could be called job sharing - is another possibility. What is meant by this is the inclusion of cultural volunteers into levels of administration usually left to paid employees. More participation by volunteers in important conferences, meetings, workshops, editorial positions, etc. as organization representatives, or in addition to regular personnel, would increase levels of experience and awareness of organization operations; on the job training for interested volunteers. This inclusion of volunteers at higher levels in the organization would open channels of communication and creative thinking. A desirable atmosphere based on mutual respect would evolve, thus encouraging a regenerative cycle of giving/receiving/giving, instead of the totemic structure which is presently most common. The result would be of benefit to all with a growing loyalty and dedication and the increasing awareness of the volunteer as a skilled contributor and resource invaluable to the community. The cycle would come around to a more valued, thus more productive and creative volunteer.

As our environment is painfully teaching us, the roots of the plant/system must be nourished constantly to produce a strong and fruitful specimen and we should recognize that this lesson applies to all facets of our lives, including the growing cultural industry. A challenging, interesting and rewarding system will create a rich new order and direction, but the first step is to acknowledge the need for change and a willingness to shift our thinking and biases.

PERSONAL Inc.

MALE BUT SEXY

Wanted: Beautiful, young men to pose nude. Must be willing, quiet, and demure, but sexy. Will train. Send nude photo and measurements to Box I, BAAWA, c/o Hamilton Artists Inc.

OPEN MIND

Wanted: Open-minded, free-thinking, 90's type Gallery willing to exhibit anatomically correct figurative paintings. Send info to Donna Ibing, BAAWA, c/o Hamilton Artists Inc.

PROJECTS AND CAUSES

Wanted: House-Spouse. MARGinal position. Must know what needs to be done without being told. Very little thinking required. Artists need not apply. Please contact Don or Jane Gordon, Box 000, Waterdown, Ontario.

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