



Split-Subject

FORWARD

I begin with congratulations to Mary Keczan-Ebos. She has brought together women artists from various regions, working in a variety of media, to fulfil the aims of a complex curatorial project. A project which has a strong focus on the cultural dialectic of this region in the 1990's.

Culturally the Bay Area seems to define itself by a kind of declared separation or fragmentation of its parts. Fragments exist based on history, work, ethnicity, place, religion; and these fragments actively resist the inevitable knitting together of communities strung around the bay.

The alternating constructing pulse to that process of fragmentation is the interconnectedness that grows with time. The resulting complex multilayered community is symbolized for me by the lines of long black limousines which pass over the high level bridge to the catholic cemetery in Burlington. These processions are like mapping lines - drawn in time - a kind of black ink joining the communities together.

The "Split-Subject" focuses on "the dialectic between gender and ethnicity, industrialization, materiality, textuality and the cultural construct of imposed religion." It is the first exhibition of a Bay Area wide curatorial discourse called, "Art Under a Clear Blue Sky, Curating Outside the Umbrella of Metropolitan Toronto." Other exhibition projects which present some aspect of the Bay Area to itself will be forth coming from: The Burlington Cultural Centre, The McMaster University Art Gallery, The Carnegie Gallery and NIIPA, as well as Hamilton Artists Inc. We can look forward to the emergence of new voices and the creation of new insights about artists working in the Bay Area useful to ourselves and to others.

V. JANE GORDON
HAMILTON, SEPTEMBER 1990

The Split - Subject

Ever since Plato admitted to the Republic only "hymns of the Gods and praises of famous men" and Aristotle allowed that women and slaves might manifest good moral purpose, although, "the woman may be said to be an inferior being, and the slave quite worthless," women's sense of identity has been in a state of constant flux. Not only has the identity of woman been defined and circumscribed by classical patriarchal histories such as these but in the determination of aesthetic qualities such as the sublime and the beautiful. Almost always, both woman and the feminine are defined as negative, lacking, or marginal.

Edmund Burke, in 1757, claimed that imperfection enhances the beauty of a woman. He defines "beauty ... where it is highest in the female sex, almost always carries with it an idea of weakness and imperfection." He continues "Women are very sensible of this; for which reason, they learn to lisp, to totter in their walk, to counterfeit weakness, and even sickness." Because women are imperfect, perfection should not be the object of love. "Who ever said," he adds "we *ought* to love a fine woman, or even any of these beautiful animals, which please us?" So history and tradition have defined the value of women as inferior beings - along with obedient slaves and beautiful animals.

Kant, in the nineteenth century, continues to define women's identity for her. He says "Women have strong inborn feeling for all that is beautiful, elegant and decorated" and that they have "sympathetic sensations, goodheartedness, and compassion" and they "prefer the beautiful to the useful." He adds that "The fair sex has just as much understanding as the male, but it is a *beautiful understanding*, whereas ours should be a *deep understanding*, an expression that signifies identity with the sublime." We can only conclude that the sublime is a masculine, and therefore superior quality while the beautiful is female and inferior. Kant also suggests limiting the roles that a woman might assume, he says "Deep meditation, and long sustained reflection are noble but difficult, and do not well befit a person in whom unconstrained charms should show nothing else than a beautiful nature. Laborious learning or painful pondering, even if a woman should greatly succeed in it, destroys the merits that are proper to her sex, because of their rarity they can make of her an object of cold admiration; but at the same time they will weaken the charms with which she exercises her great power over the other sex." The power that Kant has allowed woman is a dubious one and brings into question who has the real power. Indeed, power lies in the hands of the one who circumscribes, maps out and places into singular history, the identity of the 'other.'

The history of western art speaks in one unified voice. This voice is singular and caucasian, bound by rigid geometric form and is masculine. Western artistic tradition has focused on unity as the ultimate goal of art. With unity, we are told, comes harmony. A seamless universe. The route of this harmonious universe has been a linear progression. Since God became a man it has been only a masculine tradition. There is another artistic-spiritual tradition, however, and it also has unity as its goal but the route is multiple and circular - spiral, labyrinthian, both masculine and feminine; like the creation of the earth which was originally female.

The French feminist theorist Julia Kristeva sees a split in this moment of creation - a separation and fragmentation that results from splitting what was an original unity with the mother before birth. This is a unity that was present before consciousness was acquired; before the symbolic language of the father was historically

assumed. Kristeva's theories are formed primarily around the written and spoken word but the metaphor she uses comes from the earth, the first founding subject. The term "clive" comes from minerology - it means "split" and suggests a division that is inherent and natural: a natural fragmentation, as in the splitting of a diamond into natural cleavage planes. It is the natural fragmentation that occurs when women move from the perceived disunity of the maternal into the imposed patriarchal order of society and culture.

While the external form of women's lives appears to have assumed the oneness and seeming equality of the privileged patriarchal order - we are now free to be like a man - perhaps even to be perfect - the splits, layerings and fragmentations remain within. There is a constant struggle to maintain this imposed unity. Multiple roles that must be assumed are constantly creating contradictions, parallelisms, dualities - a kind of schizophrenia, with layers of meaning manifested in words, actions, movements and creations. The desire for a unified identity results only in a perpetually changing definition of difference. This "unsettling process" causes a "crisis within social structures and institutions" and this happens at the "moment of their mutation, evolution, revolution or disarray" according to Kristeva. This difference that always results in a questionable "subject in process" can be manifested as eruptions and explosions into fragments, with parts of identity flying off leaving only an 'other's' conception of what we should be. Indeed, imposing a silent 'otherness' to the condition of being a woman.

Kristeva says further that "the woman's struggle cannot be divorced from revolutionary struggle, class struggle." She adds that "the issues that are crucial in our practice involve the notion of the subject, its fragmentation, the inscription of heterogeneity, difference--." She further adds "call it 'woman' or 'the oppressed social class': it's the same struggle, and you never have one without the other."

Each of the definitions - and there are many more - that have shaped the western construction of a woman's identity also confines that construction, keeping her oppressed. She is at one and the same time the object of these definitions while attempting to be the subject of her own creation of identity. For the woman artist who has historically been the object of not only the male gaze but the vehicle for the male artist's creativity, becoming the maker of art represents not only a shift in identity but a re-appropriation of that identity.

In this context, I want to describe some of the shifting and re-appropriating that went into the evolution of this show. That is, I want to record a fragment of our history - our intrusion into the artistic tradition of this region. The original proposal was for a show made up of a group of artists who shared a thematic dialectic in their visual art. The dialogue that ran like the interconnected tributaries of a river throughout the work of these artists was a concern with the relation of the feminine identity, or aesthetic as Jung would have it, with social, cultural, ethnic, religious, sexual, mythological, textual and technological constructions. As we met periodically, and talked about the concerns we each felt were important to us personally and that we inevitably worked into our visual art, we discovered that various streams of consciousness were criss-crossing at multiple levels. Like women whose menstrual cycles begin to coincide with the moon and each other, it became apparent that, unconsciously, we were using similar techniques, and we were overlapping particular recurrent women's issues. We were creating a multiple, diverse, fragmented, uncircumscribed but nonetheless unified, visual language.

Mary Keczan - Ebos

Filomena said:

You must remember that we are all women, and every one of us is sufficiently adult to acknowledge that women, when left to themselves, are not the most rational of creatures, and that without the supervision of some man or other their capacity for getting things done is somewhat restricted.

Elissa then said:

But where are we to find these men? As we all know, most of our own menfolk are dead, and those few that are still alive are fleeing in scattered little groups from that which we too are intent upon avoiding.

Pampina smiled and said:

See how Fortune favours us right from the beginning, in setting before us three young men of courage and intelligence, who will readily act as our guides and servants if we are not too proud to accept them for such duties.

THE DECAMERON
BY GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO
1350



"The Scarlet Letter"

Selected Exhibitions

1989
Group Show
McMaster University Art Gallery
Hamilton, Ontario

1987
"Pushing Two"- Group Show
Ha' Ku Gallery
St. Catherines, Ontario

Group Show
McMaster University Art Gallery

Member's Exhibition
Hamilton Artists' Inc.

1986
Members Group Show
Artists' Co-op
Hamilton, Ontario

1984
18 Artists' Group Show
Harbourfront
Toronto, Ontario

1982-83
Wentworth Hall Group Shows
McMaster University

1981,82,83
McMaster Group Shows
McMaster University

Education

1989
Honours B.A.
McMaster University

1983-84
B.Ed.
Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario

1977-78
Ceramics
Istituto d'Arte, Fermo, Italy

Silvia D'Agruma

A continuous surge of energy comes from my family and cultural background. The images that I work with and am constantly struggling with are extremely personal and somewhat magical. Some of these fragments deal with relationships, rituals and traditions - some with sexuality, with media-induced perpetuating desires, with dualities in life both mythical and real and with societal expectations. I conclude by quoting:

"Hither to me from Krete, unto this holy temple, a place where there is a lovely grove of apples and an altar where the incense burns, and here is water which ripples cold through apple branches, as all the place is shadowed with roses, and as the leaves quiver a profound quiet ensues. And here is a meadow where horses graze, spring flowers bloom, the honeyed whisper of winds This is the very place where you, Kypies ..., drawing into golden cups the nectar gorgeously blended for our celebration, then pour it forth."

SAPPHO
600-550 B.C



Lu prim' ann' de matrimonie
se stà cor' a cor'
lu secònd' ann' cul' a cul'
lu terz' a cagg' 'n cul'

Selected Exhibitions

1990
43rd Annual Juried Exhibition
London Regional Art Gallery

1989
Featured Artist
New Street Gallery, Burlington

Group Show
The McGill Club, Toronto

SUMMA Show
McMaster University Art Gallery

42nd Annual Juried Exhibition
London Regional Art Gallery

1988
Artscan Juried Print Exhibition
McMaster University Art Gallery

Education

1990
B.Ed.
University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario

1989
Honours B.A. (Fine Art)
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

English is not my mother-tongue. For this reason, marks of various shapes that can be put together to have meaning as either Hungarian or English have a great magical power. Some of these constructions can have power as words and others reshape themselves to become forceful images. These signs are the union of mark and meaning.

My work is an exploration of the arbitrary nature of the meaning of the sign in visual language. That means questioning how a combination of marks on a surface can become imbued with 'meaning'. And why some combinations of marks become 'words' in our culture, and other combinations become a figure painted on canvas or sculpted in clay. Or even a building. How is it, as Kristeva asks, that consciousness of this "signification" makes us aware of a definite subject and an object? Who determines which of these signs are assigned particular aesthetic qualities? I believe that the cultural and social constructs of gender play an important part in the answers to these questions and must always be a consideration. I am most interested in the moment of intersection of the meaning of multiple signs: marks that represent the Goddess, Runic carvings, words and pictorial art. The myth of meaning that surrounds all of these gives them a power that seems magical.



"Word Woman"

Selected Exhibitions

1990
Justina M. Barnicke Gallery
Hart House Art Competition
University of Toronto

Bay Area Artists for Women's Art
Group Show
(Dedicated to the 14 Women
Massacred in Montreal)
Hamilton Artists' Inc.

Juried Group Show
Total Art Gallery
Toronto, Ontario

1989
3rd Annual Open Juried Show
Gallery 306
Toronto, Ontario

Group Show
The McGill Club
Toronto, Ontario

14th Annual Juried Exhibition
Mississauga Library Systems

SUMMA Show
McMaster University Art Gallery

1988
Annual Juried Student Exhibition
McMaster University Art Gallery

20th Annual Juried Exhibition
Burlington Cultural Centre

Juried Exhibition
Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant

94th Annual Juried Exhibition
Women's Art Association
Art Gallery of Hamilton

Education

1990
M.A.
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario

1986
Honours B.A. (Eng. & Art Hist.)
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

1968
Design Diploma
Ryerson Polytechnical Institute
Toronto, Ontario

Nora Kilkenny

Writing an artist's statement is a difficult task when what you attempt to do with your work is to allude, suggest, possibly address - but never state. Similarly perplexing is discussing my work in anything but incomplete sentences. So this task demands a clarity and conciseness generally foreign to my intuitive, rather than rational way of perceiving.

I have approached the work presented in this show from a few different positions. While some of the work is informed by an intuitive play of materials and associations, in other pieces I am more consciously isolating re-occurring motifs and processes that I work with. Through investigating the essence of my own tendencies with materials, I better understand my personal vocabulary of forms. There is something of a schism, then, between the work that almost evolves of its own volition and the work that I do that is analytical of its own art making process.

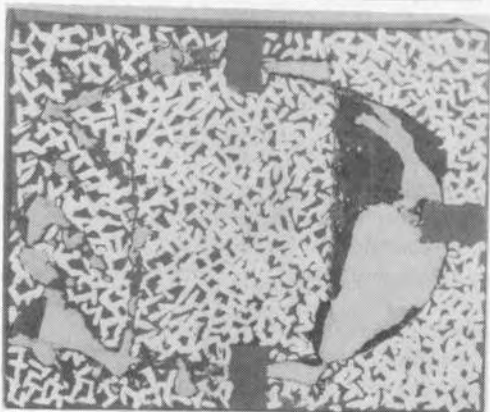
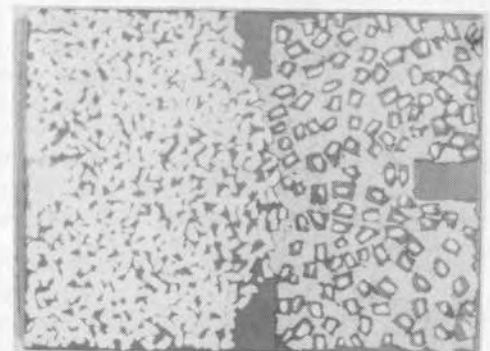
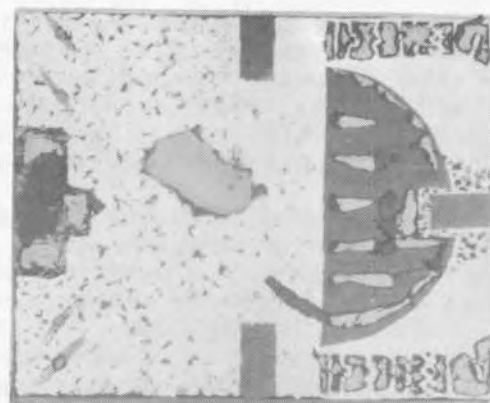
Selected Exhibitions

1989
SUMMA Show
Graduating Students Exhibition
McMaster University Art Gallery

Group Show
The McGill Club
Toronto, Ontario

Education

1990
Honours B.A. (Art and Art History)
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario



"pre-renovations"

Our society is concerned primarily with externals, such as, social and economic status and appearances. Powerful modern mythologies, symbols and iconographies are being created by the media and advertising. Attractive women are put on display to sell products. One really wonders just what is for sale. Sex plays a major part in the transaction. Images are used to entice, titillate and to arouse the audience or the buyer.

There is an emphasis in these media productions on instant gratification, disposable sex and people as a part of the consumable product. The market place is the setting - the arena for these messages.

Consumerism basically runs counter to concerns about our environment and positive social and personal interactions between people. Everything is reduced to the absurd, banal and mediocre.



"Tyranny of Fashion"

Selected Exhibitions

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1989
Group Show
The McGill Club
Toronto, Ontario | 1988
Artscan Juried Show
McMaster University Art Gallery |
| Juried Exhibition
Mississauga Public Library | Juried Exhibition
Beckett and Stable Gallery
Hamilton, Ontario |
| SUMMA Show
McMaster University Art Gallery | 1987
"Figure Show"
Stable Gallery
Hamilton, Ontario |
| Juried Print Show | |

Education

- | | |
|--|---|
| "Praxis"
Artist in Community Education
Queen's University
Kingston Public Library | 1989
Honours B.A.
(Art and Art History)
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario |
| 1986
"Hamilton Now" Show
Organized by Hamilton Artists' Inc. | 1987
B.Ed.
Artist in Community Program
Faculty of Education
Queen's University
Kingston, Ontario |

Alison Boston

This performance was inspired by a dream. Early one morning I woke up, and in that place between sleeping and waking, wrote a poem about a woman named "Belladonna". She haunted me.

She is the un-enlightened contemporary woman, confused by the sexist and stereotypical images of women created by the media and her own inner sense of identity.

The name Belladonna, is surrounded by some interesting folklore. While being a name that's frequently used in literature to refer to a "fair lady", it is also the common name given to deadly nightshade. A peculiar symptom of those poisoned by belladonna is complete loss of voice. This is particularly pertinent to the Belladonna of this performance because she is unable to express herself and is encouraged by the narrator to do so by singing. This she ultimately does.

Historically, women's expressions have been repressed. Belladonna's Adventures in Nah-Nah Land is about one woman's struggle to overcome years of repressive socialization. The piece finishes with her encouraging the next generation of women to take self-expression one step further. In this way Belladonna represents the evolution of women:

*...You've gotta tell all the world
that all we ever wanted
all we ever needed
was to sing our music
Oh, sing Donna,
sing Belladonna,
sing....*

Education

B.A.
Theatre Concentration
University of Ottawa

Grants

1988
Canada Council Explorations
SAW Video JumpstART

Performances

TRIAESTHETALON (a work in progress)
1988 - Sasquatch Poetry, Ottawa

AQUATHOUGHTICS

1988 - Susan Annis's fortieth birthday party,
Ottawa
- No Tokens Performance Cabaret,
Gallery 101, Ottawa

BELLADONNA'S ADVENTURE IN NAH-NAH LAND

1988 - Festival-La Mesure des Temps,
Axe Neo 7 Art Contemporain, Hull
1987 - Cows 're Nice Performance Cabaret,
Ottawa's Fall Festival of the Arts
1986 - Festival in the Courtyards, Ottawa
- Tree Ottawa
- Sasquatch Poetry

BREAKING THE SILENCE IN THREE PARTS

1988 - Six and a Half Minute Performance Cabaret,
Gallery 101
- Carleton University Literary Association,
Ottawa
1987 - Performance a Go-Go Too, SAW Gallery,
Ottawa
- This Moment is an Eternity, Gallery 101

MEND A BROKEN HEART T.V. GAME SHOW

1987 - Arts Court Open House Celebration,
Arts Court, Ottawa
- Visitor's and Convention Bureau,
Fall Festival of the Arts Promo, Ottawa

NURSE MARY MEETS THE SASSYSQUASH

1986 - Gallery 101

FASHION PASSION

1986 - Overture, Ottawa's Fall Festival
of the Arts
- Joico Trade Show, Toronto

I feel the relevance of these films exists in the ability of each woman to incorporate innovative, experimental techniques into the construction of the film without compromising or supplanting the content. Each film speaks loud and clear. Whether it is personal and contemplative in nature or overtly issue oriented the voice that is heard is women's experience.

In relation to my own films I have found that tracing how women have been represented through the decades, in publications such as *Life* and *Chatelaine* magazine, has been an instructive and somewhat depressing process. I can safely say that the dominant culture's agenda is intact. De-contextualizing this material by appropriation has provided me with a vast, ready-made picture archive from which to begin re-working gender stereotypes. Other stories beg to be told. Through collage animation I can tell some of them.



Still from : "*The Orientation Express*"

Productions

1987 The Orientation Express
16 mm. animation, 14 min.

Selected Screenings

- 1990
- Warsaw, Poland
- New Media Art, O.C.A.
- 1989
- A.S.I.F.A. Animation Festival, San Francisco
- National Women's Studies Assoc. Conference, Maryland
- Lifesize Women & Film, Halifax

- Women in the Director's Chair, Chicago 1988
- Five Days of Independent Cinema, Main Film, Montreal
- Emily Carr College, Vancouver

Acquisitions:

- The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
- Art Bank, Canada Council
- Channel Four Television, London, UK
- Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax
- Metro Toronto Reference Library
- California Institute for the Arts, Valencia

1985 Man-Made Life
16 mm. 6 min. Silent

Selected Screenings

- 1988
- Forest City Gallery, London
- Niagara Artists' Centre, St. Catharines
- Art Space, Peterborough
- Gallery 101, Ottawa
- 1987
- The Western Front, Vancouver
- 1986
- Festival D'Intervention 3, Quebec City

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