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**ART IN JEOPARDY**

**AN EXHIBITION**

**CURATED BY JEANNIE KAMINS**

**FOR GALERIE ARTICULE**

**MONTREAL, 1988**

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Beyond the debate surrounding Bill C-54 and anti-porn legislation, censorship exists and continues to affect artists whose work does not conform to the mainstream art dialogue. This exhibition has taken previously censored work-work censored without dependence on legislation and examines censorship itself. The intent of the exhibition is to challenge the argument that censorship will affect hard core pornography and not erotic and political art.

## The History

Art is an integral part of society. Besides reflecting the already existing culture, it can challenge the status quo and influence the direction in which a society develops. The proven art of abstract expressionism is now mainstream and the controversial labor art of the thirties now hangs in museums.

Since the 1984 election of the Progressive Conservatives, there has been a concerted and constant assault upon the arts. This effort to control culture began with the extensive cuts made to the arts length organizations, such as the Canada Council and the CBC, while funding to the government controlled Department of Communications increased.

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Then in June 1986, John Crosbie introduced revisions to the Criminal Code of Canada that would restrict any form of sexually explicit visual imagery.



Essentially this legislation said all visual portrayals of sexual acts are pornographic. Having no critical analysis in relation to images of violence and sexuality, legislators targeted traditional taboo subjects with special emphasis on female bodily functions, calling them "degrading".

The language of the law defined "lactation and menstruation in a sexual context", "sexual intercourse of all sorts (oral, anal, genital)", and any representation of "other sexual activity" as "pornographic". Although the bill provided exemptions for "artistic work", and "educational materials", these concepts were not defined. Also, any artist or organization whose work had been seized would have to defend the work to prove-at their own expense, within the court system- that it was of artistic or educational merit.

At the end of the parliamentary year the bill was "parouged", but since there had been no change in the government's philosophy it was no surprise when, on May 4th of 1987, the new Federal Justice Minister, Ray Hnatyshyn, introduced a revised anti-pornography bill.

If anything the new bill was worse than the old. It now included written as well as visual material. Although vague wording such as "other sexual activity", had been dropped, the new bill's definition of "erotica" referred to visual depictions of nudity. Although nudity itself was not called pornographic, it could not be included in material sold to under 18 year olds, and had to be in opaque wrappers with prominent warnings.

The six different prohibited categories would continue to include "masturbation", "ejaculation", and "vaginal, anal and oral intercourse". Pornography also would include any matter or commercial communication that "incites, promotes or advocates" any activity referred to in four of the prohibited categories. This would include any images of a person ejaculating onto another person. This section would interfere with the gay safer-sex campaign "Cum on me, not in me" since it advocates that men "ejaculate onto another person's body" to avoid contact with the AIDS virus.

In essence, Bill C-54 classified all sexuality as pornography. When we show skepticism about the inclusiveness of the legislation, the Progressive Conservatives say, "trust us". But before we offer our blind trust we must remember that the enforcement of this law will be in the hands of the local police, not an artistically informed body. (Not that we should trust such a body anyhow, since Censorship



Boards have not been free of social pressures.) And, there have been several cases where films have been seized by the police, the distributors charged and convicted after the films had been deemed acceptable by the censorship boards.

This control of sexual images by any biased group creates a much greater problem.

Fred Small, an American activist songwriter, writes,

*"In the absence of free and open discussion of sexuality, porn speaks without rebuttal. It is frequently the only sex "education" boys receive. It flourishes in the darkness. It thrives on taboo. In a society that encourages inquisitive, guilt-free discussion of sex from childhood on, pornography would be an absurd irrelevancy. In the long term, the only effective strategy against porn and the values it represents is to build that society.*

*We need to bring sex out in the open, into the light. We need universal, relaxed, nonreproachful, nonhomophobic sex education. We need stories, drawings, photographs, poems, songs, street theatre, movies, advertisements, and TV shows about the ways real sex with real people can be. We need to see each other naked, casually and nonsexually, at the beach and in our backyards, to know what real people look like, to preempt prurience. We need to think about and heal the hurts in our lives that have left us with sexual compulsions, addictions, and obsessions."*

### **The Reasons for Bill C-54**

The authors of Bill C-54 say that we need such a bill to control child pornography, violence against women, and the exploitation of people surrounding, and involved in, the sex trade. But in fact we are not sinking under a sea of filth. Significantly, the Canadian police are not calling for more legislation. They say that the laws on the books are sufficient to curb the pornography industry.



Bryan Johnson wrote in the Globe and Mail in 1983 that Canada has virtually no pornography industry. (Aside from the duplication and distribution of foreign videotapes, of which 90% comes from the United States.)

Project P, a joint project of the Ontario Provincial Police and the Metropolitan Toronto Police, state that despite their diligent efforts, they found almost nothing they would call "hard core" pornography. Nor have they ever been able to verify that a real "snuff" film had ever been made.)

As to the need to protect children, there are already laws against child exploitation on the books. Yet the police do not go after those who exploit children, (beginning with McDonalds and the newspapers). Regarding kiddy porn: The Badgley Commission on Sexual Offences against Children and Youth states that kiddie porn is not a major problem in Canada. Of 26,357 seizures by customs of "obscene" material, only 3.1% involved children. The commission estimates that less than 3% of print and video material in existence is kiddie porn.

Although they state that the purpose of the bill is to end violence against women, end child pornography, and the exploitation of women and young people throughout the sex trade business, their lack of commitment to the support services for women and children in other government departments belies this. If the government were honestly interested in ending these social problems, they would work for economic independence of women and young people. They would fight for equal pay for work of equal value, and would give them genuine alternatives to selling their bodies. An increased understanding and acceptance of homosexuality would greatly reduce the presence of male prostitution.

Any society which had an honest desire to end violence against women would not be cutting back on shelters to battered women, childcare facilities, and educational and work opportunities. It would be starting educational campaigns to inform us about rape, battering and incest. It would be promoting neighbourhood and community discussions on sexuality and violence in our culture. There would be analysis on the distortion of our values as presented in the mainstream media, and a concerted effort to undermine our isolation from each other.



## A Popular Program

If the control of child pornography, violence against women and elimination of sexual exploitation is not the reason for Bill C-54, then why has Bill C-54 been introduced?

Besides the fact that many Conservatives are offended by sexual imagery, the real reason for introducing this bill was a desperate need for a popular cause. They listened to such groups as the National Citizen's Coalition, REAL Women, and the Catholic and evangelical churches. In collaboration with those feminists who believe that censorship would mean an end to violence against women, they now make up a social majority. At a time when they are beleaguered with problems of political patronage, and controversy over such programs as free trade and the Meech Lake constitutional changes, a popular issue is a god-send to the Progressive Conservatives.

If their desire was to find a popular cause, then they succeeded. But this was not necessary to effectuate censorship within our society.

When I began to organize this exhibition I found that many people had good arguments about what was wrong with Bill C-54 and the dangers of state censorship. But as an artist who has made erotic art since I was a child and had had my "nude ladies" confiscated in the third grade, I knew that censorship happens without benefit of the Bill C-54s.

I believe that Bill C-54 is a bad bill. Because of the current controversy, its questionable constitutionality, and the fact that the Conservatives are busy with other issues, I expect that it will never be passed. Even so, there remains a strong demand for anti-pornography legislation.

From the church bans on scientific investigation during the middle ages, to book burnings, the rewriting of history, to our own censorship boards here in Canada, censorship has been widely practiced in most state societies. All have in common the desire by the state to control ideas. Any government would be tempted to enact a bill which not only gives them control of ideas, but is also popular.

But beyond this state control of ideas we also are presented with the very powerful social censorship. We censor ideas and images



because of pressures of classism, racism, sexism, and regionalism. We modify our work because of economic necessity and occupational opportunity. We do not need state censorship, we censor ourselves quite effectively without the state.

Dionne Brand and Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta comment in *Issues of Censorship*,

*It is significant that the censorship debate while it refers in some instances to the need for a larger political and economic analysis, it has generally failed to develop such an analysis capable of integrating a world larger than its own community of interest. It rarely contains a critique of other political censorship that prevail in the society and has largely focused on "the moral turpitudes" of sexuality rather than where it is interconnected with the censorship of working-class ideologies, cultures and the repression of some groups.*

### The Exhibition

For artists, relatively little censorship happens on the police/legislative level. Most censorship happens at the access to exhibition space. This is controlled by frightened bureaucrats who feel that only "proper" and non-confrontational views of the world must be presented "for the public good". Work which crosses race, class, or cultural lines is excluded from art galleries by curators who feel that such imagery is not "good art".

What passes these self-appointed censors has much more to do with money and mainstream standards than any harm it will do by being seen. Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler magazines (not to mention Cosmopolitan and Vanity Fair) can be found on every newsstand, but some galleries/curators are afraid to have even images of nudity.

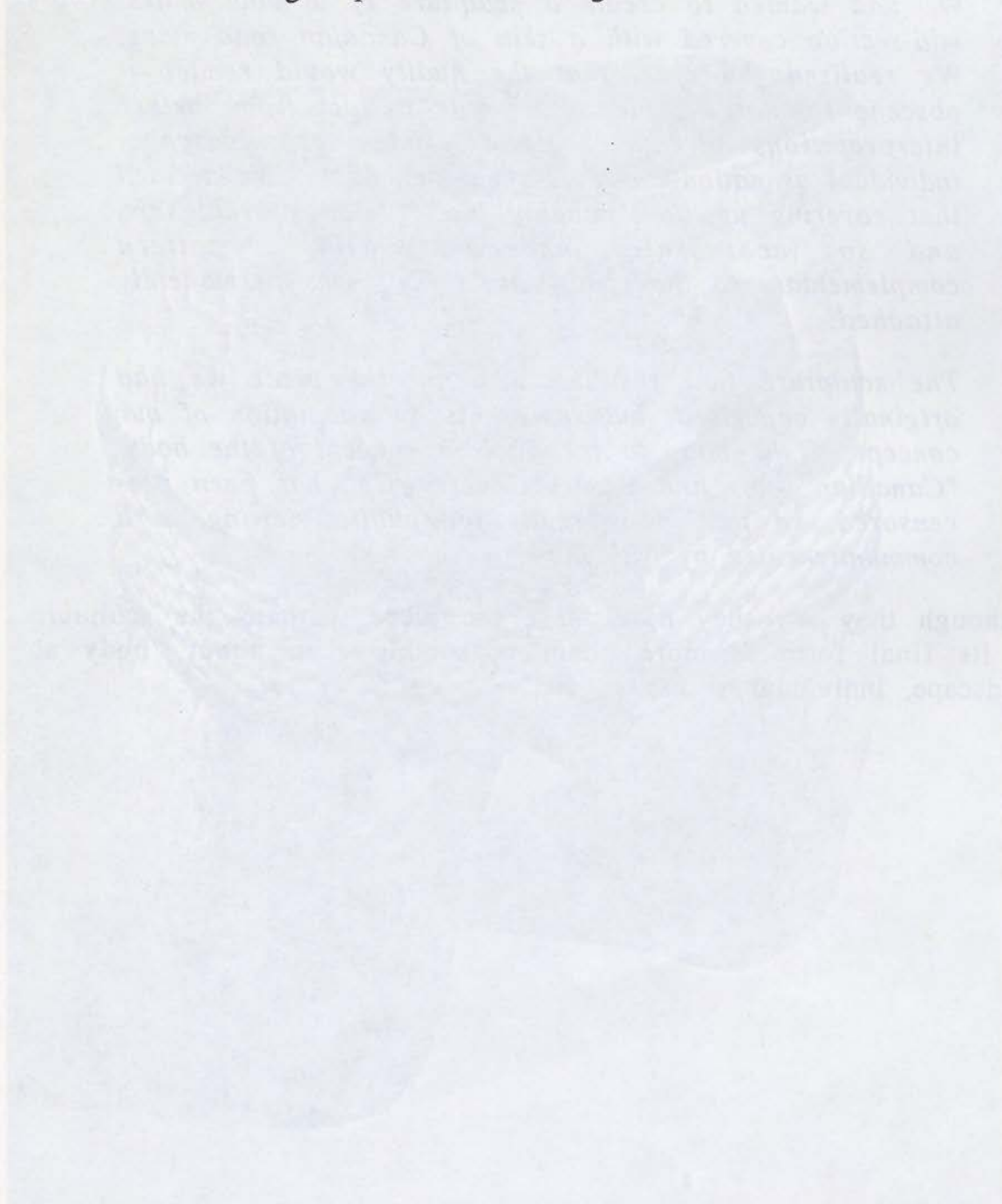
This exhibition takes already censored works and uses them in a visual dialogue about censorship. The exhibition is divided into:

1. Self-censorship
2. Curatorial censorship
3. Public protest/with gallery support
4. Public protest/without gallery support
5. Censorship by federal bodies
6. Media censorship

From the artists point of view, the greatest tragedy of having one's work censored is that once censorship occurs the controversy surrounding the censorship often becomes more important than the piece, and an analysis of the ideas presented by the work is no longer of interest.



**Self-Censorship** - When we make art we think first of our own concerns, but then we consider our audience, the art's saleability and how the work will be made accessible to a buying public. Self-censorship is the hardest form of censorship to document since most of this work never gets past the idea stage.



In the exhibition Aubrey Dayman and Glen Paul, who regularly work collaboratively, have made a piece "Canadian Buns and Basket Covered Up" in which they examine this issue.

*We had wanted to create a sculpture of a nude males' mid-section covered with a skin of Canadian road maps. We realized, however, that the nudity would render it obscene to most people, and would detract from further interpretations of our sculpture (body as landscape, individual as nation, body as shell, etc, etc.). We decided that covering up the "naughty bits" would prevent this, and so incorporated underwear with a pattern complementary to the road maps. This was permanently attached.*

*The sculpture that resulted was not the piece we had originally conceived, but represents an adaptation of our concept of the body to the public's concept of the body. "Canadian Buns and Basket Covered Up" has been pre-censored, so that it is ready for public viewing in a community ruled by Bill C-54.*

Although they say they have made the piece, perhaps the sculpture in its final form is more about censorship than about "body as landscape, individual as nation, etc.".







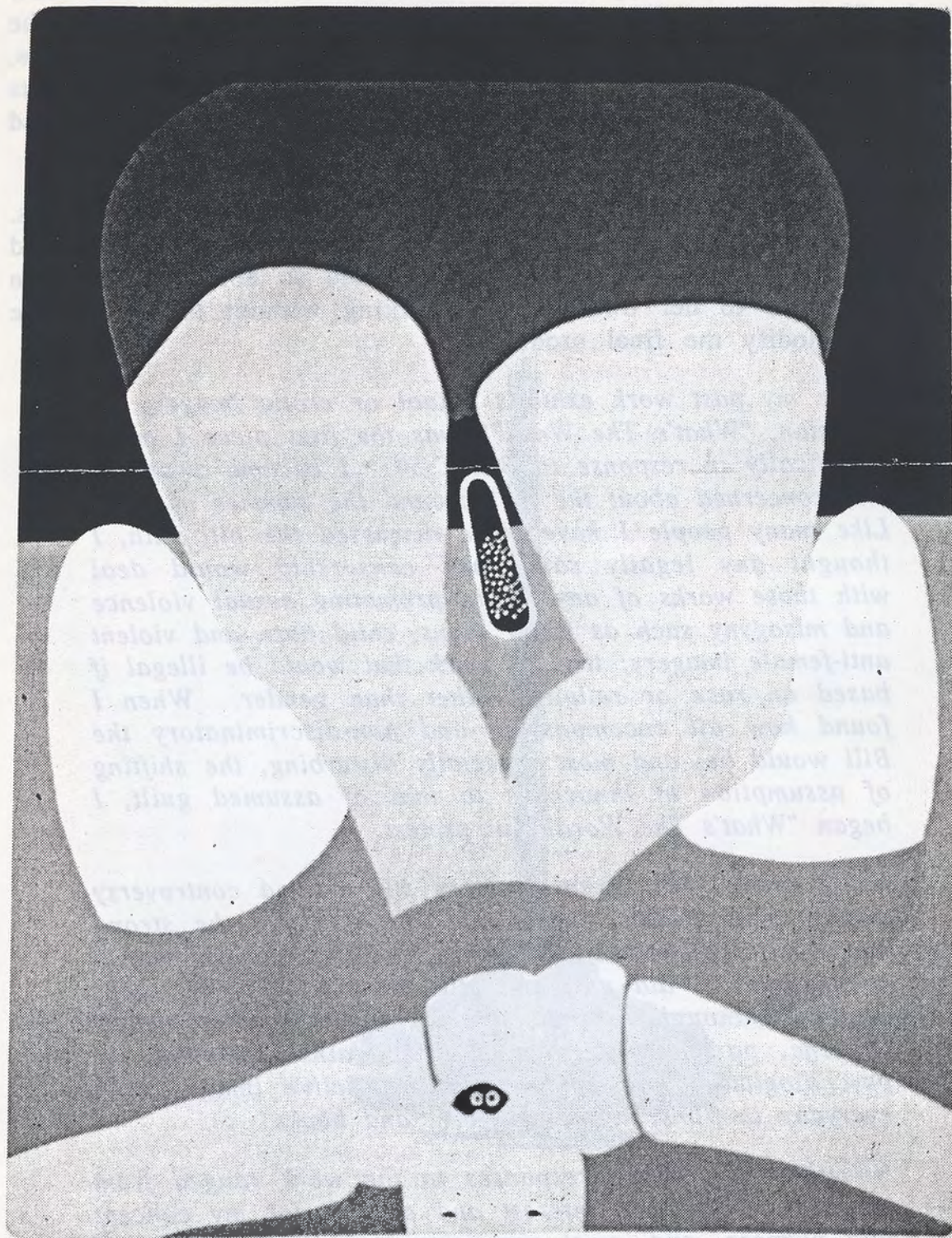
In a slightly different situation Sharon Zenith Corne did not exhibit her piece "Double Rape". Ms. Corne was one of the organizers of an exhibition in Winnipeg in 1975. The exhibition Woman As Viewer was organized as a protest show after the Winnipeg Art Gallery had proposed an exhibition of men's images of women for International Womens Year.

*I recall that "Double Rape" was excluded from the Woman As Viewer show. As described in the Branching Out article, the organization of that show...reads like the "Perils of Pauline"...It began to feel as if artists groups, artists and the Winnipeg Art Gallery were so threatened and confused about the thesis of the show that we were constantly under attack with threats of boycotts, pickets, etc.... more time was spent fending off attacks than on the show itself.*

*I've described this because this caused [me to exclude] "Double Rape" from the show. Although it was accepted by the jury and one of the jurors was particularly encouraging that I keep it in, I decided [to exclude it]. In view of the difficulties with the show, I suspected that the inclusion of my own piece, given that I was the co-organizer of the show, would result in another round of criticism and possibly discredit "Viewer". Also I worried that the overt sexual content would create more problems.*

*If I were doing this all over again, I'm not sure I would be so altruistic.*







Janice Truss entered her piece "What's The Word" in an Alumni show at the University of Western Ontario. The professors curating the exhibition came to her and asked her to enter something less risqué. She says that they questioned the artisticness of the work and its credibility in terms of the art dialogue. In confusion she entered another piece.

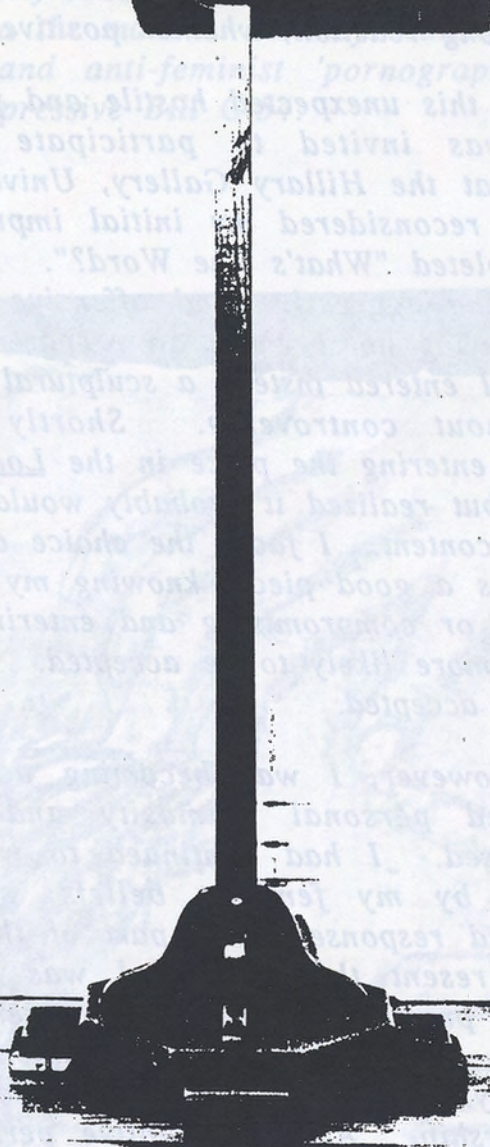
She says she found herself questioning her own artistic sensibilities. She found that she was modifying her work to suit the expected reactions of curators. Ultimately this became so abhorrent that she has gone back to her own way of working without letting outside pressures modify the final product.

*While my past work exhibits sexual or erotic imagery on occasion, "What's The Word?" was the first piece I made specifically in response to Bill C-54. I became aware of and concerned about the Bill around the summer of 1987. Like many people I have since discussed the bill with, I thought any legally sanctioned censorship would deal with those works of any media promoting sexual violence and misogyny such as 'snuff' films, child porn and violent anti-female imagery; that is, work that would be illegal if based on race or religion rather than gender. When I found how all encompassing and non-discriminatory the Bill would be, and most especially disturbing, the shifting of assumption of innocence to that of assumed guilt, I began "What's The Word?" in protest.*

*While aware that sexual imagery still caused controversy among some people, I was not prepared for the strong and varied reactions this work received as it neared completion. I did not, and still do not, feel that these drawings, though explicit, are in any way shocking or obscene, particularly when judged against some of the psychologically and emotionally destructive images seen everyday in films, magazines, T.V. and books.*

*Nonetheless, people's responses to the work ranged from nervous indifference, interest and support for my concept and purpose, and, most surprising (to me), hostility and personal judgements against not only the piece itself (which I could accept), but against me personally,*







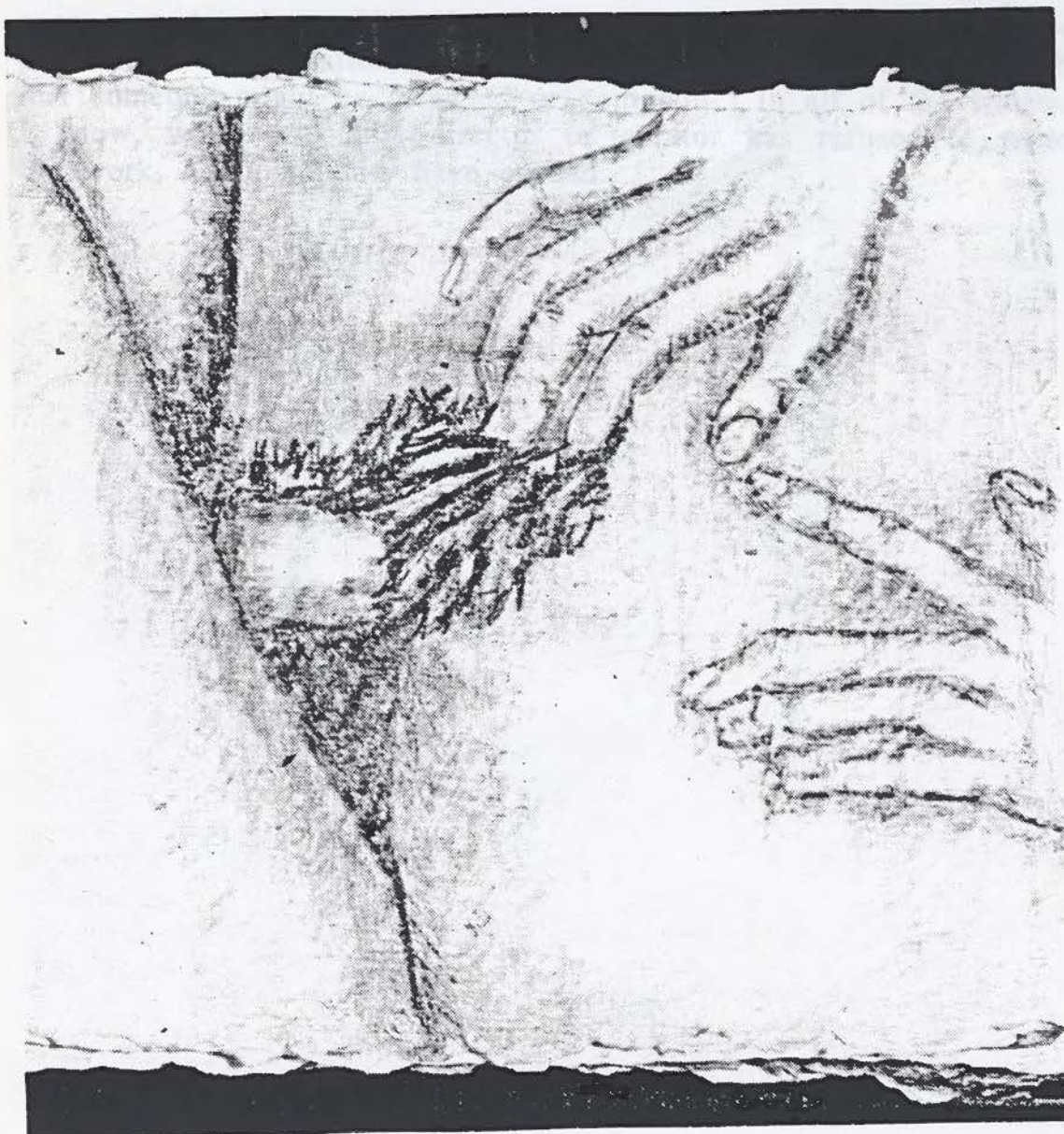
Not surprising, however, the response had a good deal to do with the fact I was a woman producing these images, rather than a man, which would be far more acceptable to deal with. More noticeable, though, was the fact that the most responses came from men, I received very little input from women, other than approval, disinterest, or shy curiosity and amusement. The men all had some form of strong reaction, whether positive or negative.

Because of this unexpected hostile and personal reaction, when I was invited to participate in the Alumni Exhibition at the Hillary Gallery, University of Western Ontario, I reconsidered my initial impulse to show the newly completed "What's The Word?". I had been taken aback by the aggressive and offensive responses I had received, having not been at all prepared for that kind of response. I entered instead a sculptural rebus of Eros, a piece without controversy. Shortly after, I again considered entering the piece in the Look '88 exhibition in Sarnia but realized it probably would not be accepted due to its content. I faced the choice of entering what I thought was a good piece, knowing my entry fees would be wasted, or compromising and entering a piece which was much more likely to be accepted. I did compromise and it was accepted.

By now however, I was becoming accustomed to this unwarranted personal animosity and familiarity this work aroused. I had continued to work in this vein, influenced by my feminist beliefs, and incorporating these varied responses as a part of the works. I now began to resent the position I was placed in simply because of producing these images, even though they are done in a clear, non-erotic or violent context, almost documentary. I realized that I had fallen into the trap of self censorship. All the negative personal responses I had received had subtly caused me to censor my own work, insofar as compromising my choice of entries to possible exhibitions due to quiet pressure and hints of censorship. Also influencing me were the economic concerns of a struggling artist when faced with entry fees to these various exhibitions and the almost certainty of non-acceptance.



I have come to feel self censorship is a more dangerous form of censorship than even legal censorship because the work never makes it out of the studio to even face the possibility of legal censorship. One can at least hope that if the artist attempts to show the work wherever possible in the public eye and it is subsequently censored, eventually the publicity will draw more people's attention to the matter. so they realize far more than child porn and anti-feminist 'pornography' is at stake under this repressive Bill C-54.





**Censorship by curator** - If we are not personally committed to ideas which challenge the status quo, sexually, politically, or artistically, our work will probably never confront overt censorship. But, if we work outside the mainstream art discourse, our work is subject to confrontation. Those who work in "alternative" mediums (such as fabric) or those who use imagery which is contested in critical artistic dialogues (such as political art) necessarily have a problem of access to credible art venues. If the imagery is erotic it is hard to get the work exhibited in anything but an erotic art exhibition.

Most of the works in this exhibition were censored before they were ever seen by the public since galleries/curators are timorous about presenting confrontational images. They tell the artists that they fear someone might be offended or complain. In all of the situations I know, where the artist/director or curator has refused to remove the work, no complaints have ensued.



In the following cases the gallery directors or art curators have been the protectors of the public's sensibility.

In 1977 Geoffrey James co-organized with the National Film Board (NFB) Stills Division, an exhibition of works from the Art Bank, "Transparent Things Transparences" was an exhibition showing the various ways artists use photographs.

One of the pieces in the exhibition was the sculpture by Ian Carr-Harris "The Violin Lesson by Balthus". This piece had been in several previous exhibitions including the Paris Biennale, yet Loraine Monk, executive producer of the Stills Division of the NFB was offended by a reproduction of the painting by Balthus which she felt represented child pornography. Geoffrey James refused to remove the piece from the exhibition. Even though the NFB paid for a catalogue, it maintained no further connection with the exhibition.

"Transparent Things Transparences" travelled to several cities across Canada including Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, but an exhibition which had been scheduled to hang at the NFB Gallery in Ottawa was cancelled. Throughout the run there were no complaints in regard to the work.



by anyone, and it is certainly not for the inclusion of his painting "Floral Border" in a prestigious public art gallery in Ontario.

The commitment on the part of the public gallery to have an exhibition of my work was made by the gallery director based on a studio visit a year and a half in advance of the eventual exhibition date. Thus "Floral Border" the painting to be in contention was set to be made, and was the director in my studio as they near a curator from the gallery was given the responsibility of mounting the exhibition in my studio and we came to my studio and we showed the show.

One of the other introductory to the "Floral Border" the opening with any expressed.





Toronto artist, John Armstrong, had to fight for the inclusion of his painting "Floral Border" in a prestigious public art gallery in Ontario.

The commitment on the part of the public gallery to have an exhibition of my work was made by the gallery director, based on a studio visit a year and a half in advance of the eventual exhibition date. Thus, "Floral Border," the painting to be in contention was yet to be made, and was not seen by the director in my studio. As the date for the exhibition drew near a curator from the gallery was given the responsibility of mounting the exhibition. The curator came to my studio and we together chose a number of large paintings for the show. "Floral Border" was included in this selection.

Once the exhibition was installed, and prior to the opening, the curator asked me to replace "Floral Border" with any other painting. The reason, quite openly expressed, was that in consultation with the education officer it was felt that the presence of the painting would disrupt the gallery's very active primary school education program. The children, it was explained to me, might be embarrassed by the painting, start to giggle and not be able to confront the artwork in an appropriate and serious way. The curator and the education officer were intransigent on this point and did not see how the show might be adversely affected by this exclusion.

Although I certainly view each of my paintings as a complete and self-contained expression, the exhibition should create another unity - that of the range of my current interests. I use the male and female nude extensively in my work, and have included examples of each in exhibitions comprising a number of my paintings. My paintings could not apparently be simultaneously ideal public school curriculum and a representation of my practice as an artist. I resolved that I would take down all my work if "Floral Border" was not to be exhibited. But first I approached the Director, who supported me and made it unnecessary for me to follow through with my withdrawal.



*It is certainly not my intention to embarrass anyone by making the name of the gallery public. It would never have occurred to me that an exhibition would do anything other than represent the exhibiting artist.*

*Members of the gallery staff gave priority to an anticipated audience reaction, and hoped to ease out of the perceived problem of having to discuss my picture. My work is more private than expressly confrontational. I would never have thought it possible that an exhibition of mine could be bowdlerized and would imagine this use of the nude to be if anything, an antidote to pornography. Artists are very conscious of how the presentation and selection of their work can misrepresent their intentions. One other ever recurring concern is the written introduction to the exhibition which may over-simplify or offer too pat a definition. The censure of problematic pieces accomplishes the same end.*



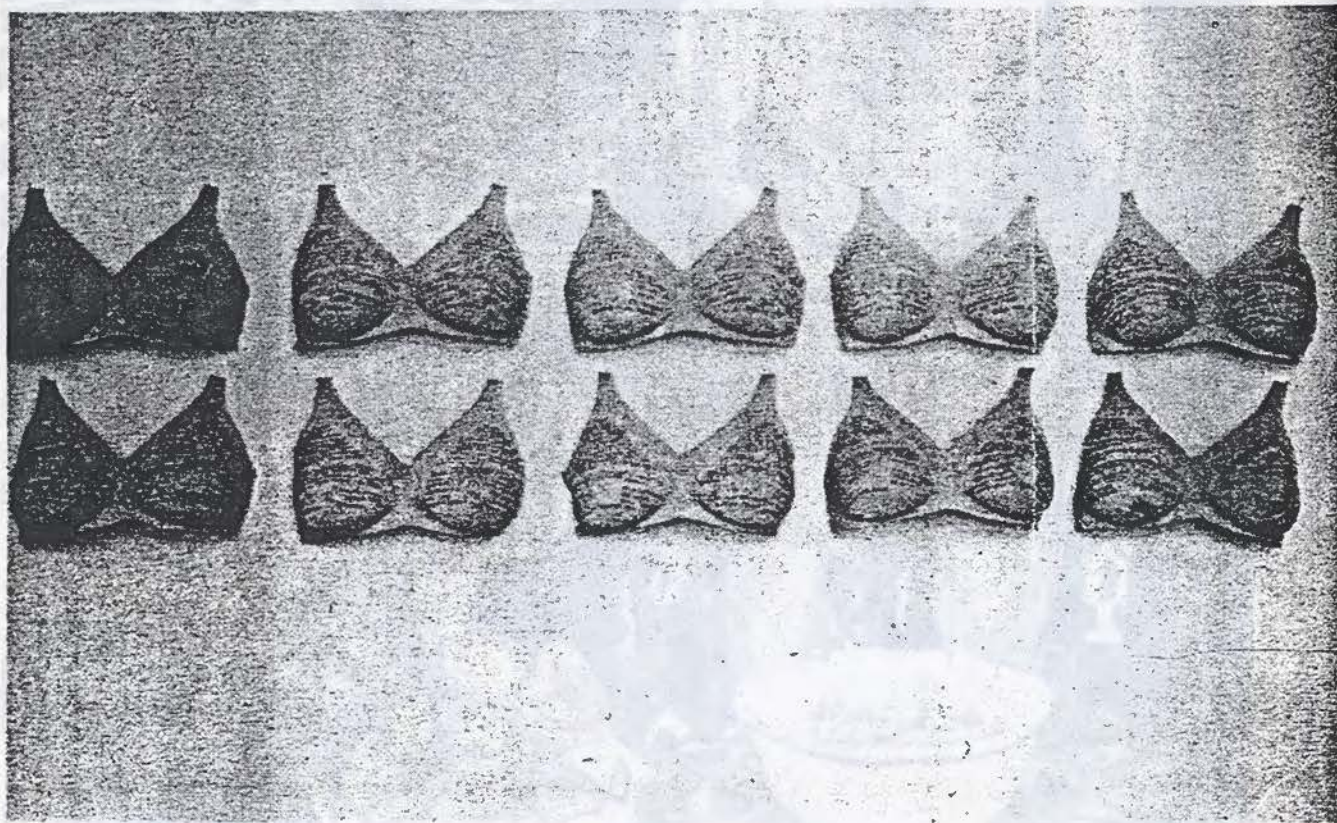


Lise Melhorn-Boe of Toronto works with feminist imagery. Recently she has experienced confrontation with these pieces.

*I was asked to put works in a show a few years ago that would be touring several small galleries in Southern Ontario, including Grunsky and Brampton. Both of these, and I believe the other stops as well, are galleries which are attached to Public libraries. The artist who was curating the show said, "I love Breasts, but I'm scared to include it. I don't want to cause any trouble."*

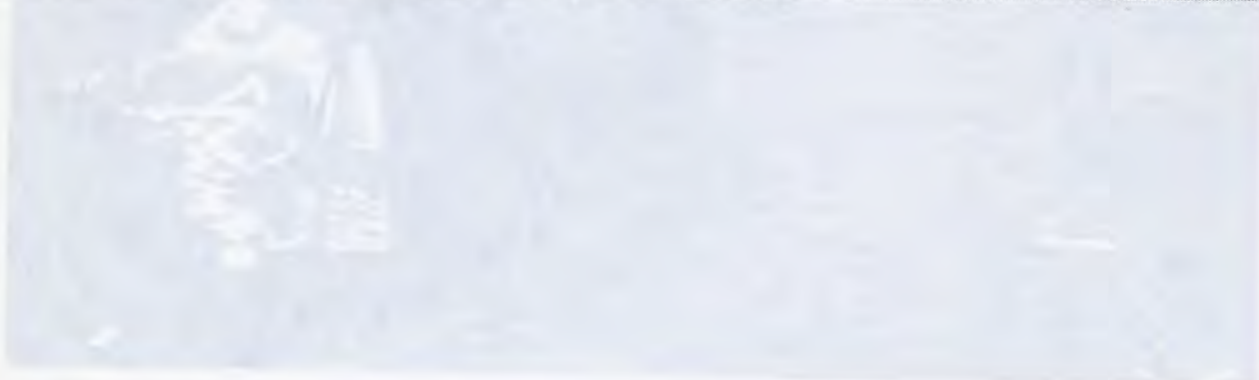
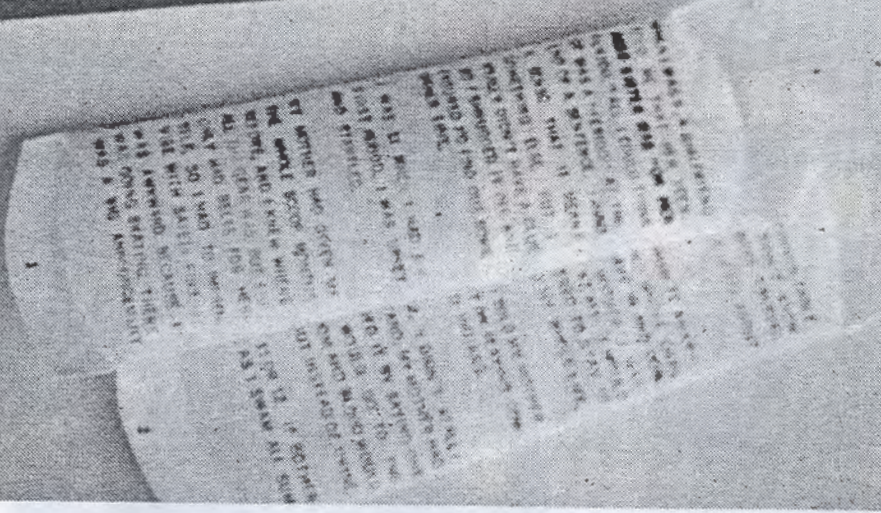
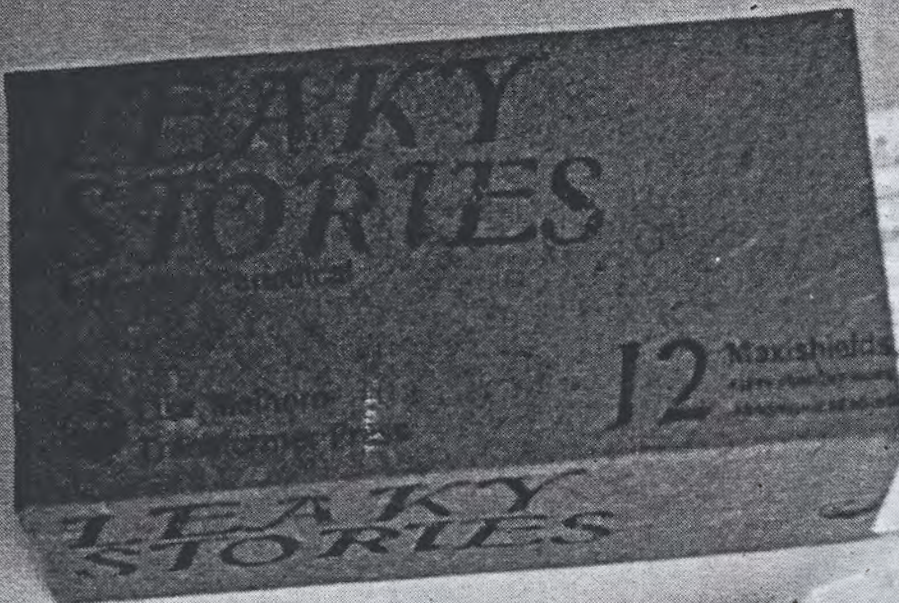
*Just a couple of weeks ago, I was doing some workshops for kids at the gallery in Hamilton where there was a book exhibition including 8 of my pieces. Breasts was one of them. Word got around among the teachers and by Friday (the third day), the teacher who was bringing her class in for the afternoon phoned in the morning, and said, "could you take down the Breasts? I have a couple of boys who just can't handle things like that." The curator refused. The kids were fine.*

*About "Leaky Stories": Just a few weeks ago, the curator of the Woodstock Gallery came to my studio to choose some books for the Artists and Words exhibition she is organizing for May. She rejected "Leaky Stories" and "Breasts" as being too risque for conservative Woodstock.*





Look! These thousands of minutes are so short in life!



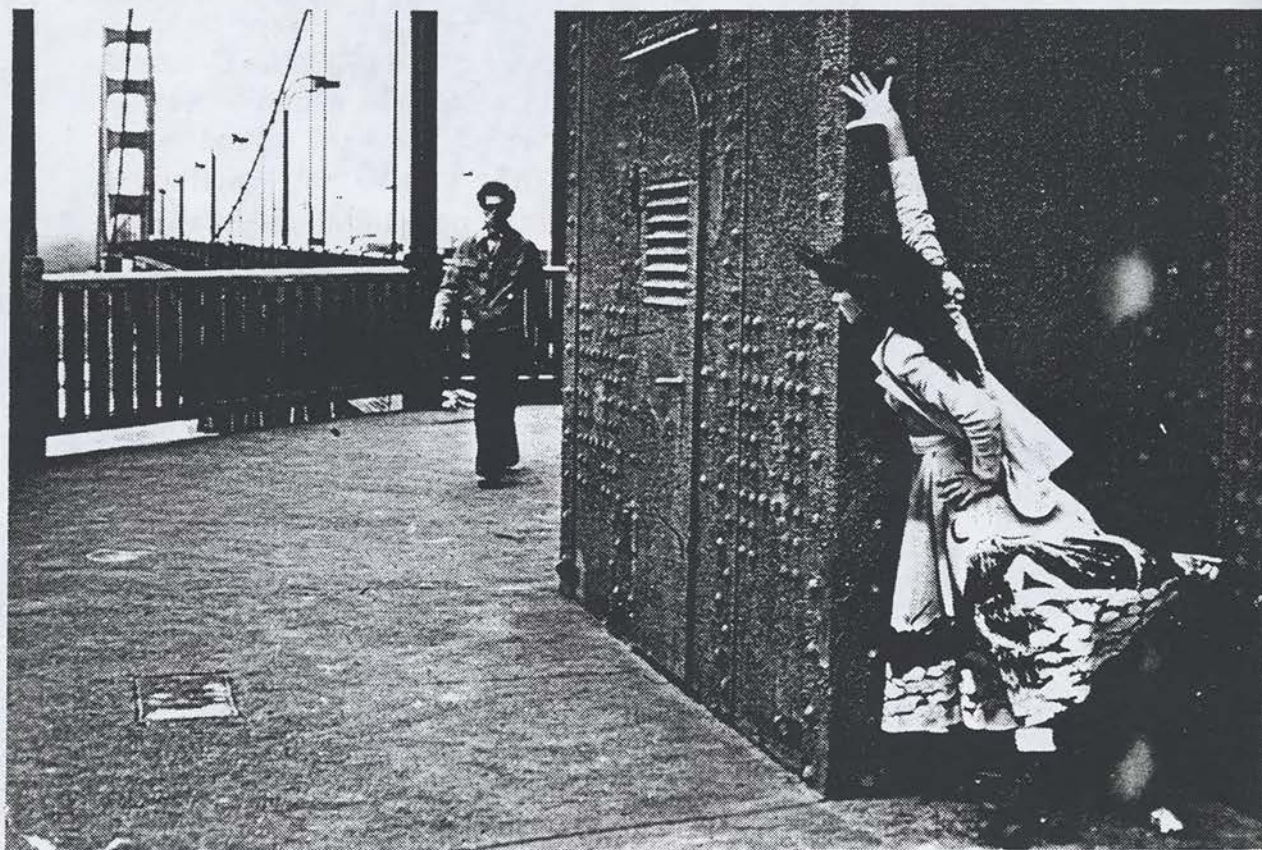


Linda Dawn Hammond of Montreal was in school at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute when her piece was refused.

*The photographic series, "The Rollerskater" (Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, 1978), consists of six Black and White hand coloured prints.*

*Owing to its erotic content and display of female genitals, a student committee refused to include it in a group exhibit at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Toronto, in the spring of 1979, in spite of the acclaim the series received from several of the University's alumni.*

*In retaliation, it was presented in the same building at an unofficial gallery, "the Hood", by Dr. Jim Smith during March and April of 1979.*





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The police came to Galerie Foxus and asked owner/director Elio Weisfeld to remove the picture of a woman holding an erect penis from the window where it hung (with several other photographs which were also removed). Weisfeld refused to remove the picture.

Mr. Weisfeld was interviewed by the police and described the incident. He said that he had been in the gallery for some time and the police came in and asked him to remove the picture. He refused to do so and the police threatened to make a copy of the picture and show it to the public. Mr. Weisfeld said that he had been in the gallery for some time and the police came in and asked him to remove the picture. He refused to do so and the police threatened to make a copy of the picture and show it to the public.

The incident was reported in the Montreal Star and the Montreal Gazette. The Montreal Star reported that the police had threatened to make a copy of the picture and show it to the public. The Montreal Gazette reported that the police had threatened to make a copy of the picture and show it to the public. The incident was also reported in the Montreal Star and the Montreal Gazette.

Commenting on the incident, Doug Clark says:

This is a very interesting case. It shows that the police are not always on the side of the artist. In this case, the police threatened to make a copy of the picture and show it to the public. This is a very serious threat to the artist's work. It shows that the police are not always on the side of the artist. In this case, the police threatened to make a copy of the picture and show it to the public. This is a very serious threat to the artist's work.



Martin Lebovitz had an exhibition at Gallerie Fokus in Montreal. The photograph in contention was the first in a series on pregnancy and sexuality. The series took the steps of birth from intercourse to portrayals of the child. "The Master's Piece Seized" was seized by the police on July 26th 1987 after complaints by neighbours.

The police came to Gallerie Fokus and asked owner/director Eibie Weizfeld to remove the picture of a woman holding an erect penis from the window where it hung (with several other photographs which were part of the exhibition). Mr. Weizfeld, claiming artistic freedom, refused and the photograph was seized.

Mr. Weizfeld went to the media. They not only described the incident, but published photographs of the offending image. With the photograph gone, Mr. Weizfeld hung the newspaper clippings in the window. The police, in an effort to prove their power, threatened to "make another seizure" if the clippings were not removed. With Mr. Weizfeld out of town, the artist removed the clippings. Later the police seized the gallery's street sign which had a zerox copy of a newspaper reproduction of the piece.

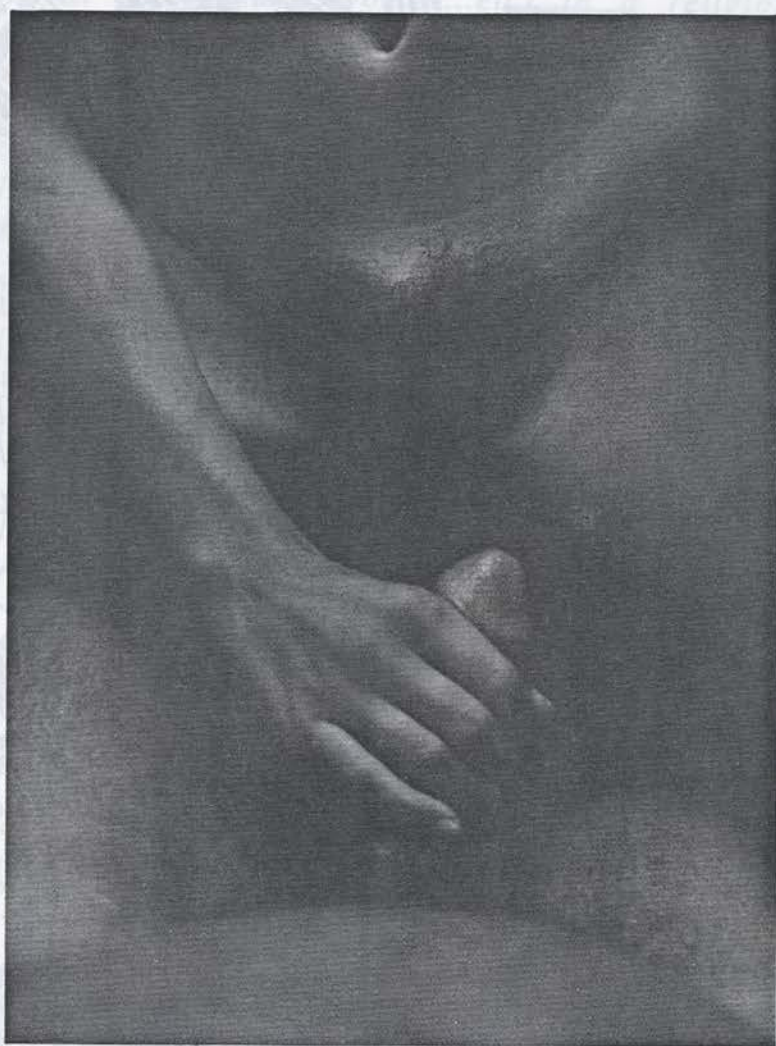
The issues in this case are really a question of police power. Mr. Weizfeld did not try to placate the police but rather was confrontational. Since the seizure, an entire issue of the McGill Daily was confiscated by the police for having a reproduction of the image, yet, police did nothing when the neighbourhood paper Liaison St Louis carried a picture of the piece on the front page, or when Le Devoir, the Gazette, and Voir all carried reproductions of the photograph. In all of these situations, not one person from the public has complained.

Commenting in Arts Manitoba on another censored photograph, Doug Clark says,

*This article, national Globe and Mail exposure, a second article in the Winnipeg Free Press and CBC television exposure were the result of Winnipeg Transit's decision [to remove the work]; a decision that effectively turned a feature story into hard news. "As long as censorship produces the horrible taste that it does in our collective mouths, it turns the popular media into a most effective collaborator in the distribution of images and issues such as these."*



Ultimately, Mr. Weizfeld was sentenced to 5 days in jail for his sign obstructing the public thoroughfare. Regarding the seizure of the photograph itself, the judge decided that the work was not pornographic and all charges were dropped.





Wickfield was married to 2 days to his life.  
The police are still in the city.

The police are still in the city.  
Wickfield is married to 2 days to his life.

Mr. Wickfield  
is married to 2 days to his life.

The police are still in the city.  
Wickfield is married to 2 days to his life.

Wickfield is married to 2 days to his life.





Donna Ibing, is an Ontario artist who has had several works censored at different times, most of them having happened before she felt capable of protesting the incidents. Here she tells a story of an incident that happened to her when she presented work from her Famous Women of the Bible series.

*The latest episode [of my work being censored] happened when I showed part of my woodcut series Famous Women of the Bible, (a feminist look at the unsung women...etc) in a religious show at McMaster University Gallery. I thought I'd be safe here. Then the gallery received a letter from some guy who wanted my work removed. Although he didn't say why they were obscene the curator and the other artists decided that it was because Eve was nude or because of the feminist content. Anyway we all had a good laugh about it, but with Bill C-54 this guy could call in the local C-squad.*

Following is a copy of the letter:

I have viewed this art and do not feel that it justifies being called Christian Art. On the picture creation of Eve, I feel that her stance is very suggestive and anything but healthy. I would hope that the organizers would feel the same way and remove it. I know that several of the viewers also felt the same.



In June of 1979 Jeannie Kamins had her piece "Picnic Lunch" removed from a prestigious exhibition in British Columbia. Although the work was controversial in two exhibitions, it has been used in illustrations in three magazine articles about censorship.

In June of 1979, the Central Visual Artists Association organized a British Columbia art show in which the work of several artists was featured. Jack ... was the director of the show. ... from the Vancouver Art ... to the art scene and ...

**Public Protest without gallery support** - Most censorship takes place before the work is ever seen by the public, but in some situations the work is taken off the "walls". In the cases of Jeannie Kamins and Peter Tittenberger the curators had made previous agreement with the exhibiting bodies to remove any work which they found offensive. In most of the cases in the exhibition, the works were censored by people who worked for the galleries and not because of complaints from the general public. All saw their roles as being protector of the public's sensibilities.

"I had ... a ... exchange show between the Vancouver Art School and the art museum at UBC several months earlier. At that time one of the professors moved the piece from the front of the gallery to the back. He defended his action by saying that 'the light was better in the back'. In this case the hanging committee supported me and the piece was returned to its original position.

I was upset by the removal of my work because it made me feel dirty, and by implication that my art was pornographic."



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*In June of 1979, the Central Visual Artists Association organized a British Columbia Artists Exhibition. It was a prestigious show juried by Jack Shadbolt, a senior Canadian artist, Glenn Allison, the director of the UBC Fine Arts Gallery, and Peter Malkin, a curator from the Vancouver Art Gallery. I was new to the art game and I felt very flattered to get all three pieces accepted. The exhibition hung at the B.C. Central Credit Union.*

*The exhibition had been hanging for a week when an unknown bureaucrat in the upper echelons of the Credit Union returned from holiday. There had been no complaints about my picture but in an effort to protect the public morals he asked that the piece be removed. The CVAA had a previous agreement to remove any work which the Credit Union felt was offensive, so the piece was taken off the wall, and another put in its place.*

*"I had shown the same piece in a student exchange show between the Vancouver Art School and the art students at UBC several months earlier. At that time one of the professors moved the piece from the front of the gallery to the back. He defended his action by saying that "the light was better in the back". In this case the hanging committee supported me and the piece was returned to its original position.*

*I was upset by the removal of my work because it made me feel dirty, and by implication that my art was pornographic."*



Peter Tinnenberger was one of several artists whose works were in an exhibition "Gallery in Transit" curated by Doug Clark. Gallery in Transit was conceptualized as a public art project involving Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. It would constitute three bases, one bus from each city. In the panels where the advertisement was placed, the bus was the only one in the exhibition.

At the last, the artist and curator proceeded unless the good of the work. Throughout the work, they claimed several photographs by the might be moral.

Again, in 1981, the photographs were saying that "the bus" was the only one in the exhibition.

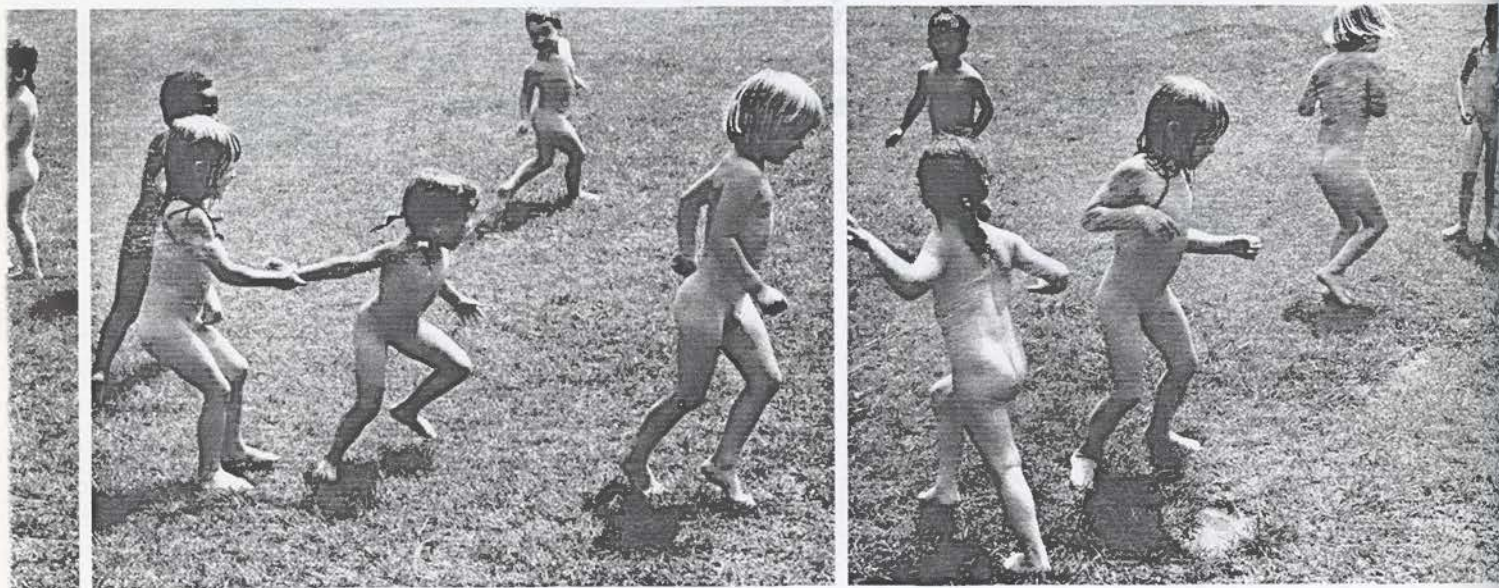




Peter Tittenberger was one of several artists whose works were in an exhibition "Gallery in Transit" curated by Doug Clark. Gallery in Transit was conceptualized as a public art project involving Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. It would constitute three buses, one bus from each city. In the panels where the advertisements usually go there would be a photographic exhibition. Winnipeg chose to have a group show on their bus.

At the last minute, the Winnipeg Transit authorities informed both artist and curator of their decision not to allow the bus exhibition to proceed unless Peter Tittenberger's works were removed. For the good of the majority artists they decided to remove the work. Throughout the discussions with the Winnipeg Transit officials they claimed several times not to be "personally offended" by the photographs, but that "viewers less sophisticated than themselves might be morally damaged".

Again, in 1986, when the exhibition reached Vancouver the photographs were removed when one of the bus drivers complained saying that "he didn't want any perverts on his bus".









Gerald Harpe exhibited his piece "Penis Torso" in Waterloo. He installed the work and only discovered its removal when he came to see the exhibit several days later. He was not notified that his piece had been removed nor was he asked to put in another work.

*The exhibition was of sculptures in bronze, stone and ceramic mediums, about 20 works, depicting ways of viewing the male-female relationships present in our culture. The piece that was removed explored the androgynous and the common genetic roots of the male and the female gender, a theme found in many aboriginal cultures. The exhibition was in 1978, in the Gallery of the head office of the Mutual Life Insurance Company in Waterloo, Ontario. Several days after I mounted the exhibition, I returned to interact with the public, and found the bronze sculpture, "Penis Torso", missing. I retrieved the sculpture, as you put it so well, from some "well meaning" public relations person's office, with the comment "Some may find it offensive!"*

*I never got an answer whether some one had complained or if the public relations person himself was embarrassed. I tolerated the interaction, as best I could-with humility. The situation made me feel guilty and I could not understand why the censorship. I felt violated.*

*I can now understand, but still choose not to identify with their reasoning. It is the white male system, with its dualistic, patriarchal non-egalitarian values that were in jeopardy.*







In June of 1980 the Winnipeg Convention Centre hosted an Art Bank exhibition. On the second day of the exhibition, following an anonymous complaint, Therese Dion, the Art Bank liaison officer in charge of the exhibition was asked by the Convention Centre management to move the entire show to a separate area of the Centre because "there were so many suggestive works in it".

Dion refused to move the show or to put all the "erotic" works in a corner as proposed by the centre's public relations officer, Helena Kaufman. Ultimately Dion did consent to put the offending works in a less prominent place.

On the Friday before the exhibition opened the Vice Division received an anonymous complaint about the show. Two vice officers were sent to the Convention Centre and reported that they saw nothing that would violate the criminal code.

After Joe Borowski, a self-described "anti-obscenity crusader" called the Vice Division, Sergeant Dan Jones, officer in charge of morals and pornography went down. His response to the exhibition was:

*I do not for one moment think that they are prosecutable, though the symbolism may be over the heads of most people.*

The works in question were:

Sorel Cohen - After Bacon/Muybridge, (Coupled figures/Whizzer leg toss), 1980

Jennifer Dickson- Dream of the Captive, 1976

Richard Nigro - Of Intimate Silence, 1978

Ernst Lindner - Summer, 1972

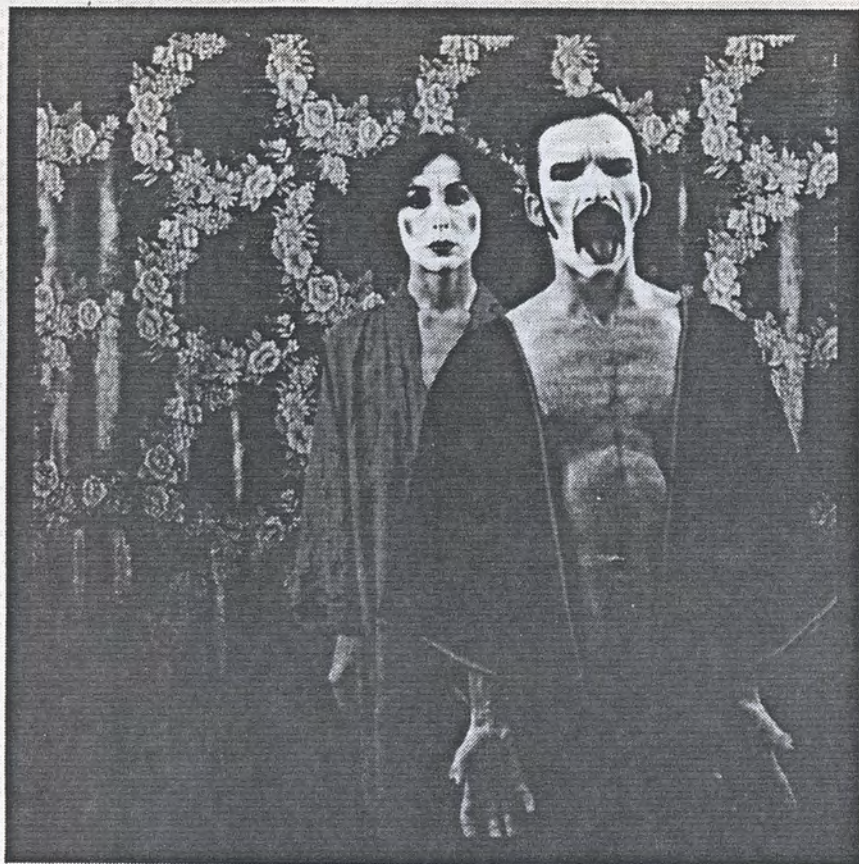
Mark Prent - Thawing Out, 1974





Jennifer Dickson, Dream of the Captive, 1976

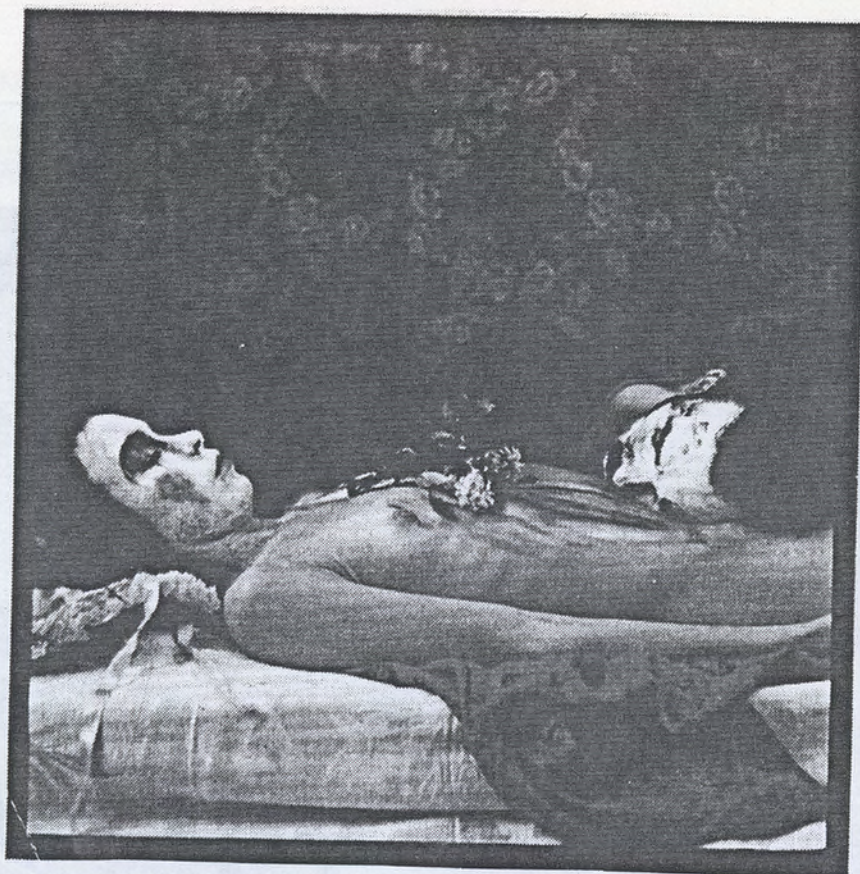




Richard Nigro - Of Intimate Silence, 1978 (Detail)

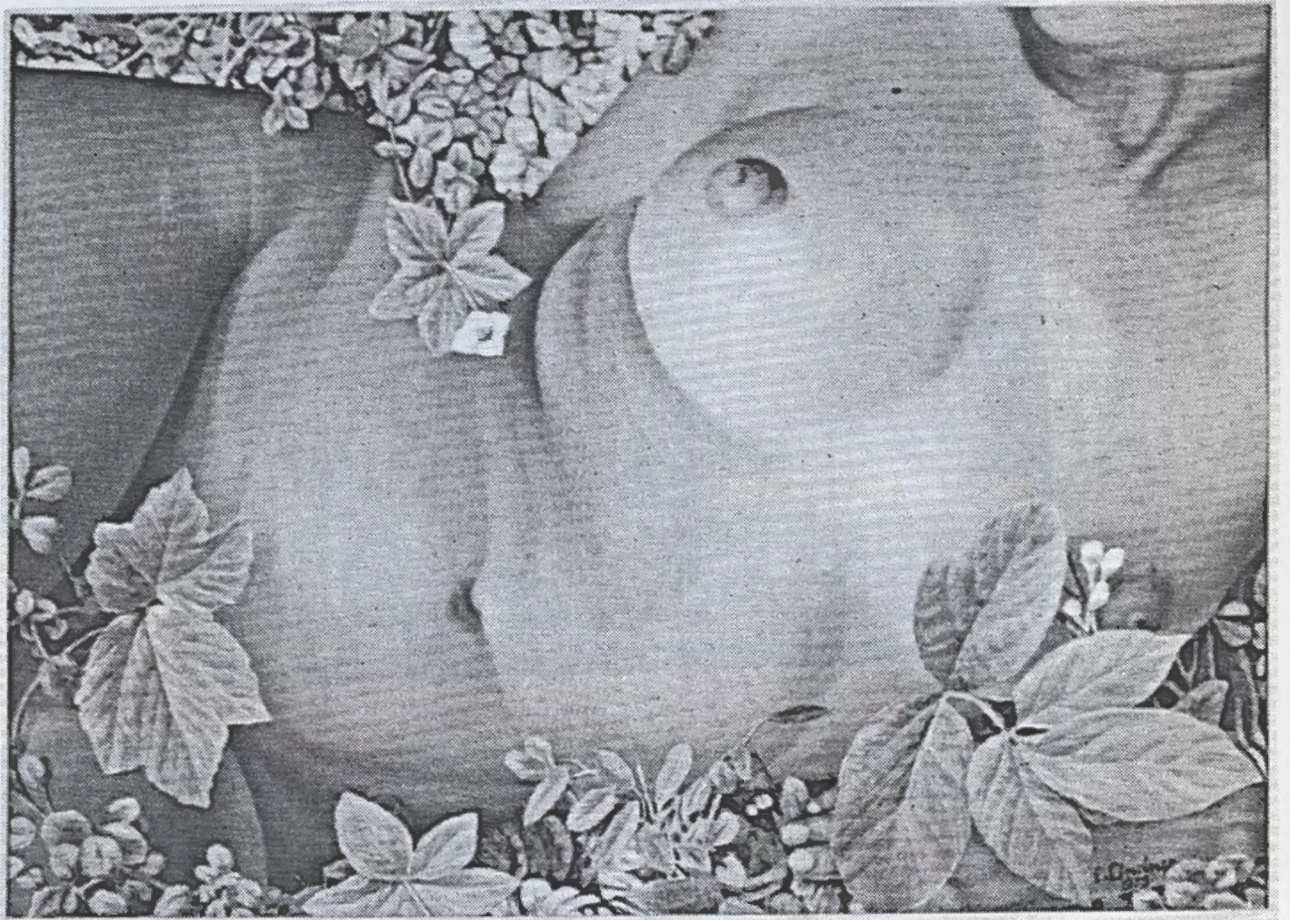






Mark Prent - Thawing Out, 1974





Ernst Lindner - Summer, 1972







1961 Guy Borremans had his photographs on exhibition in Montreal. It consisted of 15 nude women. Although the CBC had thought nothing of showing these photographs on TV, the vice squad found them offensive enough to close the entire exhibit.



Francis De Lucy is a painter who works almost exclusively with  
erotic imagery. In 1971 Mr. De Lucy and another artist, Jean Guy  
Monette, a jeweller, collaborated on an exhibition for the gallery  
Artisans du Quebec which was on Peel Street. Mr. Monette made  
his erotic drawings on



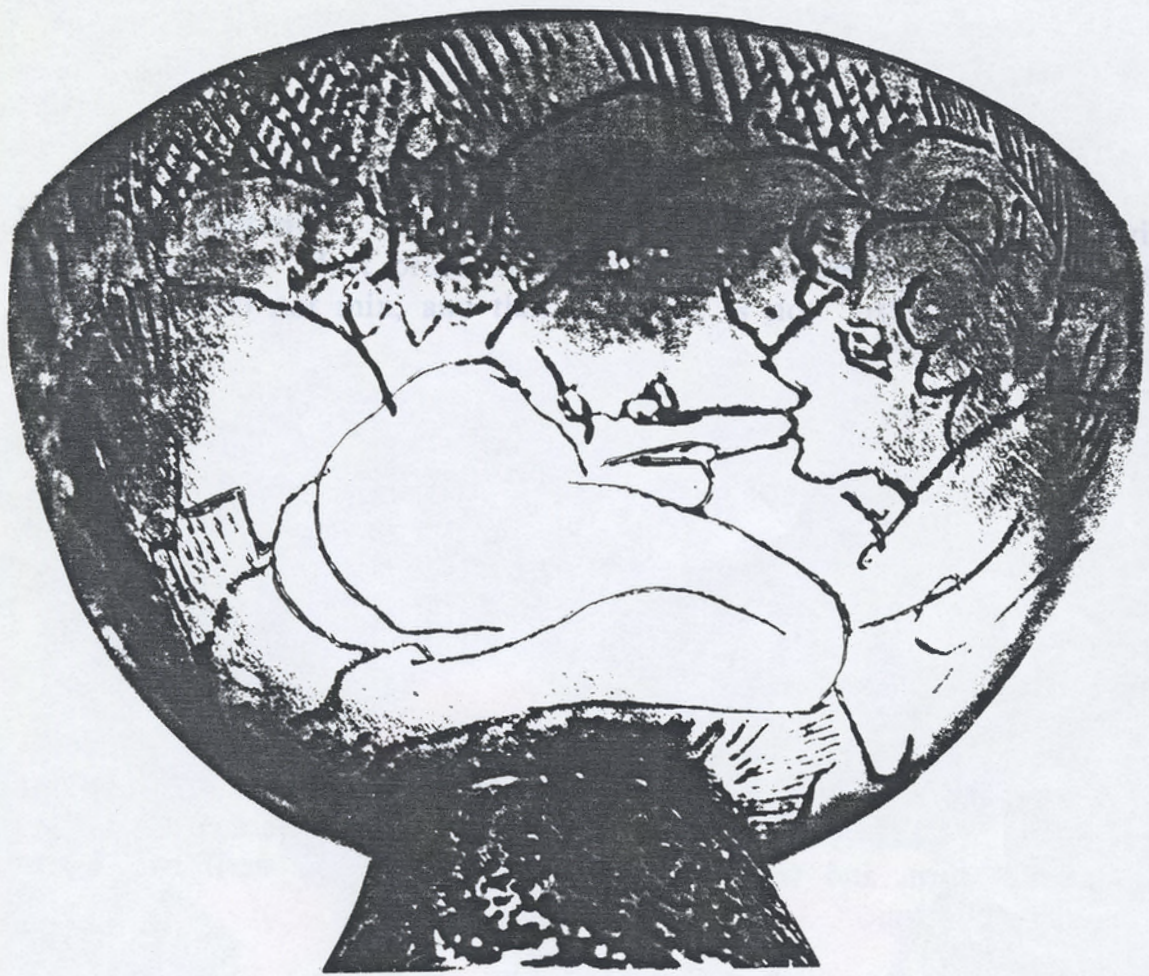


Francois De Lucy is a painter who works almost exclusively with erotic imagery. In 1971 Mr. De Lucy and another artist, Jean Guy Monette, a jeweller, collaborated on an exhibition for the gallery Artisans du Quebec which was on Peel Street. Mr. Monette made copper bowls, and cups. Mr. De Lucy engraved his erotic drawings on to the pieces.

These pieces were exhibited in the window and soon became popular to the lunchtime crowd. After several days the word got around and people would congregate in front of the window to look at the bowls.

The police became curious as to what was attracting so many people, and when they saw, they made the gallery owner remove the works.







**Political dissent** - Art is often censored when it deals with political issues. Most often the form of censorship is to claim that art and politics do not mix, and that the work is not "art".



Artists dealing with political concerns have often used vulgarity to get across their message. Such is the case with Patrick Collette.

Patrick Collette was attending the University of Moncton, New Brunswick in 1984 - 1985, the year that New Brunswick celebrated their Bicentennial. Although it was also the centennial of the Acadian flag, there was no mention of anything Acadian in any of the government literature.

Mr. Collette felt that this total disregard of his heritage was only one step in the elimination of the Acadian culture from the New Brunswick mosaic. In desperation he began to change his artistic imagery.

His first act of political art was to make 8 posters which protested the creation of New Brunswick. It was the beginning of the end of the Acadian people he contested. The Dean had them removed.

Mr. Collette who had been President of the Fine Arts Students for two years and was a straight A - B student suddenly found that when his work began to reflect his political concerns the faculty turned from him.

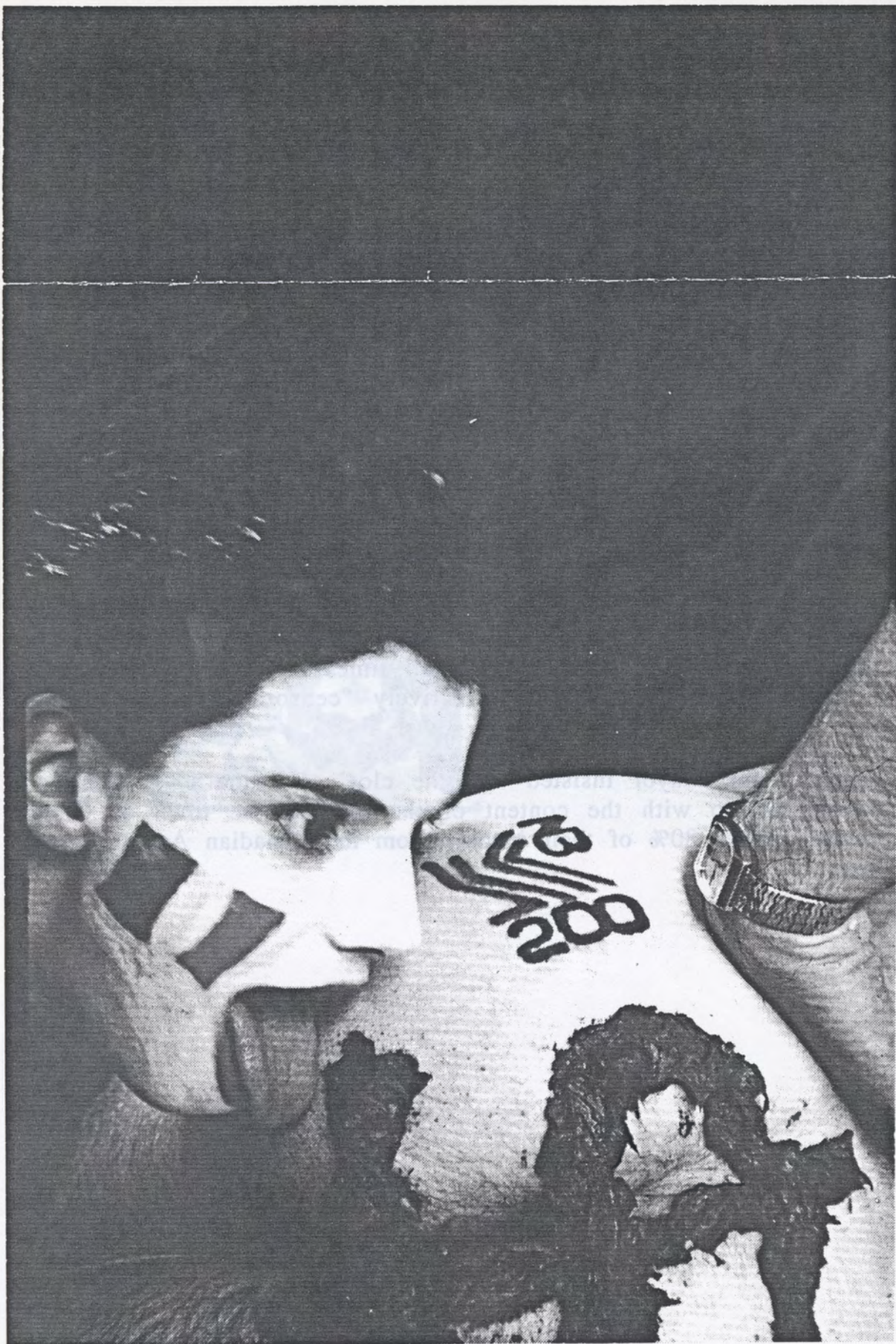
His photography teacher began to avoid him and would not discuss his work. Ultimately, in his last year he failed him. Although the course was a year course, he did not learn that the teacher had failed him at half term and would be failing him that year until two weeks before graduation.

His painting teacher did not behave quite as poorly. She would talk to him, but she felt that political concerns could not be included within an art context. She also failed him.

At the end of the year, those who were to graduate were included in an exhibition. His work was not hung in the three main gallery rooms with the other student work. His were placed in a separate room off to the side. The Director of the Fine Arts Faculty came and told him in philosophical tones, "Sometimes we think we are advancing our career, but we are really going backwards."

He was very upset. It took him a long time to do art work again, and he did not get his Bachelor of Arts Degree.







In 1981 Scott Marsden decided to organize an art show to commemorate the second special session of the United Nations on disarmament. With the help of the United Nations Association of Canada and Operation Dismantle, he sent out over 500 invitations to mail art artists all over the world.

Although the exhibition was co-ordinated two years before the Cold Lake Peace Camp was started, Mr. Marsden thought it a natural for the town of Grand Centre, only two kilometers from the Cold Lake air base cruise missile test site. In 1984, he applied to have his exhibition hang in the public art gallery for his peace and disarmament exhibition because "it as a neutral place" in a military area. The show was accepted.

Mr. Marsden hung the exhibition, but on February 23, 1984, just after the show opened, the city council, at a secret, meeting voted to have the exhibition closed. The director of the gallery was told to remove the exhibition the following day.

At the threat of legal action, the town council and the art gallery reluctantly decided to re-install the exhibition. However, if Mr. Marsden was not at the gallery at all times the gallery staff would lock the gallery doors, thus effectively "censoring" the exhibition from public view.

Although the Mayor insisted that the closing of the exhibition had nothing to do with the content of the exhibit, the town of Grand Centre derives 80% of their income from the Canadian Armed Forces Base.



Media intervention - The Media is often the place where erotic issues get coverage. When the work has been removed from an exhibition, one regularly see these

"TO BE OR NOT TO BE"  
 "CENSORED"  
 A MAIL ART SHOW ON  
 PEACE AND  
 DISARMAMENT  
 "CENSORED"  
 coordinated by scott mardon

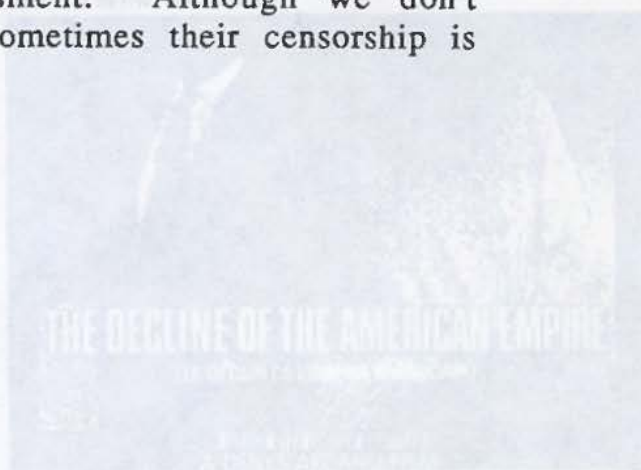
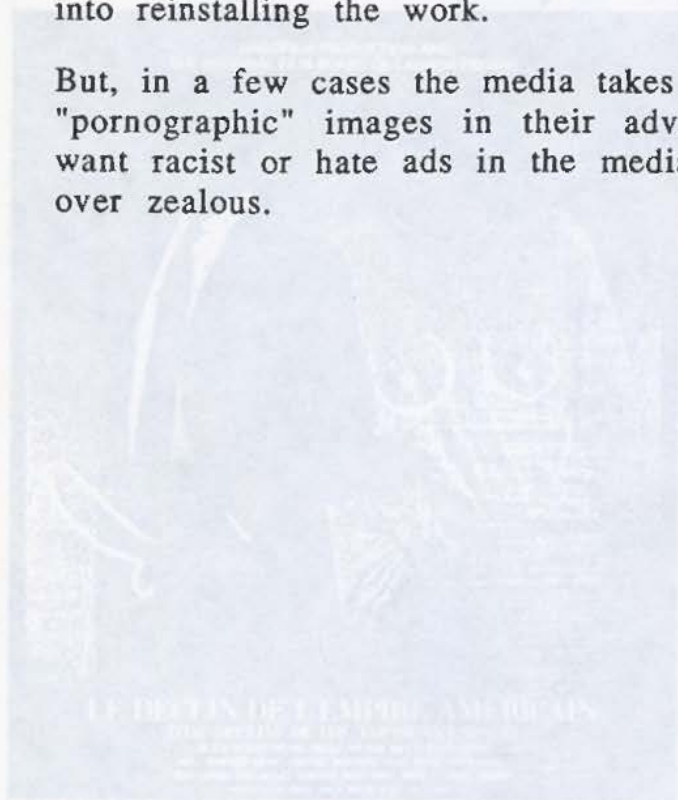


...DIE ALTEMEINEN SACHEN ...IN NACHRICHTEN DER WIRTSCHAFT ...WIEBEN ...  
 ...DAS ...DIE ...WIEBEN ...  
**COLLAGE**  
 "DYING MACHT HAPPY"  
 H-BOMBE  
 FR. 21 MAI  
 SA. 22 MAI  
 SO. 23 MAI  
 TÄGLICH 21 UHR  
 VT. STUDIO IM KONZERTHAUS



**Media intervention** - The Media is often the place where erotic issues get coverage. When the work has been removed from an exhibition, one regularly see these same pieces reproduced in the papers and journals. Media intervention often brings enough pressure to bear that the gallery or curator in question is shamed into reinstalling the work.

But, in a few cases the media takes the stand that they won't show "pornographic" images in their advertisement. Although we don't want racist or hate ads in the media, sometimes their censorship is over zealous.



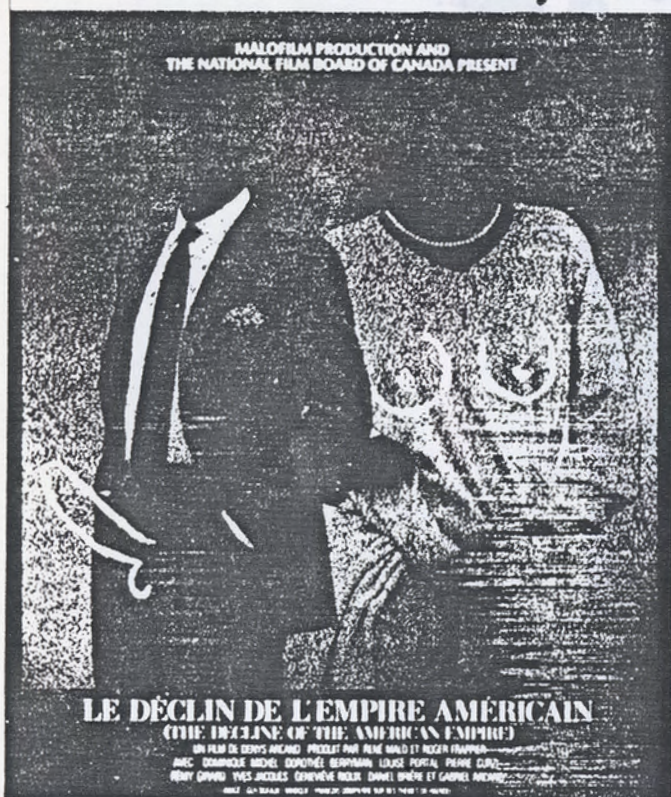


Cineplex-Odeon placed ads for "The Decline of the American Empire" in both the Globe and Mail and the Toronto Star. The first day the ad ran, but from then on the ad was "cleaned up", with an airbrushing out of the penis and breasts which had been graffitied onto two fully dressed figures. When Fuse Magazine asked the advertising sales manager why the ad had been altered, he said that it was "a question of taste".



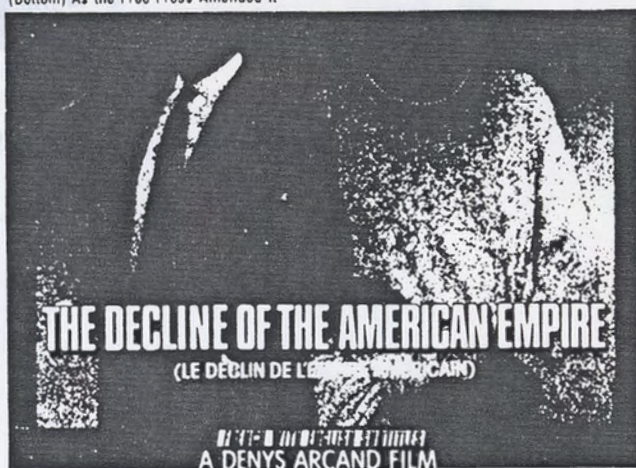
In the exhibition Woman as Viewer in Winnipeg, Phyllis Greens, crocheted "The Boob Tree" was on the poster of the show. The poster was so popular that it was stolen as fast as it was put up. Even so, although the piece was reproduced in a review in the Globe and Mail, the Winnipeg Free Press refused to carry an ad of the exhibition.

OPENING NIGHT FILM • FESTIVAL OF FESTIVALS •  
TORONTO, SEPTEMBER 4<sup>th</sup> 1986



(Top) As the Creator Intended It

(Bottom) As the Free Press Amended It





In the exhibition *Woman as Viewer* in Winnipeg, Phyllis Greens' crocheted "The Boob Tree" was on the poster of the show. The poster was so popular that it was stolen as fast as it was put up. Even so, although the piece was reproduced in a review in the Globe and Mail, the Winnipeg Free Press refused to carry an ad of the exhibition.

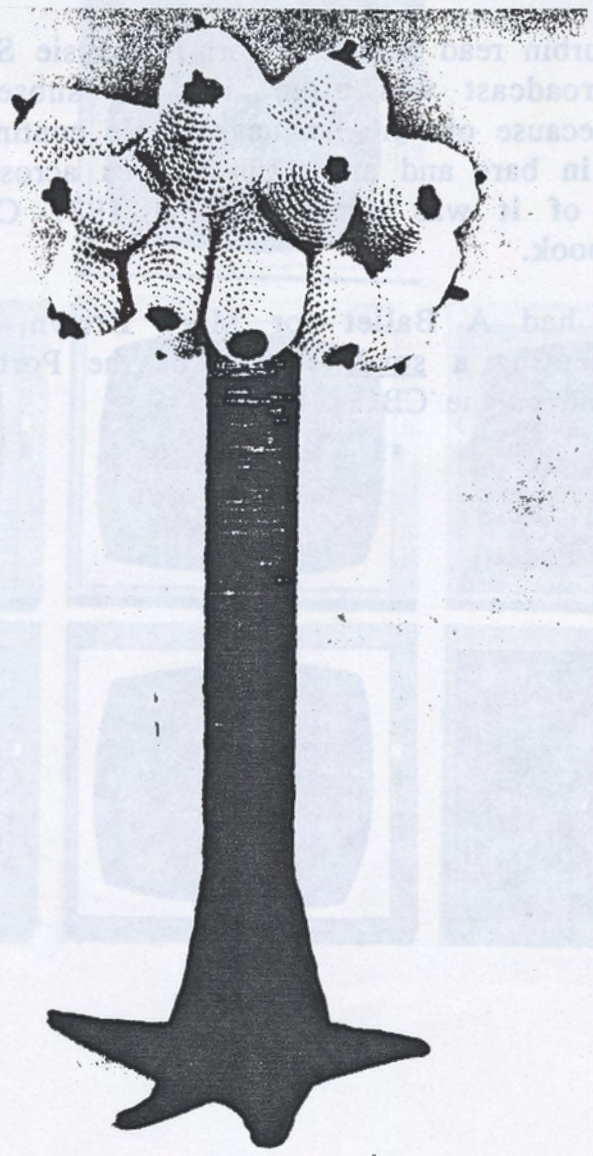




Dennis Tourbin is interested in exploring the area between painting and literature. He is fascinated by the way television presents information altering our visual perception of life. He says, literature has remained relatively static so that the printed word has become an "endangered species". He feels that the printed word must assume a more visual appearance in order to survive.

In 1972 Mr. Tourbin read the stories on the CBC. The original broadcast was cancelled because he was unable to do readings from the book in his own voice. Finally, an audio tape of his readings was published the book.

The exhibition had a poster which was published by the CBC.





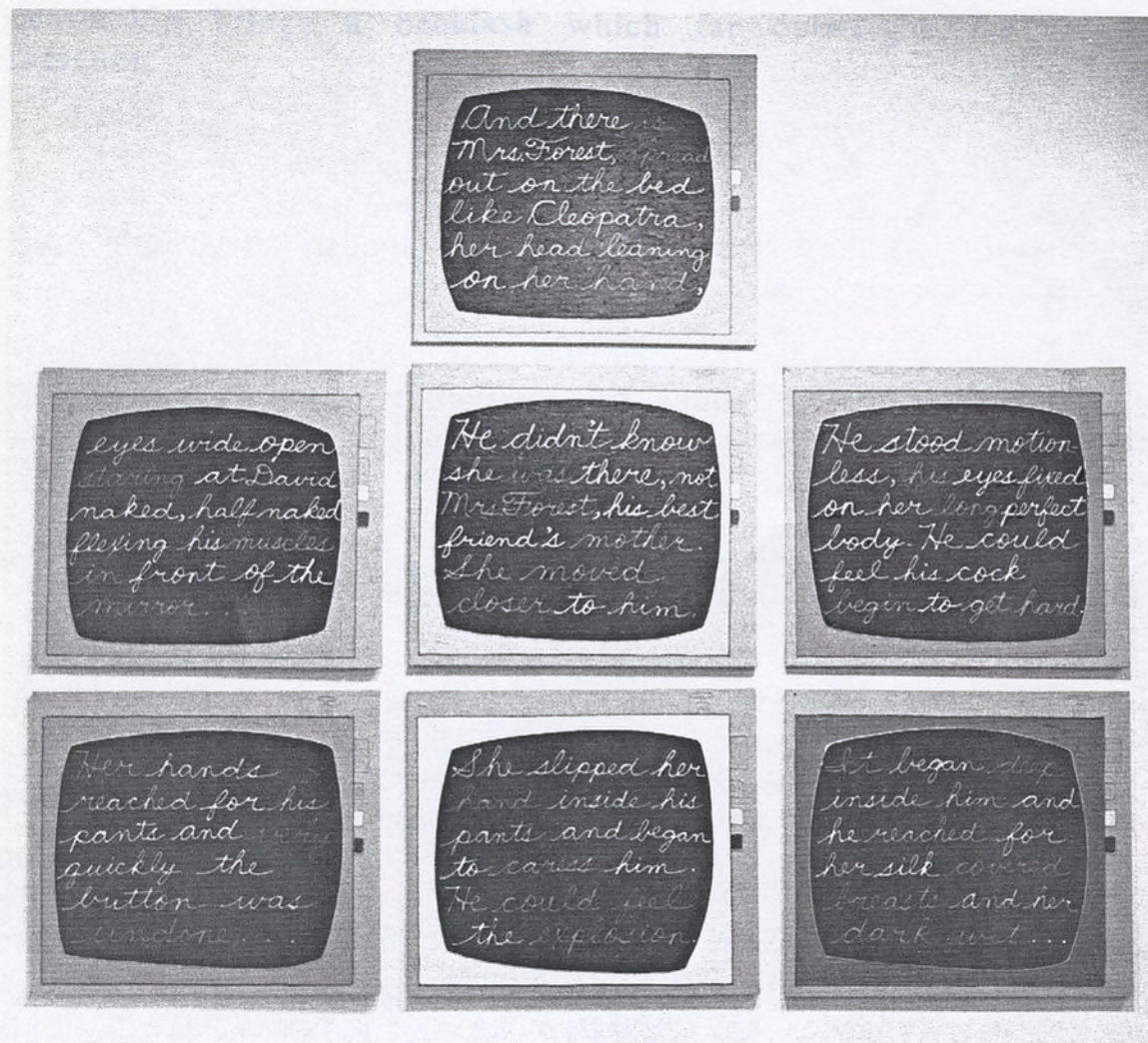
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In 1972 Mr Tourbin read from his Port Dalhousie Stories on the CBC. The original broadcast was aired, but the subsequent re-broadcast was cancelled because of "the language". He continued to do readings from the book in bars and artist run centres across Canada. Finally an audio tape of it was made, and in 1987 Coach House Press published the book.

The exhibition had A Ballet for Mary Brown, a series of word paintings representing a small section of the Port Dalhousie Stories which he had read on the CBC.



Issues of power - Organizations and persons in positions of power feel that resistance to their commands must be silenced. In many cases the work itself is not erotic, but the resistance to the





**Issues of power** - Organizations and persons in positions of power feel that resistance to their commands must be silenced. In many cases the work itself is not erotic, but the resistance to the censorship brings a backlash which far outweighs the original incident.



Eileen Raucher Sutton is an artist who lives in Edmonton. Her husband Philip Davidson, had held a permanent position as assistant director of the University of Alberta's office of institutional research and planning for ten years. In his private office he hung a drawing of a nude torso by Ms. Sutton.

In October of 1986, he was ordered to remove the drawing. The supervisor cited as the reason, complaints from female staff members who had found it offensive. Mr. Davidson agreed to take the picture down if any of his co-workers were genuinely upset by the picture. A third party mediator eventually determined that there was "some significant, genuine concern".

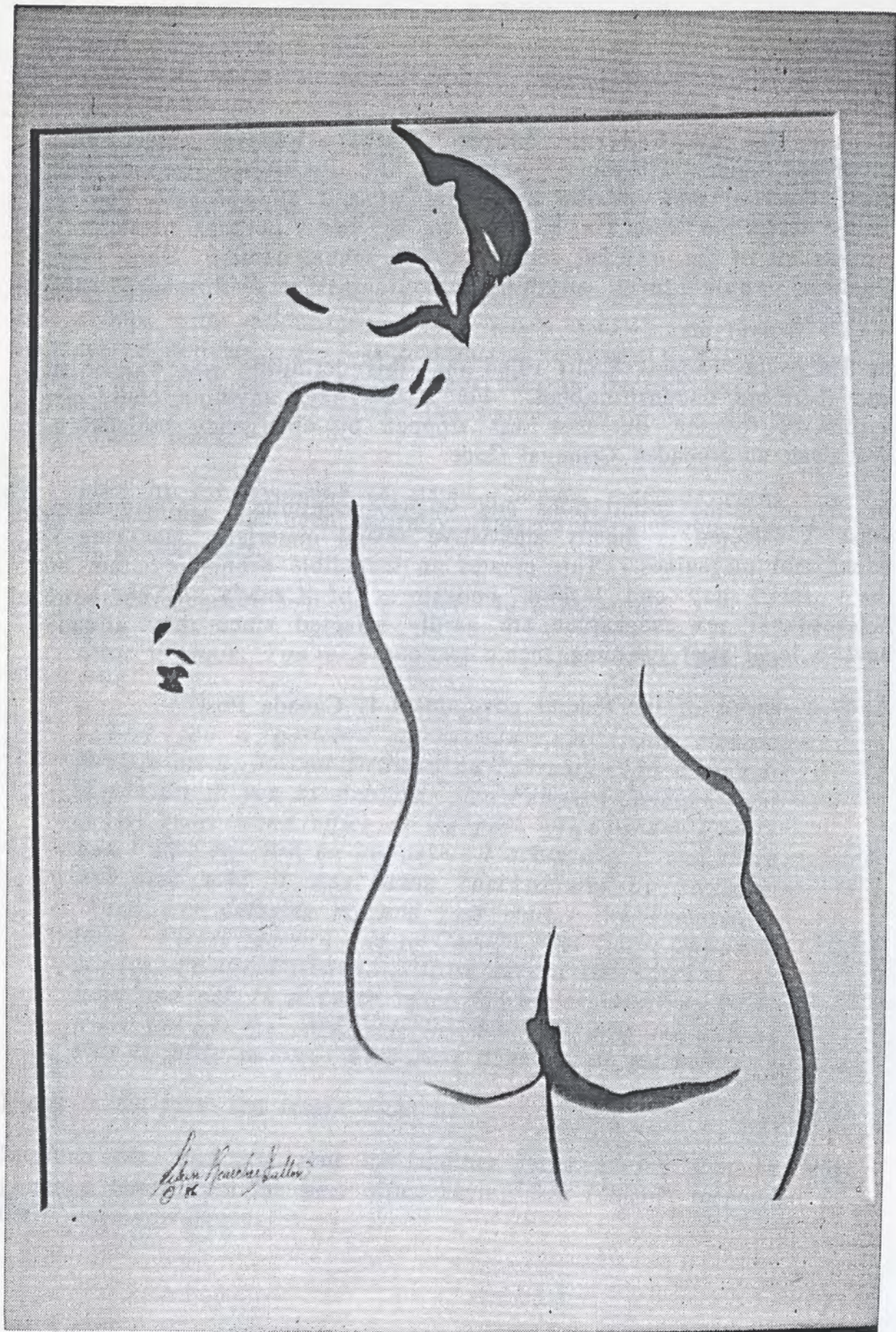
Peter Meekison, academic vice-president of the University of Alberta, stated that although the university does not endorse censorship of art, they were still a workplace and the issue was how co-workers reacted to it.

Russell Bingham, associate spokesman for the Edmonton Art Gallery, agreed that it was difficult to find anything offensive about the drawing.

The entire issue would have stopped there and not been too significant, but four months later Mr. Davidson's job description was revised and in April he was informed that his new position was "redundant" and "the university no longer needed him".

Ms. Raucher Sutton says, "The university claims there is no connection between these events. I think the message is clear."







**Censorship by Federal Bodies.** - Most Federal censorship involves Canada Customs. Through the Prohibited Importations Tariff Service, they monitor and judge what is allowed into Canada. They determine what is allowed in by their personal standards. Almost all of the material seized is of a sexual nature. Until 1985, Customs could seize anything they considered "immoral and indecent".

In 1985, the Federal Court ruled that this definition was too broad and therefore unconstitutional. For a few days anything could get across the border, but that was stopped by emergency legislation. We await an amended Criminal Code.

In the meantime prohibitions and seizures continue. Unfortunately, what is affected is mostly alternative sexual material. Homosexual books and magazines. This creates an incredible economic strain on the small gay and lesbian bookstores of Canada. The large heterosexual sex magazines are hardly affected since they already have a legal staff handling such situations.

Another censor of the federal government is Canada Post.



Mike Duquette works for Canada Post. Several years ago he began making mail art.

In 1980, a week after he sent out a piece of mail art, a postal inspector told him to sign an affidavit describing mail art or "face arrest and a raid on his house in front of his wife and two-year-old son".

He had sent a 16" x 20" postcard composed of several hundred one-cent stamps with antique postal cancellation marks. He mailed the card special delivery. He was told that it is illegal to place postage stamps any place on a postcard other than in its right-hand corner, and that it is illegal to collage the stamps and to use the antique cancellation marks.

In a brief by Mr. Duquette he stated, "Several more postcards were delayed and one was even willfully damaged by a postal supervisor in front of witnesses."

In 1986 Mr. Duquette sent me a letter. In it he writes:

*Dear Jeannie, You're not going to believe this, but it's true!*

*I sent you a postcard approx 14"x 20" with Ronald Raygun on it, Special Delivery on February 3/86 hoping it would get to you by Feb 7th. On February 26/86 I went to my supervisor's office at the post office where I work and I saw my card on his desk. I asked why it was there and was told it was being checked out by security. "They" are delaying my and your mail. I've enclosed a form. Please forward this to Canada Post Corp. Customer service, Pacific Division. Please record the date on the form and ask in a cover letter for an explanation. If or when you get the card, note the date and drop me a line. This is fairly serious. They have done this to me before.*

I sent in the form and forgot about it.

In June Mr. Duquette sent me another letter stating that he had gotten a letter from the post office saying that I hadn't responded to their correspondence.



Finally, in November, I got a letter from the post office. In it they said that my letter from Mike Duquette had been lost in the bottom of an empty mail bag.

Enough was Enough. In December I answered with a letter to the Minister of Canada Post with copies to Mr. Duquette, Canada Post, The Canadian Union of Postal Workers, and three MPs.

I finally got a response (although not until May of 1987). Included in a plain brown envelope were two postcards, one, the card in question, and another sent around the same time but not cancelled. Also included was a letter from Canada Post written by R.C.Smith. (sic)

*I have obtained a report from East Plant Officials outlining the circumstances of removing two items of Mr. Duquette's mail from the mail processing stream. It seems that the envelopes were covered with offensive graffiti as well as sadistic acts of violence. Reference is made to the Postal Guide, Section 34.13 which states:*

*Some of the more serious offences include using the mails for delivering:*

*obscent, indecent, immoral or scurilous articles:(sic)*

*Therefore, items of this nature are a criminal code offence and hence, their removal from the mail stream.*

*I trust this explains why you have not received mail from M. Duquette. Thank you for writing with you concerns.*



14



Confused Sexual Views by Paul Wong, Gina Daniels, Jeanette Reinhardt, and Gary Bourgeois was to have been the inaugural video production at the re-opening of the video space at the new Vancouver Art Gallery.

Luke Rombout, the director of the VAG cancelled the production only three days before its opening. The reason given by the director was that the work was not defensible as art, might provoke undesirable press and might alienate the gallery's many new members. He said that he had cancelled the show after seeing three and a half hours of the tapes for, the first time, the week of the opening. "The material that I looked at dealt with social-sexual investigation of some sort. These tapes are simply the faces of people being interviewed. This itself does not constitute a creative act. There is no connection with visual art."

Although the work has hours of interviews - talking heads of people in the art community talking about their personal sexual history - the final installation was to be a complex construction of multiple TV monitors with 27 showcards composed of 8 x 10 colour stills of each of the subjects and text taken from the personal statements.

Paul Wong is an internationally known video artist and whether his work was art or not involves far greater philosophical analysis.

Mr. Wong believes that the fact that the tapes had people of all sexual persuasions talking about their sex lives is the reason for the cancellation. Regrettably, the issues of his piece are no longer part of the discussion of this work.

The art community rallied around this issue. There was a picket of the art gallery, a law suit was instigated claiming damages to reputation, the art community ran an alternative Board of Directors slate for the gallery, and one curator was fired.

the video tapes have been shown several times since this incident in alternative spaces, but the original complex multi-monitor installation has never been presented. Had the piece not been cancelled it would very likely have traveled and been seen in all the prestigious galleries across Canada.





BRUCE, ELIZABETH & ANYA

"we're striving to maintain some sort of environment for mutual satisfaction. . . . also for growing children . . . a relationship you're having with a child you take more seriously, you don't just run off . . . I'm not pressing or persistent in my affections . . . we're both passive . . . it's a fluke that we ever got together."



CHICK

"any object, person, or beast or flower that has a kind of beauty . . . really ethereal . . . my sexual orientation is where I seek out that beauty . . . it's difficult to live in a modern world and even more difficult to find happiness . . . erotic. . . is a certain delicacy . . . sense of serenity, a calm. . . it's what is exuded from them that my spirit can touch . . ."



