

SOUL'S KITCHEN by Donna Lypchuk

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My dabblings in art criticism for the last fifteen years have taught me that it is useless to try to write about any art "movement" or "trend" without first encroaching it in some kind of outrageous metaphor. As a proud owner of a television remote, I know, that being as sensational as possible is the only way you can get our attention deficit ridden society to read a story about art. Art critics are capricious creatures by nature, which means that I plead guilty in advance, of the various Sins Of Omission that I will no doubt be accused of in the near future -- as I present you with an latest outrageous metaphor, to describe a much too late-breaking story about the Toronto art scene called SOUL'S KITCHEN. Warning: this story is intended for entertainment purposes only and not for therapeutic or medicinal use.

Soul's Kitchen is that imaginary place, deep within the human psyche where ideas are concocted, canned, whipped up, processed, decorated, half-baked, chilled and sometimes beaten to death in the name of offering up some "food for thought". It is the place where every artist lives -- the mental space where, as the great social anthropologist Levi-Strauss claimed, the "raw" is transformed into the cooked. Metaphors are mixed, truths gutted, sacred cows are slaughtered and pure poison preserved for immortality. Every artist is ultimately a metaphysician, basically transforming solids into vapours, the banal into the divine, even sometimes turning what looks like pure bovina excreta into gold. The artistic process mimics our first experience of "magic" -- when Mom first manifested a four-course meal from a presumably empty fridge. No wonder artists are such holy creatures. The kitchen is the hearth, the home, the very center of soul. The kitchen is where the Goddess lives.

That is the reason this article is called "Soul's Kitchen" and not Tool Time With Zeus and the Gang is because it is about women artists. As an armchair anthropologist I have long often though I smelled something simmering quietly, like along held resentment on the back burners of the Toronto art scene. Images done by women ... of so-called dysfunction -- self-amputation, mommy-hating, daddy-bashing, prostitution, obsession, and ritual abuse have been glaring at us, like a woman scorned, from Toronto's gallery walls for over twenty years. If a body of work reflects the subconscious collective mind, then I have come to the conclusion that the Goddess within is not a happy camper.

This blatant, en masse womanly "refusal to nurture" finds it's rebellious roots at the Dorothy Cameron Gallery in Yorkville in 1961. Even the bodice-ripping fervour of Women's Lib, as it so quaintly was called back then, failed to eject the only, famous living woman artist at the time, Joyce Weiland out of the "kitchen" and into the gallery where she belonged (at least without one phone-call to morality squad to protest her gratuitous display of T & A) Ten years later, when Weiland exhibited at the National Art Gallery, her work was identified by it's numerous cute allusions to the womanly arts -- sewing, cooking, and making the bed. She baked cakes with Polar Bears on top, sewed pillows out of plastic and recorded history by immortalizing Pierre Trudeau's dictum "Reason Over Passion" on a patchwork quilt. Like a truly, amoral force of Nature, Weiland was the first artist to show us "how to keep 'em nurtured" while at the same ravage the scene like a soul destroying tornado.

At the time, female artists also decided it would be fun to objectify themselves to the same extent that men had been objectifying them all of their lives. In the 1970s, the hyper sexualization was the au-courant tool of transformation. Artists used lipstick, needles, strings to in essence prostitute themselves in the name of fine art. Weiland fetishized her own mouth, by having her lipstick marks lithographed in sequence singing "O Canada". However, the Queen of Female Impersonators at the time, and perhaps of All Time was Suzy Lake. A photographer and performance artist, Lake specialized in taking snap-shots of herself in the act of transforming into a glamorous Cosmo-like career girl. In one starkly feminist performance piece, Lake also had

herself strung up as "living puppet" in which the strings were manipulated by men. Lake soon found herself emulated in the 1980s by Cindy Sherman, who according to Lake's current dealer, Paul Petro, has admitted to following in Lake's high-heeled footsteps. It pains me when I hear Suzy Lake described as Canada's Cindy Sherman. Cindy Sherman is more correctly -- the U.S.'s Suzy Lake.

In the eighties, images of domestic discontent continued to pepper the walls of the Isaacs and Carmen Lamanna Galleries with spite. The needle was Colette Whiten's weapon of choice when she painstakingly reproduced realistic black images of Canadian politicians in T.V. tube gray shades of threads. At the Ydessa Gallery, Liz Magor punched her fist into bowls of rising dough, took pictures and asked us for our impression of the void left behind. Today, we see that a womanly arts such as "needlework" have taken on a different, more macabre meaning, particularly when you find yourself standing, as I did, last year, in the Power Plant art gallery, admiring a bloody looking baby doll stuck full of pins by artist Catherine Herd.

The 1980s also produced a crop of women artists in Toronto whose work seemed ... a tad hostile, compared to say, the colourful, yet polite examples of abstract expressionism that were adorning the gallery walls uptown. To see "art with an attitude" you had to go down to The Ydessa Gallery on Queen Street, where every couple of months, a brand new fascinating "case history" was featured on the clinically white walls. The twisted photo-mutilations of Shelagh Alexander, which featured lost female souls lost stranded in alien black and white landscape reconstructed from found bits of 16mm film were experiments in borderline perceptual schizophrenia. Kim Kozzi, the ancestral mother of all artists today who use such supernatural materials as borg, black light and astro-turf in their work created kooky, multi-media constructions that could be described as lessons in WitchCraft 101. Kim Kozzi, who later co-opted men into her realm to form The Fast Wurms. The naive watercolour netherworlds of Nancy Johnson which featured a Smurf-like female personae trapped in an eternal state of re-birthing took the idea of self-abnegation to uncharted heights of detachment.

At Carmen Lamanna, the painter Joanne Todd, the sarcastic bastard daughter of Mary Pratt and The Devil, wowed the critics with her cryptic visions of social utopia while Rae Johnson, in the same gallery periodically horrified them with her not so subtle paintings of women forced into sexual subjugation. At Garnet Press, Natalka Husar shocked and appalled with her garish self portraits -- tainting womanly occupations like cooking, canning, collecting and making the bed with a touch of evil.

At the time I remember thinking that this art was more "naked" than any painted classically "nude". Besides, mimicking mental illness brought you fame and acclaim. Although Toronto was definitely a hot-house of blossoming malevolent talents, artists from other provinces like Wanda Koops, Betty Goodwin, Yana Sterbak and Angela Grossman were also busy "spreading the disease" in our public galleries and museums from coast to coast. Like archeologists these artists were excavating the ruins of the female psyche. What they managed to dig up was an amoral, crazy-making face that predates any religion as well as any human projection that we might have about what is ugly or evil. After all, one man's ugly, orange borg rug is another's suitable wig to wear during the goddess worshipping pagan ritual.

Recently this movement, which used to just be an tempting aroma, wafting from the secret confines of Soul's Kitchen has exploded in our faces. Like a souffl  full of wicked imagery -- babies stuck with pins, prostitutes, bondage, diesel dykes, vaginas, and other blasphemies have exploded in our face with the burgeoning careers of such artists as Janieta Eyre, Catherine Heard, Julie Voyce, Maggie Celestino, Fiona Smyth, Ottilie Mason, Anne Marie Cheung, Shari Boyle, Eliza Griffiths and Gretchen Sankey. Mail me a roll of toilet paper and I'll finally have room to name them all. Despite this relentless dumping of psychologically toxic "female" imagery into our visual fields, the mainstream press, which is still predominantly male, has ignored it, the

same way corporation ignore their culpability for their little industrial spills.

I think that this is because, after all these years, it is still hard to accept that there could be such an entity as "the angry, young woman." The archetype of the "angry young man" has existed for years as a noble, lauded thing, but the female artist who expresses anger, visually or otherwise is still perceived to be a crank, a crack pot, desperate for the very male attention she seems to deplore or the worst insult of all -- practicing a form of self-therapy. Female anger is still not considered to be legitimate thing, even though basic feminist theory has taught us that anger is one way of "taking the power back." Society still perceives angry women as victims. Why are women angry? Because their work is misunderstood.

I still get the sense that Joyce Weiland's work, which I saw when I was eleven years old in the National Art Gallery is still perceived as a famous attempt at flirtation. Even as late as 1987, when Weiland had her retrospective at the AGO, a very famous local art critic for the Globe and Mail chose to write a line about her physical attributes as opposed to the art. Another well-known critic wrote of his nausea upon seeing an exhibition of prostitutes by Rae Johnson in 1986. However, as a 26 year old stringer for magazines such as Vanguard and C at the time Johnson's exhibition made my cauldron bubbleth over -- it was immediately apparent to me that this painter was getting to the bottom of that Madonna/Whore complex that famous Canadian Jungian psychoanalyst Marion Woodman had been writing extensively about in her series of books. Artists in other countries, such as Cindy Sherman and yes even Madonna since have made their careers out of exploring this dichotomy. But not here in Toronto. Oh, no.

Female artists are expected to practice their craft within the confines of their covens, which are bordered by the pages a few publicly subsidized art magazines who pride themselves on their attempts at socialization. From my point of view, there are just many Cassandras screaming in the basement right now, that it is time we let them out. Despite the bloody evidence all around me, that the patriarchy has finally been completely and thoroughly savaged, I am completely mystified as to why the "angry young women" artist is still treated as being the exception rather than the norm. Words like "courageous:" " are still used to describe the work of the inimitably witty Joanne Todd, who may be the only real social critic working in the visual arts today. it seems that women can't win the Smart Art Award in Toronto unless they have a tongue as sharp and cutting as a proverbial castrating knife. It was interesting to note here, that during the course of writing this article, that I found many of these artists reluctant to discuss how they felt about what has been written about them. Hard won experience has taught them that if you kick at the pedestals of the patriarchy you'll just end up stubbing your toe.

The artist with the bloodiest feet in town is Joyce Weiland. She was the first woman in Canada to be given a solo exhibition at the National Art Gallery in 1971, a feat that wasn't repeated until twenty years later, when the National Art Gallery gave artist Yana Sterbak, who you may recall caused quite an outcry for exhibiting a dress made of raw meat. This progressive move by the NAG was a painful remainder that women rarely "make it" big time in Canada; about once every twenty years. Weiland was also the first woman in Canada to write and direct a feature film -- "The Far Shore" about artist Tom Thompson's mysterious death. The film was also her first inescapable failure -- a forty days in the desert type experience shared by many feature filmmakers since. She was the first woman to show nudity in public and the first to bring women's so-called frivolous country fair crafts back into the realm of fine art. She was our first mystic, sensualist and intellectual. Weiland wet her tootsies in every medium. She was an animator, a sculptor, an installation artist and a painter. She is -- as artist and professor Vera Frankel so aptly puts it "the Earth Mother Conscience of us all." This also makes Weiland is also our first orphan. How does one nurture the The High Priestess of Canadian Art?

Weiland, who unfortunately ailing at this time, with a disease that can be compared to a return to Cassandra's basement, is unable to comment on this matter of Soul's Kitchen, but it is obvious

from watching experimental films, such as Rat Diet In North America, Catfood and Water Sark that she was Queen of that particular Domain. In 1963 when wrote: "I decided to make a film at my kitchen table, there is nothing like knowing my table. The high art of the housewife. You rake prisms, glass, lights (water and myself to it). The housewife is high."

During her long and illustrious career, Weiland played many roles -- In 1961, she was A Riot Girl, when she exhibited a crude drawing called "Balling". When she was making her short experimental films, she was an Angry Jung Woman, finding art in the Sargasso Sea that was her kitchen table. She definitely behaved like a Voodoo Fetish Queen, when she created a perfume called Sweet Beaver for her 1971 exhibition at the NAG. Weiland was also the quintessential Goddess Freak, exhibiting pastel paintings that Jay Scott described in a 1987 issue of Canadian art as being "the return of the female to a rococco Eden, as a romantic journey into mythological paradise, pastel inupurity and lambient with love."

Part of Weiland's legacy to this city, is the spawning of a couple of generations of women who have been inspired to create art that is different then men's. In an interview in 1987 to the Toronto Star, Weiland said "Women artists are different from men in that once we sense who we are, we're perhaps more personal, have more courage about how revealings can be more spiritual."

Which brings me back to my outrageous metaphor --Although cooking up culture in Soul's Kitchen is a spiritual matter, it does become necessary, for art critic, who can be compared to a kind of pompous waiter, to eventually present the dear reader with a kind of Menu that lets him or her know what's ON SPECIAL today. Keep in mind that it is also an art critic's job to call people names. I hope your in the mood for blood and guts. Like all fine cuisine, some of it may seem familiar, having originated from the kitchen of Joyce Weiland, who at one time in her life presented herself in each of these roles.

TORONTO'S ANGRY JUNG WOMEN This work, like a dose of revenge, is best served cold. Although the catch phrase that best describes the work of these women is "Reason Over Passion" their work has a way of nipping at your conscience. These are the analysts, the social critics and commentators. They are the admirers of pure forms, mathematical and ancient. They are lovers of language and the symbols that came before it. Their domain is the "hall of mirrors", the fun-house, the pool that reflects Narcissus.

It's not nice to be mean to Mother Nature. The quintessential Angry Jung Woman, who is also a bit of a High Priestess herself, but humbly objected when I suggested putting her in the same league as Weiland because she considers Weiland to be her teacher ... has to be Dorothy Cameron -- who is now eighty years old. A former art dealer, who first exhibited Joyce Weiland's work in the 1960 Cameron has devoted the last two decades of her life to creating "goddess artifacts" out of clay. A die-hard Jungian, Cameron's work summons up queer, yet strangely familiar primordial forms from the bowels of the earth that mirror the trappings of the goddess -- the gash, the circle, the snake, the bowl, the sun and the seed. "Every women is a vessel ..." as punk singer Patti Smith would moan. A seminal artist who has told me she has retired, Cameron's work provided an introduction to the sculptural "hives", "hovels", "ellipses" and "eyes" that would emerge later as themes in the work of sculptors such as Magdelene Celestino.

If Cameron's medium is the earth, than Judith Shwarz' medium is the air. A professor at York University who exhibits with S.L. Simpson, and who will be having a ten year retrospective of her work at Fine Arts Gallery at the University of Waterloo in January, Shwarz' work, consists of body-size gleaming razor sharp torch-cut or water-jet cut pieces of steel that have been designed on a computer. Shwarz's shiny silver arcs has that fine whine of spirituality to it that can only be summoned up by an exercise in pure mathematics. The pieces literally have an edge to them -- they contain the subconscious threat that they will either, like a fire, sear through space or like

ice, collapse into entropy. There is something wonderfully empowering about a woman who can say "My name is Judith Swartz. I BEND steel."

Vera Frankel's metaphysical terrain is water. A performance /video and visual artist who teaches York University, Frankel's work delves deep into the murky regions collective subconscious. The "Harriet The Spy" of the local art scene, Frankel's work, which takes various interactive, and mostly electronic forms investigates the role of the storyteller. "All the story tellers are gone -- we have trained truth-tellers now." A champion of anti-censorship in the eighties with quite a sense of humour, Frankel, who often described herself as a pornographer once installed an electronic message in a shopping mall in London that flashed "This is your messiah speaking, instructing you to shop. Don't worry. Nobody will force you to anything to do what you don't want to do." Her most recent project, The Body Missing Project, a website that can be accessed at www.yorku.ca/bodymissing, is a collaboration about Kunstraub -- the art theft policies of the Third Reich. It does not surprise me that Vera's name translated into English, literally means "truth. She will be exhibiting in Lillhammer, Norway, this winter.

Also in the Angry Jung Women section of your menu is Suzy Lake. Resurrected prints of her earlier drag queen antics are currently on display at the Paul Petro gallery along with more recent photographs, which feature the images of the artist peeling paint, Liv Ullman style, from the walls. The cross-dressing or hyper-sexualized alter egos that we see appearing in the paintings of Natacka Husar, the photographs of Yanita Aires, the installations of Ottilie Mason, the watercolours of Julie Voyce, the Polaroids of Barbara Astman and even the line drawings of Shari Boyle, who also uses puppet strings to illustrate how women are still puppets of the patriarchy.

Perhaps the most acidic of The Angry Jung Women is Joanne Todd, whose clever images manage to burn themselves permanently into your rods and cones for years after first sight. One of my favourite, brought to you direct from Soul's Kitchen was a piece called "In The Kitchen" 1975 which featured a nude woman trussed up like a turkey and hanging from the ceiling of her kitchen. There was the nostalgic yet disquieting Duke Slayton Before Dinner Guests (1982)which featured a gaggle of fifties beauties sitting for their portrait with a painting of a group of B-52 Bombers; a subverted comment on how it is actually the girls who help create the boy's clubs. Todd's most recent work, which can be seen at the Sable Castelli Gallery focuses on the way antique glassware looks when laid against the satin sheen of naked mattresses. This work shares a peculiar kinship with the paintings of Natacka Husar who also, has a fetish for juxtaposing kitchen objects, such as colanders and graters with the bedroom linens and curtains.

Honorary Angry Jung Women, Christine Davis and Carolyn White, both at S.L. Simpson use mirrors, and household objects to make a statement about the piteous lack of a strong, female identity in this culture. White, also takes us back to womanhood's traditional province with her peephole portraits of miniature furniture taken through the window of a dollhouse.

THE GODDESS FREAKS. This moniker refers jointly to artists whose work not only appears "freaky" to Non Pagans, but also to artists who jointly worship the Goddess in all of her forms. Goddess Freaks are mad for the power, glamour and all the accessories that come with being a Supernatural Being. They are horticulturists, tree-huggers and healers who see spirits hovering in the urban decay. Their work is not politically, but rather karmically correct.

A seminal Goddess Freaks of the highest order the scene has to be Kim Kozzi, who along with her partner Dai Skuse comprises the Fast Wurms. For the purposes of this article, Dai Skuse will be described as an honorary witch. Long before everything New Age became all the rage, you could always smell a Fast Wurms installation a long way down the hall way because of the cedar smudges burning inside the gallery. Using crystals, copper, water, essential oils, magic stones, feathers, paint and poaching magical totems, symbols and creatures from this and other cultures,

the Wurms, over the years have created numerous a "psychically charged environment." Epileptics Beware. Black lights, strobes, essential oils, Psychedelia from Mother Nature create their super-sensory "vibe." All exhibitions by The Fast Wurms have proved to be memorable, but an image that sticks in my mind is a Star Trek inspired self-portrait of Kim Kozzi and Dai Skuse: wearing witch hats made of birch bark,, black capes, cat's eyes on their chest and posing as the Combination Security Guards/Horticulturist for an imaginary space called WurmHole at the Koffler Gallery in 1984.

Fiona Smyth is A Goddess Freak who creates freaky -looking goddesses. Her quasi-religious portraits of haloed half-female/half alien creatures are resplendent in their neon-nakedness. Sprouting sensual Hydra-like tentacles and private parts that glow like radium Fiona's slutty, alien girlies, currently on view upstairs at Reactor on Camden street are the crazed Dionysian companion to the more sordid, gritty paintings of Rae Johnson, who has also been known to depict women engaged in immoral activities with various hoary creatures of the night.

"The Goddess is everywhere!" is the mantra of painter Sybil Goldstein, who is can trace all forms of art and architecture back to it's ancient origins in Neolithic Goddess cults. Like Vera Frankel, Goldstien is a bit of a private investigator, using unorthodox methods such as "graffito" (a method of engraving into molding paste) to resurrect architectural detail. These plaques will frame her new revisionist portraits of famous daughters from the Biblical matriarchy. Goldstien was painting cherubs and angels way before their pre-Raphealite faces begun to adorn every post-card in town. Her landmark exhibition Mythopolis in 1985 features angels flying about the downtown urban Toronto landscape. The next time you're in the Cameron Hotel on Queen Street, look up -- and you will see one of Goldstien's neoclassical cherub paintings.

Artist Tina Poplawski is the Ancient Druid of Toronto painters. Her paintings of buds, flowers, trees and roots are perversely reminiscent, in a nice Georgia O'Keefe type way, of certain parts of the female anatomy. Also, rather than just imitating nature, Poplawski sometimes incorporates buds, petals and other "found" treasures right into the paint.

Artists Moira Clark and Cathy Daley both know "What Makes a Legend Most" -- the clothing! Daley, formally part of Ydessa Hendeles eclectic collection of exceptionally intense women artists in the eighties, is now doing delicate, ethereal studies of a long black evening dresses: the kind you would expect a Hollywood Goddess to wear. Artist Moira Clark, similarly, is fetishizing the female personae and all of her trappings, by enlarging the seemingly insignificant details that adorn most of us. By aggrandizing objects -- such as the earring, the comb and the shoe, Clark takes the mythology of dressing to a menacing fairy-tale world -- where earrings draw blood, the comb is poison and the shoe is too tight for fairy tale princess' feet.

VOODOO FETISH QUEENS. David Cronenberg plus the Apocalypse minus Sugar and Spice and Every Thing Nice equal your local Voodoo Fetish Queen. The Toronto Voodoo Fetish Queens love black magic: using their God-Given charm to manipulate others, summon up demons, or trick the eye into thinking it's seeing double. You can tell the work of a Voodoo Fetish Queen by it's careful attention to detail, the way a scar is carefully sewed up in bloody red stitching or by the way a potential weapon is placed next to a vulnerable part of the human anatomy. They also love a good mutation, the same way an evil scientist who wants to rule the world does.

If this bunch could be described as living in a Reformatory for Woman, then sculptor Magdalen Celestino would be the current head-mistress. Formerly one of Carmen Lamanna's "naughty, daring artists, Celestino creates fleshy limbs out of latex rubber which she arranges with the Zen-like precision of a Japanese flower arranger on the gallery walls. Like the Fast Wurms and Shelagh Alexander, Celestino's work seems to transform us to a place of ancient, bloody carnage where glorious, anthropomorphic monsters once ruled. Her piece, Accessories For A Banshee (1997) which featured long, snake like rubber gloves dripping bloody threads thrilled horrified

visitors to her last show at Susan Hobbs in August.

The kitchen, or should I say, the wicked laboratory of Catherine Heard dished up of a multiplicity of human horrors for public consumption at the Power Plant last year. Part mid-wife, part cannibal, Herd's main specialty is creating Freaks of Nature -- Siamese Twins, wounds with mouths in them, toddlers and fetuses covered with scars and fur. Like a true "savage" Herd also uses human hair to create some of her creepy specimens which leads me to believe that part of the process of mass socialization might also mean getting in touch with the Jeffrey Dahmer within.

Painter Nataalka Husar is the mother of all cloning, dissection, preservation and canning. Each one of Husar's canvases reminds me of a dark German Cabaret, in which daily house-hold objects are the obscene players. Jewellery boxes, graters, scissors, buckles, chains, porcelain, colanders dance against a maudlin curtain of drapery. In the midst of this drama, which is usually a self-portrait of the artist as a Drama Queen, caught in the conflict between will and womanly duty.

One of the most, exciting, new Voodoo Fetish Queens in town is Janieta Eyre. A spiritual artistic heir to Suzy Lake, Shelagh Alexander and Nataalka Husar, Ayres dresses up and clones herself in colourful, visual stunning photographs that present us, often with an askew, surrealist view of domestic abode. However, Yanita's dynamic duos are not very good housekeepers -- there is a threat implied by the unnecessary proliferation of mundane household objects. Ayres turns the kitchen into a museum where the mad housewife writes her diary. These It is hard not to look at a Yanita Ayre's doppelgangers of herself, as one curiously does all twins and not wonder "Which one is the evil one?"

The original Voodoo Fetish Queen, however, has to be Rae Johnson, who first explored the politics behind sexual power in her much reviled show at Carmen Lamanna in 1986. Even though she has turned to still-life and landscape, Johnson is one of the artists who has the spooky ability to animate that which we normally consider to be dead. Each line in a Rae Johnson painting personifies an emotion. A pillow smiles at you from a couch. A cloud leers at you from a sky. Now with Paul Petro, Johnson's still-lives and landscapes continue to creep people out with their moody, dark ambiance.

RIOT GIRLS. Riot Girls are into purity, honesty and other raw foods for the soul. They wear the army boots in the Toronto Art Scene and they will fight for their right to party. Rude, crude and occasionally lewd these artists don't give a flying fuck about what you might think of their work. Whenever I think of their work, I think of the title of a Shelagh Alexander piece: "The imagination of the powerless is the most powerful imagination of all." Despite their bravado, Riot Girls love a good fairy-tale.

To get to the bottom of all the ugly, heart wrenching, soul-searching and honesty that has gone on in the ten years, you have to step back to the mid-nineteen eighties and take a look at the work of Nancy Johnson and Shelagh Alexander who were at the time both artists with Ydessa Gallery. Johnson's crude, gestural water-colour drawings, which always included a self-indulgent Kathy Acker like statement about the "horror of being oneself" paved the way for the erotic, neurotic child-like states of mind that were to appear in the works of artists such as Catherine Heard and Julie Voyce. Although Shelagh Alexander's photo-compilations, were also, mostly about the "horror of living your life as a somnabulist", it had a certain "look" to it -- that I can only describe as "punk rock" collage. The emotions and feelings expressed in these artists' work were so intense, raw and private that just the act of looking at it, made you, by default, the Peeping Tom -- the "pornographer." by default.

Also on the scene at that time was an artist who you could call a kind of Rebel Without A Gallery. Gloria Berlin Jones, a musician with Toronto's all female punk band Fifth Column and A graphic

artist for the now defunct Impulse Magazine, was blowing the boys away with her naturalistic, heavy Metal type drawings. Her "Motorcycle Girls" is the standard by which I would measure most Riot Girl Art today. An artist whose portraiture reminds me of Berlin's would be Ottawa's Eliza Griffiths, who does naturalistic painting of Gen-X types slogging around in their indigenous sloth-holes.

Today's answer to Gloria Berlin Jones and Shelagh Alexander would be Shary Boyle, an OCA graduate who will be exhibiting with Garnet Press this Spring. A bit of a Jungster, Boyle does fanciful pencil and ink drawings of little girls strung up like puppets, bound with thorns and snakes or crouching autistically in a corner. Boyle's work doesn't exactly make you want to scream "You've Come A Long Way Baby!" These are not images are not a prescription for violence, but rather description of the currently badly wounded state of the feminine psyche. The little girl mind has the licence to kill, as those who are innocent don't know the difference between good and evil.

Equally disturbing are the Malice In Wanderlust type scenarios depicted in the watercolours of Julie Voyce. In Voyce's niavely nouveau illustrations, a character strongly resembling the artist depicts herself slithering like a Kafkaesque slug out of a sea-shell or sitting happily in bed, enjoying a post-coital moment with the Big Bad Wolf. Voyce's tall tales are on exhibit at the Paul Petro Gallery.

Not all fairy tales have a happy ending which may explain why most new Riot Girl art appears to be distinctly ambi-sexual. A visit to the McGill club last summer to view an exhibition curated Caroline Azar called Ms. Strangelove introduced two more new Riot Girls onto the scene. Displayed on one wall was a self-portrait taken by Otilie Mason, that would be straight cheese-cake portrait of cleavage if it wasn't for the Snidely WhipLash type mustache penciled on her upper lip. Sitting in the centre of the gallery was a mummified body of Joan of Arc, rendered in gold from which hung distinctly Catherine Herd like strands of human hair (clipped from the head of the curator) by Norma Jean Lefebvre. The image of Joan of Arc brings us an interesting question. How does one be a successful artist and also avoid becoming a martyr?

Righteous rage, resentment, horror and the ritual re-enactment of anger have become the new tools of personal transformation. Wearing your heart, your guts, your mental illness as well as the balls of the patriarchy on your sleeve has suddenly become fashionable -- the dish of the day. If this is what Toronto's female artists have been cooking up in Soul's Kitchen, then it seems to me, that the Goddess must be very, very angry. Maybe one day, when women in general reach no longer have to act out their anger, our eyes will be nurtured with Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice ... once again.