

10

# spiral

# 3

women's  
arts magazine



featuring  
women's environment

## Production

Send us articles, arguments  
graphics, letters, photos,  
instructions on doing, making  
eg. frames, looms, films. Send  
us feedback. What are your  
reactions to Spiral? What  
would you like to see more of,  
less of, what pleases you?  
Let us know if you can help us,  
if we can send you copies, if  
you can sell some.

## Sales

Ask your local bookseller if  
they stock it - if not, show  
it to them. Persuade them to  
try a few each quarterly. Let  
us know each printing how many  
they'd like to have invoiced  
out to them.

Buy a number, two, ten, a  
hundred copies from us and sell  
them to your friends.

HELP WOMEN ARTISTS COMMUNICATE  
WITH EACH OTHER. BUY SPIRAL.

---

## Contents

---

Editorial	1.
Paulette Barr	3.
Olive Winchester	4.
Anne McDonell	6.
Gladys Gurney	8.
Jocelyn Herrick	11.
Alison Jackman	13.
Lea Barker	16.
Anony-ms	20.
Women's Environment at the '77 Women's Convention	24.
Rosie Scott	41.
Merlene Young	43.
Alison Wright	46.
Wendy Laks - I am Giving Birth to Myself	48.

# Spiral

## Who are we?

We are a collective of Christchurch women with a feminist perspective eager to provide New Zealand women with a literary/arts journal which is a forum for their own thoughts, feelings, attitudes in a nurturant supportive atmosphere.

## What are our aims?

To offer space to women artists, particularly those who have not been accepted by the male critique - publishers and galleries - and further, share the polemics of the global women's art movement. Create our own critique. Share work and spiritual aspirations.

Print Spiral, contact many women artists (painters, writers, photographers, composers, film makers, craftswomen) to develop a communication network throughout the country of which Spiral is a vital part, letting you know who is doing, thinking, making what, where and when - eg. arts workshops, festivals, exhibitions, books, biographies, new theories, discoveries, experiments . . .

## What have we done so far?

Published the first three issues of Spiral. The compilation of Spiral was done in Christchurch with contributions from painters, poets, photographers and other dedicated women.

## What are our difficulties?

To have the money to print the next Spiral we need a good return from the sales of each issue, now on sale at bookshops and galleries or which you can write to us for posting. Therefore we need to contact as many women as possible who see the need for this publication - and will buy and help us sell it.

## What you can do

Buy gift subs for mothers, friends, women artists of your acquaintance. Take out a sub for your doctors', dentists', lawyers' waiting rooms . . . art gallery, staffrooms, playcentres, clubrooms, stationer. Ask your local library, art gallery or . . .? if they have a sub, and if not, suggest they get one.

# Editorial

## Not in Limbo

Cultural feminism, the artistic, critical and research activity of women with a feminist consciousness, is nibbling at the edges of that public masculine experience with which we are constantly bombarded. Slowly and fragmentarily.

Public manifestations are seen in the continuance of Broadsheet magazine, Daybreak bookshop, Herstory press, Spiral, the Womens Studies Association; in the infrequent visits of literary spokeswomen such as Marilyn French and Ellen Moers, in concerts, conferences and exhibitions by feminist artists and academics.

Subterranean evidence may be seen in feminist homes round the country; shelves of feminist and women's books, magazines and records, diaries, walls of visual arts. This influence is hardest to measure, but it does provide for women reinforcement, vigour, humour, changing models from victim to self-respecting survivor, and changing lifestyles and futures.

In the sixties writers such as Sylvia Plath and Janet Frame implicitly raised words, the solidity of words, thus art, to the highest life form, a kind of individual exorcism of pain and negation. In the seventies,

Judy Chicago and Marilyn French suggest implicitly that art is one expression of life experience common to all women. Both artists show feminism to be not the solution but the structure informing life and art. Emergent American writers such as Rita Mae Brown and Bertha Harris offer seriocomic situations in which women artists' humanity exposes a sterile technique-fiddling (male) art establishment; a New Zealand poet, Rachel McAlpine in her *Chat with God the Mother*<sup>1</sup> shows one direction of feminist influence, a changed spiritual focus.

Where art and politics meet is a widening refusal by women to be bound by traditional content even when using traditional skills. For if we define politics as the expression of a philosophy of life and its government, we are all participants, all political beings, with a stake in the necessary changes of that philosophy. The women's art environment made for the 1977 United Womens Convention was a rebellion against traditionally defined "exhibitions". As women artists look to their common experience they see the need for all women's creativity to be recognised, they see that it exists everywhere, if only

spasmodically in public.

To publicise the subterranean changes of consciousness it is necessary to pool energies, to group, to organise, and document women's work. The Christchurch environment showed that an art with common environmental, thus political origins, must be a democratised art, its processes demystified so that it can communicate with its ancestry, the common - and uncommon - experience of women. As well as a report of the environment, this third

issue gathers a variety of women poets from around the country. The greatest response to Spiral has been from poets. It may be that exigencies of time, space, and material inhibit a full-time family nurturer from more expansive activities, it may be that we need more women-directed outlets for written, visual and performing arts. Spiral welcomes reports of such ventures.

- 1 From *Come to the Dinner Party*  
Rachel McAlpine Pub. Caveman '78.

---

### Thanks

We have been assisted with this and the previous issue of Spiral by grants from the NZ Literary Fund. We would like to thank all women who have supported Spiral and in particular Jane Stewart and Louise Lewis for generous gifts.

### Credits

Published by Spiral Collective:

Patsy Keene, Anna Keir, Ruth Lawley,  
Heather McPherson, Wendy Prestney,  
Tiffany Thornley.

Layout: Lynne Ciochetto

Cover: Allie Eagle & Lynne Ciochetto

Fundraising: Gladys Gurney, Leslie Carr

Registered at the G.P.O. Wellington as a magazine.

## Paulette Barr

---

I can't stand the quietness of the night  
clock ticking  
typewriter clacking  
cats tongue lapping

I can't stand the stillness of the night  
immobile mobile  
catatonic tree  
grey stone maiden

Sing me a lie  
Sing me a lie  
Tell me that one day there won't be  
schizophrenia  
incest  
self-mutilation  
or egg bound bantams

Sing me a lie  
Sing me a lie  
Tell me I'll never die.

Dearest little sister with your rosebud  
lips and bright young eyes  
I planned to tell you tonight  
about life  
about men how they rape beat  
& oppress us  
About loving women loving yourself  
but tonight little sister I'm silent  
& my heart is heavy  
with the pain of trying to  
love myself.

## Anzac Day 1978

Six old schizophrenic men walked across the field  
They were wearing their best hospital issue sports jackets  
and were carrying a wreath -  
a wreath for their physically dead comrades I thought.

But their faces were saying something -  
something I felt as I fingered the crumpled poppy hidden  
in my uniform pocket -  
something I felt  
as I squirmed uneasily.

Born July 1953 - Sun in Cancer,  
Moon in Libra, Scorpio rising.  
Training as a psychiatric nurse -  
should register May '79 if all  
goes well.

Interests are astrology, feminism,  
politics and detective novels -  
Marsh, Christie, Allingham and  
Sayers (no coincidence that they're  
all women). Since reading Violette  
Leduc, Colette and Gertrude  
Stein have had a desire to travel  
to France.



---

## Olive Winchester

---

### Etiquette at the Circus

She ran to the clown -  
touched his bust of balloons -  
he jumped away. -

She walked to a horse -  
pushed sweets through its yellow teeth -  
it neighed in anger.-

Sadly she went home. -  
What ticket buys the right  
to take liberties?

## Fettered to Mother

Don't say -

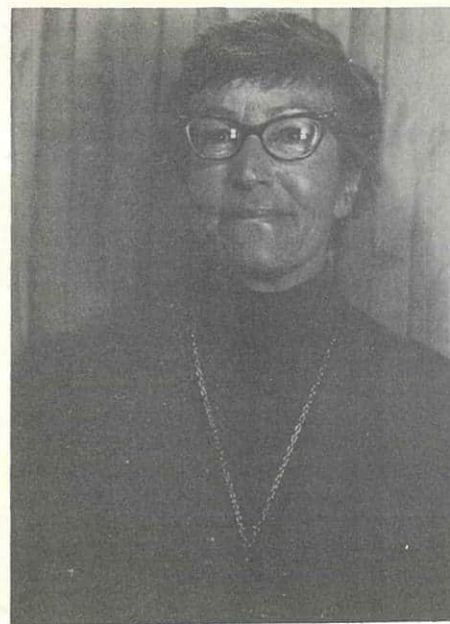
'You should be grateful,  
for all I have done for you.  
Birth, Care, Happiness. '

Don't look -

And hope to see  
resemblance to your lover.  
For I am me - no other.

Don't ask -

For love, respect and thought  
I can give nothing of myself  
unsought.



Born October 5th 1919 in London,  
England. Came to N.Z. in 1951.  
Have son 33 and daughter 31.  
Interests, people, animals,  
reading, writing. (No special  
order.) Also love dancing and  
eating but one must have vices . .  
to give balance.

# Anne McDonell

---

## A Visit

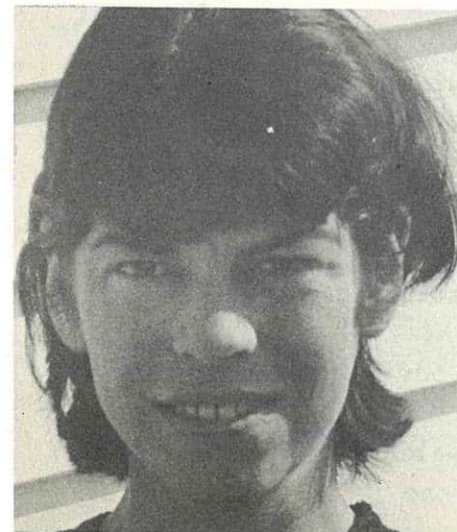
Nearly a century old; frail  
bed-ridden and with muddled memory  
she lies there, valiantly attempting  
a conversation with the grand-daughter  
whom she has failed to recognise.  
Like the glass in a kaleidoscope  
her memories mix and mingle,  
never forming the same pattern twice.  
Who is this stranger by her bedside  
with whom she is forced to converse  
and to share her sacred memories?  
It bothers her to entertain strangers.  
"I'm in a home where they fix old people,"  
she tells me as if to say  
"Why not come back later when their job  
is done. Then we'll have tea together."  
I blow my nose, kiss her furrowed forehead  
and hasten to the world where I am recognised.

## Hate - A Protection

Desperately I seek to hate him,  
definitely, finally,  
to feel an emotion for him  
which I can comprehend.  
Black is understandable  
like white, which is impossible  
but this grey confuses,  
encourages false hope  
then maliciously deals  
its hand of hurt.

## Sunday Morning

I lie in bed with my  
coffee perched precariously  
upon the shambles of sheets  
and toast crumbs dropping  
like gravel to a river bed.  
The children's request session  
ceased some time before  
to set free an exuberance  
one could hardly ignore.  
I flick through the pages  
of a library book, long overdue  
knowing now that I'll never read it.  
People amble down our avenue  
on their way to morning prayers.  
I feel annoyed as they regard  
my pyjama clad children with stares  
of sympathy. I close the blind.  
It shuts out the view  
but not the discomfort, physical and mental  
which plagues me. But I knew  
when I decided to lie in  
that this is what it would come to.



I am the mother of three children  
aged seven to ten years and am  
working full time as a speech  
therapist. I am also a teacher  
of speech and drama (non-  
practising). My interests  
include writing poetry and prose  
for adults and children, drama,  
and home life with my family.  
I am also involved with the  
Toastmistress organisation.

My work has been broadcast and  
published by School Publications,  
Eve, Home Journal, Outrigger,  
Thursday, Australian School  
Magazine and others.

# Gladys Gurney

---

"You said you thought sometimes I  
was a silly old woman but then  
again you loved me."

Silly old woman dancing all night  
you hold your own with the young  
more or less,  
more or less my friend  
and have another drink  
lean awhile.

Wise old woman you lend your  
ear to the problem my friend  
This thing is less or more  
more or less.  
Shall we making it more retain it?  
Making it less divide it with me,  
I take a half.

Shall we find a tribe  
and divide it and divide it again  
until the pieces become so small  
they disappear  
more or less.

Strong old woman  
"Anyone for indian wrestling?"  
"Shall we dig the garden  
or have another beer?"  
less or more  
more or less.

Loving old woman  
Your arm held many a child  
Your own - more or less.

Sad old woman  
remembering lonely times with no-one  
just the thought coming  
sometimes less  
sometimes more.

Silly old woman  
you took it and you hold it  
more or less  
less or more.  
But then again you love me  
less or more?  
more or less?

## Amazon Song

Sing  
Sing me  
Sing me a song  
Sing me an Amazon Song  
Sing of the lateness  
of time  
of regrets  
of loves  
and of those not loved  
of revolution coming  
not fast enough  
of young ones growing  
not fast enough  
of my passing  
too quickly  
too slowly  
of my missing  
of you and you and you  
and the hugging and kissing  
of you and you and you  
the sleeping, weeping  
with you and you and you  
of the picnics, parties  
cold days, wet days  
hot days, rotten days  
of our power, strength  
of our weakness and oppression  
of our hopes, dreams  
wild crazy schemes  
Sing me on and on and on  
of the children we raised  
hoping yet fearing  
of the never-ending caring.

Sing of our creativity  
destroyed or ignored  
of the fight for recognition  
of our artists, writers, musicians  
    slowly banding together  
    gathering their wimmin strength  
    Sing of our travelling sisters  
meeting, greeting  
of visions, missions  
Sing on and on  
Sing of the ancient ones  
    who died  
Sing a death song  
    for them  
    of the knowledge  
    of the power  
    of fear created  
    in the hearts of men  
Sing of the flames  
    of bodies destroyed  
    but not spirits  
Sing of our religion  
    preserved secretly  
    through it all  
Sing louder and louder  
    Sing that the spirits  
    who departed  
    will hear  
    and return  
Sing our Amazon song  
    shake, break  
the patriarchal foundation  
then sing with joy  
    and build again  
Sing of renewal  
    of rebirth  
Sing  
    Sing me  
Sing me a song  
Sing me an Amazon Song.

I am a Sagittarian woman who likes people. I write poetry very spasmodically. I also like to draw or paint spasmodically. I look at my poetry now and in it see the progression of my life from a conventional suburban 3 children, one mortgage etc. life to a realization of myself as a person, a woman, a woman relating to women and now a woman relating to a cause, a woman's dream hence the "Amazon Song".



---

## Jocelyn Herrick

---

### The Dead Complaint of Winter

i wanted to write a poem  
    about the bulldozer  
    and its driver

both damaged a main bow  
    of the red beech  
    outside the window

i wanted to drag them back here  
    to confront th split

i chewed my lip, and let it slip.



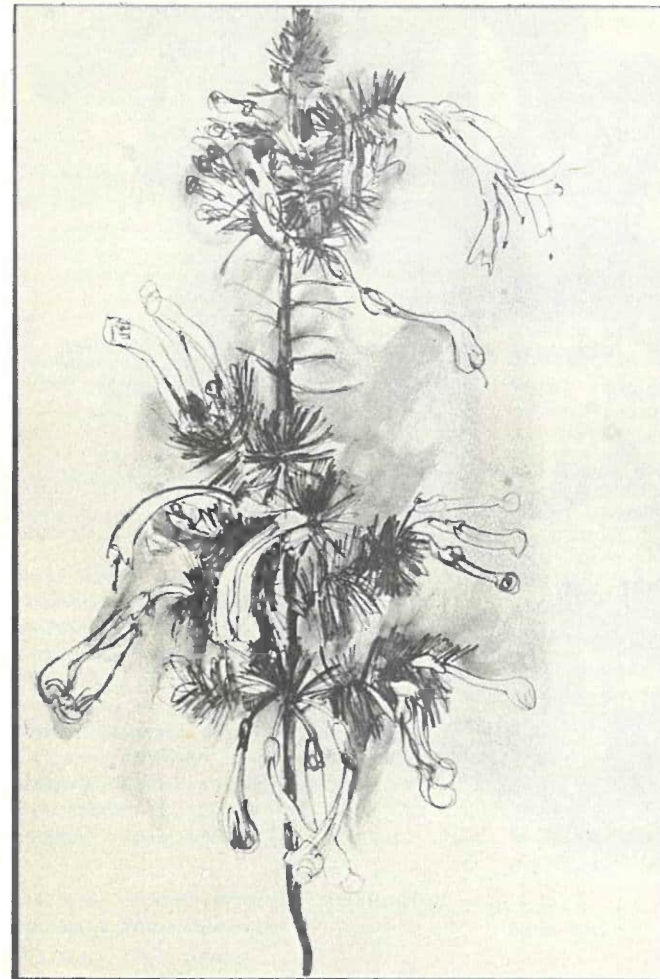
This man and wife  
stumble & shuffle  
along leather coat, Notre Dame  
physique, whinging each step  
like th ignored dog  
who gets fed regularly  
i admit it

love is more than  
walking together  
this we know  
, or really hope  
which is th greatest of all  
take another look  
here i sit, it was me  
who said  
you wouldn't know  
if i died  
& i, did not know,  
the story turned  
perhaps  
too real  
on me

I am 23 years old, separated,  
have lived most of my life in  
Christchurch and have written  
poetry on and off since high  
school, my enjoyment comes from  
Russian and German literature,  
the sea, my dog and th guy  
i'm separated from. have just  
completed year one of th liberal  
studies course at canterbury.



## Alison Jackman



1. "Tecoma" series (charcoal and wash) 53 cm x 35 cm June 1975



2. "Matai Valley, Nelson" (charcoal and watercolour)

34 cm x 41 cm June 1975



3. "Matai Valley, Nelson" (pen and ink) 35 cm x 42 cm July 1975



Photo: Jackie Sullivan.

Born 1952  
Educated at Mayland College,  
Nelson.  
Attended Canterbury School of  
Fine Arts 1972-1974.  
Returned to Nelson in March 1974.  
Nursed mother through terminal  
illness and was working at  
Waimea Potteries at the time of  
her death as the result of a car  
crash - July 1975.

Alison Jackman works: collection  
Helen & Tony Jackman.  
Photos: Jan Geary.

Whether Alison was painting or not was an indication of how she was feeling at the time. Although she felt a definite need to paint she could not work when really depressed. Perhaps this was because so much of her energy went into her work and when depressed she did not have this to spare.

Nearly all Alison's work had its beginnings in landscape or plant forms. Her early paintings were dark but evolved into use of rich, often vivid colour, sometimes with additions of shiny gold or silver paint.

Lacking a highly developed protective shell, Alison was easily affected by criticism, losing faith in herself and her work. Her growing realisation of and faith in her own strengths is reflected in her later work. Her painting had always been strong and energetic but her later work seems more sure and freer in style.

Feeling a need to spend more time painting Alison had begun working only part time at the pottery.

Her growing interest in line led to the series of linear black/white landscape drawings.

The flowers were Alison's last drawings. She saw these as indicating a new direction for her, involving as they did a conscious studying of one object.

Anna Keir

# Lea Barker

---

## On Whose Shoulders I Lay My Burden

Last night it was stupidity  
the ceremony of the pills and booze  
guarded enunciation  
No poem written  
no study done  
no loving

We spoke of you  
- the young man and I -  
and he like others  
filled his mouth with depression  
& puffed it out at me,  
the sad balloon,  
bloated to bursting point  
with self-import

export, you have gone with  
my blessing, with my  
love tucked somewhere on  
your person for no sniffer dog  
to find. I placed it in the  
cells of you, the binding atom  
bells of you

in that secret of all sacred  
places where the moon  
is the measurer of time  
& the sun a counterpoint

contrapuntal  
hey, Rapunzel  
let down your hair

Oh, I never could, I never could  
I was afraid to be alone with you  
afraid to be in love  
afraid to make the public show  
just letting you breathe gracefully  
beside me  
in the interval.

## Kiss Miss Carol

Part of a grim suburbin  
the young mother with her  
manchild & babe  
is pegged to lines of nappies  
saltears in the dishwater  
& crucified by every cry  
the new one makes

6am feed  
& feed the worker too  
he's gone by 7  
the dishes done, the house luxed  
the nappies soaking  
& a cup of tea before her  
with her woman's daily

The day lengthens as she looks  
ahead to feeds & tea & telly  
while hubby's at the pubby  
with the blokes from work

There was a friend she had at school  
with whom she shared her  
secret lusts - they'd giggle at graffiti  
but the real thing looms like  
legless roasts outside her oven  
now and laughter is a history.

Perhaps this weekend  
they'll go down to see his  
parents - hers no longer care,  
she's woman now and wife  
grown out but not grown-up

She'd like to take up netball  
again but who'd look after  
baby and the thought of  
facing strangers  
gives her chills

No, she'll stay in her indifference  
worrying about the price of three chops  
& putting off yet again  
the material  
she longs to buy to make  
a sunfrock  
I'd never wear it anyway

too fat  
now that I've had a child

Afternoon drips soot into  
the fireplace  
& looking up she knows  
the clock has stopped  
& she is trapped within the wanting  
of a wife.

### The Girl In The Kent State Advertisement

(For Mary Vecchio)

You were my virgin Mary  
deflowered  
by an ejaculation of shot  
visions

I had my own billboard of you  
Newsweek-cover, black edged  
the time and place of birth and death

They say you were defamed by fear  
your bruised innocence mutilated  
further by the insults and the threats  
of people loathe to be moved  
or move from their arm-chair  
TV-dinner (½ baked) ideas.  
You ran away to music  
& love that fell to trade  
Tried for the crime we are  
forced to commit  
(we are all hapless hookers)  
just as they are hopeless hackers  
at the tree of truth.

It was we who first  
noticed its fruits  
& it's for that we're not  
forgiven.

### The Dead Ceremony

Celibate the sun!  
On autumn grass greening  
on seagull's backs preening  
while I wait for you.

I am strong  
I will say goodbye  
I will walk away unswerving  
unnerving ... yes it is  
your shape with coat outlines  
the lyric of your step.

The shadows even at noon  
are long & your head  
reaches me long before  
your arms do

And somewhere in that blasted tiny  
space of time  
between your shadow melting  
on my feet  
and your substance melting  
in my mouth  
I grow to love you once again

BUT

It's a dead ceremony this  
the speckled eggs of eyes  
the tracery of flesh  
the stubble of your manhood

What do you see in me  
An ordered mind?  
Some certain talent?  
Big breasts?  
A willing player of your co-star part?

IS YOUR LIFE A TV MOVIE?

Yes, it's a dead ceremony this  
frozen into frames  
& locked with light-found sound  
some zee-rate movie  
with countless repeats  
playing in your very own home:

:SEX:

"Turn it off darling"

and

"Let's go to bed."

# Anony-ms

---

## Endurance Test

When they were embryos within the pit  
of her womb  
she nursed and nourished each growing moment,  
gave up smoking  
daily swallowed her dose of vitamin c and  
calcium  
endured almost cheerfully the sciatic pain  
for the glory of the coming birth.

With devoted patience she forgave teething  
tantrums  
hollowed out sleepless nights  
later, kindy parties, salt and flour dough  
and as they grew their world grew with them  
while hers lost dimension.

Adolescence sprang wildly, uneven,  
clenching and loosening.  
In the middle of the see-saw  
she held tight to her balance  
and through it all  
always had His tea ready  
for Him  
after His Hard day,  
soothed the quarrelling word  
and grew a little tireder  
a little colder a little older.

When the nest was bare  
he made her a pebble garden  
and a neat square lawn  
to call her own  
to occupy her days.  
Passersby see her sitting staring at the  
stones,  
plucking shreds of grass  
wondering how it all began  
where it has gone  
and if it had ever been at all.

## Memories of a Childhood 1

My cousin and I  
slept together in a feather bed  
wide as the land  
soft as a sigh.  
Our night world within white-wash wood walled  
sunporch  
papered with photo cutouts  
from nineteen thirties' weeklies,  
pictures of a midget's marriage,  
the thirty-three stone fat man  
and circus bearded lady  
in company of varied other public freaks who,  
for the admission price of three pennies  
were gawked upon  
now, for nothing,  
gawked down at us  
giggling in the candle-light  
shadows of our child fingers  
grotesque shapes upon the wall.  
Outside dark breezes stirred,  
whispers among dry cabbage-tree leaves  
while through the wall  
comforting mumble mumble  
of grown-ups talk when children are in bed.

## 2

Geraniums grew around the porch step on which we sat,  
our small bottoms warmed on sun burned wood,  
bare stubby feet browned and free  
beating a happy rhythm on solid packed dirt path  
our senses ever alive to sights sounds and smells.  
Cunning, we children could dive and hide under massive rich  
growing rhubarb leaves when the call came to wash for tea,  
innocents who never stole grandads' chewing tobacco  
and, sitting under the apple trees, ourselves  
chewed the solid weed with brown  
dribbling from the corners of our mouths  
gasping back in our choking throats  
eyes watering from delight  
of stolen pleasures and pain  
and later  
hiding from each other  
as we sicked the nauseous spit up  
and over our bare feet and summer dry grass.

## Labels.....Adele

Adele, my sister, was a loving being  
a fountain of emotion  
when she spoke  
words seemed to run off the edges of  
her sentences.  
To stand, unwittingly, upon an ant  
brought shadowed anguish and pain  
into her brown eyes.  
Witness to suffering of children and  
animals  
was almost too great a burden  
she could not turn aside and ignore  
yet neither could she save the world.  
One day she swallowed a bottle of  
Harmony colour remover  
which served to remove part of her throat  
but left her still alive  
and ever more vulnerable.

THEY called her depressive.

## Old People's Home

They are making baskets again today  
with lashing swirling moving twisting  
unrelenting strips of cane.

When I was a child  
I had nightmares  
gorged with lashing swirling moving twisting  
unrelenting what -- snakes? coils? -- strips  
of cane --.  
I cannot make baskets  
they remind me of my nightmares.

You must make baskets  
or you will die because you have nothing  
to do  
your hands and your mind will wither  
and die.

But I am old.  
If I have to make baskets  
then rather  
let me die.

## Therapy

Tinky toes - why did you want to kill  
your husband -  
But I never did.  
You held the knife -  
I was peeling potatoes.  
Peeling potatoes against his stomach -  
He must have stood too close to the sink.  
Did you not push the knife into him -  
I was trying to kill a potato. He must  
have stood in the way. I have this thing,  
each now and again,  
well,  
to be honest  
every day lately  
I want to destroy the sink the bench the  
dishes the beds, rip down the curtains,  
jump on the venetians, smash the dusty  
windows, but they're all dead, too many  
of them, day after day, surrounding me,  
walls and windows and ashing fireplaces  
all dead  
I want to rest in limbo  
I have failed.

You held the knife -

Yes, but I never used it.

## Labels.....

No bender of the intellectual mind,  
I have no talent to play with criss and  
cross words.  
Abstractions bother me  
as indeed they should  
I can never think them through  
too simple a train of thought  
that does not deviate from the rails  
but rather inclined to stop  
at the nearest station  
look around a while  
than slide on in one direction,  
neither left or right  
yet lacking the tenacity of dogmatism ..

THEY labelled me passive, unresolved.

# The Women's Environment at the '77 Women's Convention

## The Beginnings

We, the CHRISTCHURCH WOMAN ARTISTS GROUP, are organizing an exhibition over the period 30 May-9 June 1977, to coincide with the United Womens Convention, and for a few days afterwards. The time from the 30th May to 3rd June will be used for setting up the exhibition; from 3rd June to 6th June (Convention Weekend) will be open to women only, then open to the public for the remaining three days

The Gallery consists of three basic levels, with other associated spaces or rooms (5 areas altogether), which can be interpenetrated as linking areas, or alternatively screened off into more intimate spaces, to the personal preference of the artists.

The overall theme of the exhibition is to transform the existing gallery spaces into a conducive environment to reveal something of the nature of woman's creativity. We will use the three floors of the gallery as symbolic levels, with the mezzanine or top floor representing the 'Head' or spiritual level, the Mair gallery and 1st floor levels (incorporating the print room) as the 'Heart' and the ground floor as the 'Body'. Beginning on the ground floor with the feet of women's experi-

ence - their varicose veins, cooking, washing, family serving situations, womans pride at home/work.

## The Reality 1

Over a year of meetings the project evolved. We envisaged a creative space which would make a statement about our art, its processes and everyday environment, which are barely separable. We would each claim a space towards a woman-transformed area. Our thesis was that art is a process which derives from our lives; that woman's art is an organic growth from her environment and experience; that as the domestic environment is her art, it should be so recognised that art must be redefined to include the experience of half the population.

The group had different backgrounds, experience and training in art skills. Most had heavy domestic commitments. There were inevitable ideological differences. Some meetings were hard going, often with child disruptions. Successful meetings happened when we had organised our thoughts and in turn presented them, the night Anita

organised our grant application being one.

Between the motion and the action fell the refusal of our Arts Council application, the dropping out and moving of several members, the attainment of new enthusiasts.

We seemed a small group at setting up time, and that building seemed larger and more echoing than remembered. But as more and more women came bringing their embroidered sneakers, quilts, cardigans, dresses, memorabilia, Amazon t-shirts, unframed paintings, photographs, sketches, another kind of energy rose - not filling a space but creating one.

Heather McPherson



Photo: Janet Hart



Photo: Janet Hart



Photo: Sandy Hall



Photo: Sandy Hall



## The Reality 2

We were inspired by the WOMANSPACE ventures of an American Feminist Art Group and connections we'd gradually made together about our woman artist experience. Our group began planning for the woman's environment with a sense of wanting to reveal the nature of woman's work and experiences from a feminist perspective: where we could make parodies on public images of women, make references to our vulnerability, our powerlessness and our powerfulness, show woman's self-images (countering the heavily popularized images of woman by man), work communally, make tributes to women's collaborative abilities. The ideas for the environment came individually and collectively as both a painful and revealing process of recognizing exterior oppression. We wanted to break taboos that were and are so strong few of us realized they existed. We asked ourselves: HOW IS IT THAT WOMEN'S VIEW HAS NOT BEEN SHOWN IN THE ART HISTORICAL VIEW? ALWAYS THE MALE IDENTIFIED VIEW OF WOMEN FOCUSING ON HIS STRENGTH HIS ACTIVITY HIS WORLD HISTORY. Always removing women from communicating, sharing, visualising, dramatising her reality. We asked ourselves how REAL to woman is Ruben's *Rape of the Sabine Women*. How removed such images of women are from women's experience in male mythological disguise.

We wanted to see those images taken back by women. We wanted and want a whole redefinition of the images we have been fed by the male world

about femaleness. By us. The C.S.A. experience was the start of this vision, I believe, of sharing a totality of feminist art politics and women's creative experience.

It was more than just a gallery space showing women's work. It was more than a place of happenings. It was a place where women stayed, where we talked and danced and sang, shared, created and listened to each other. Where a large number of women connected on many levels and communicated in many ways that the patriarchal culture disallows. A space we created to be true to our own impulses. The generation of experience that reached out and reverberated in new assertion of and repossession of womanhood. A space we created to give each other an insight into the emotional aspects of woman here in this country 1977. We wanted it to be a dynamic focus for the 2000 odd women attending the U.W.'s Convention.

Just before we got all the requested work into the building some of us started to panic. The place didn't feel 'filled' enough. Louise Lewis had withdrawn her work. That was a great disappointment as her work is so brave in its intimacy and brilliance. Jenny McMahon arrived and offered to show her work. Her five large colourful hessian paintings were hung on the end wall of the Mair gallery. It's a big square space and Jenny's big paintings received a 40 ft. viewing vista. This is a simplification, but I remember feeling they looked like wild primitive signs - coloured - like Peruvian mats or tapestries. Her work became a

vitalizing link and then almost magically, many women arrived with items to share and display: work jeans and embroideries, posters and drawings and photographs, domestic articles and children's art that began to shape the building in a truly growing way.

Jenny's late arrival made me feel as if that large back focal wall was strongly buttressed by her vibrant work.

We had talked a lot in our women artists group of ways man-made environments negated nature and woman's nature. We had talked of making statements that challenged the concrete and synthetic. The alienness of art gallery spaces. Cushions and mattresses, the children's play things and activities; the *atmosphere*, rather than any particular created structures, helped to transcend that space.

Angie brought her water colours, Sand Hall her photos, Rosie her pot pourris and life photo collection jumbled in a cardboard box. I saw Shonagh carting a marble bust of a woman into the main gallery and dressing it in a velvet patchwork jacket she'd made. Ali Kennedy brought her woodturning creations to town.

The environment was no longer something that was being 'controlled' by organisers but rather it grew as each woman came and contributed - in many ways it never really stopped - the exhibits always seemed to be changing. Different happenings and the women's theatrical rehearsals created a flexibility and momentum to the

event which made it very exciting. It was a place where communications between women really happened. In my definition that communication is of political importance to the growth of feminist vision, action and art. Here the block that women daily suffer in isolation was being removed to reveal a commonality. We were dropping the mysterious veneer of 'professionalism' that seeks only an elite, to include women of differing classes, races and sexual orientation. To provide real keys to our own and each other's communications.

I remember Joanne's 'first' pastel drawing and a typed sheet pinned underneath explaining how she felt in exposing her art and the scariness of risking a creative statement.

The environment provided visual links to what was going on in each of our lives. Obscurities were pinpointed and revealed; you could stop right there and read a scribbled interpretation to personal symbols rather than scratch your head and move on unenlightened. Here we had consciously worked on ideas of openness. We invited women to stay and participate in our environments, rather than glance at the work on the walls, glance at the catalogue and shuffle on.

In our women artists group we recognized that something BIG and powerful and female is missing in our male dominated culture. We shared and exchanged our feelings of loss and sense of potential woman worth.

We worked on making statements

about our domestic nurturing selves - we talked of making domestic 'pieces' with washing machines, stoves, cooking, nappies, the interruptions and abrasions and the rhythms and cycles of being nurturer and creatrix; the 'feet' of women's experience: children and man-servicing situations. We wanted to emphasise not only the hum-drum isolated experiences but the unsigned creativity of women who artfully work their skills in cake decorating, mending, ironing, growing and preparing food - proceeding through a womb-like (birth) cavern up the stairwell into a maze which would penetrate into a variety of activities and structures, incorporating both art work and continuous performances, our domestic/spiritual/cyclic/emotional body sexual and political struggles and aspirations were to be presented. We worked very hard collectively on ways we could create the womb-like stairwell. We met at the gallery, visualised and drew the space and we discussed together ways it could be done, whether we'd use netting and soft spongy material covering it, how we could build an armature that would express the emerging process of birth and transition.

I remember really wanting that space to work - and to be used in that way - a place women went through to arrive in the women's environment: a sensual experience we each had contact with as we went up or down the stairs. Collectively it became a struggle and finally Rosemary Johnson, very pregnant, undertook the final visualizing and translation

of the area.

Rosemary had assimilated all our ideas and came up with what I experienced as a brilliant and simple solution. Our combined ideas had gotten too fiddly and technical but Rosemary's piece was designed to be easily installed. It wasn't *exactly* the vision I had had - I don't suppose it was anyone's but it was an incredible translation of our needs. I was very stimulated by the process of talking of our vision and how Rosemary, like a sha(wo)man or wise woman or tribal artist, interpreted. It was a simple construction, various coloured pieces, some patterned, some plain, of very light, flimsy fabric (like summer nightie material) cut and layered into hanging panels, three partitions thick, up the stairs. The sensation of the filmy materials brushing against my face as I went through them recalled for me a sense of femaleness I might have known before or on being born or when I was a very small infant. The stairwell was quite uncanny in the way it provoked an eerie modern, slightly synthetic but primitive sense of mother/internal/dense/forgotten/emerging woman sensibility.

Heather's structure, just up and into the main gallery, after coming through the stairwell, was something I felt nervous about before and during its construction. Heather is a poet, she joins words and constructs images that amaze and inspire me, but I had not seen her handling hammers and nails and power tools before and, seeing the determined but not very experienced way she handled a saw - all my 'man's environment - girl

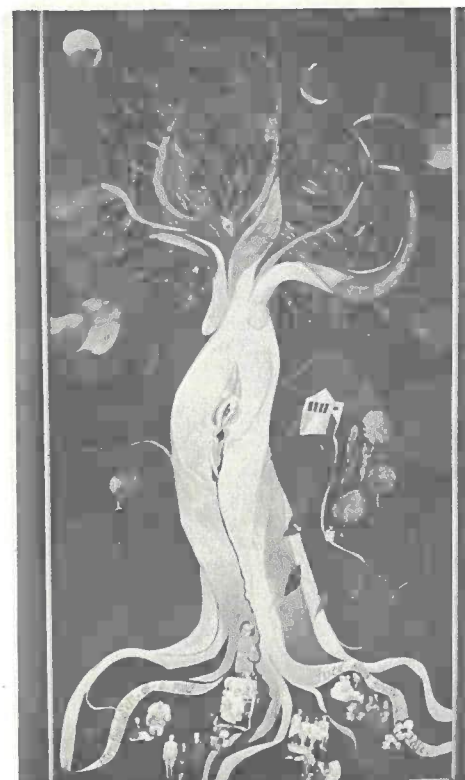


Photo: Janet Hart

conditioning' experiences and doubts came, flooding me with memories of the frustrated nil-or-little carpentry skills I had struggled with unaided as a woman art student. "Damn all those typing and cooking and sewing skills one learns for ones female 'role', I'd rather have known how to build something effectively that would stand up!" Heather persisted with help from Gladys and Elly and Anna and her small son and her environment appeared. I saw her paint a poem on the slanting 'roof' frame and I 'got' what her vision

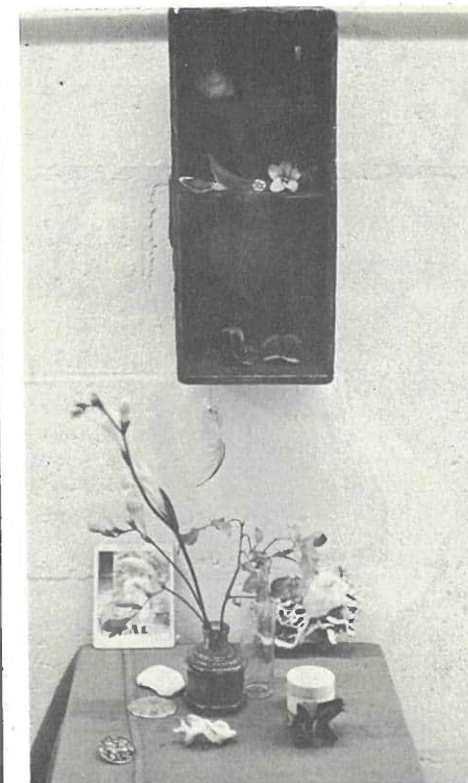


Photo: Janet Hart

for the piece had been on about all the time. 'With the scraps of the patriarchy . . . ' Artist, forager picking through fragments of symbols and events out-there-and-inside-and-before-and-for-the-future-and-who-Heather-was-right-then, was all there to see: her home, her typewriter, her child's world all taken in under the open roofed hut as objects vibrating with an essence of her immediate reality. I had a sleep on the divan there one morning when the gallery was open and a woman came up to the structure and bent down to



Photo: Janet Hart

touch me; she was slightly startled when I moved, thinking I had been a life-like sculpture. Yes I am real, and so is Heather's environment!

All the assembled work was hung and placed as much as possible in a way that 'better or best' value judgements became unnecessary: I liked the way Angie's first-ever watercolours of flowers were taped up next to Jaqueline Fahey's framed, mind/feeling/relationship probing figurative oil paintings. I liked the equal weight both of those women had. Showing non-professional



Photo: Janet Hart

and professional alongside each other was a statement of validation beyond conventional art-taste-professional standards.

An incredible range of overwhelming and transforming experiences for me happened seeing Joanna Paul assemble her work. 'Unpacking the body.' The totality and intensity, the vulnerability and strength of Joanna's work made me cry in its rawness and truthfulness. It deserved a thorough documentation. Joanna connected words and images and actions and objects to make

decipherable symbols about the huge experience of nurturing, of motherhood, creatrix, of creation of life force - of temporality and ongoingness. They are too fluid to try to write about. I wish she would assemble it again so it could be filmed, photographed and recorded. She had a number of pink painted frames with a white painted object hanging within each: a white painted bread knife, a white painted colander, a white painted flute, and word pieces linking these whitened household objects: a sensed code or alphabet of archetypal woman's essence.

For my own part I wanted to use my exhibition space to feel comfortable enough to be viewed by women who might not ordinarily encounter art, to feel as comfortable as those who do. I put mats and chairs and cushions in my area to create a feeling of the space being not just mine but everywoman's, to stay in, read, eat, look, sing, talk etc. Ruth brought me two hay bales (I wanted earth smells). I used them to display Argent's photos, then I hung my home environment paintings. I showed the American Amazon Odyssey poster with two women on a winged horse, and interspersed the paintings with some photographs of myself as a child (to give a sense that this could be anybody's girl child grown up). I hung a self portrait above a full length mirror. A Judy Grahn poem hung next to one of the self portraits.

'I'm not a hole  
I'm a whole mountain  
I'm not a good lay  
I'm a straight razor . . .'

I was showing the texture of my life, the sexual, some lesbian lovermaking drawings, the garden-compost, sprouting strawberries, potpourri; the garden cane chair - to be sat in - in front of a circular painting of the same. I showed abstract and lyrical coloured oil paintings and I provided a key to one of them - as closely as possible, noting and mapping and writing what the 'journeyings' of line and texture and colour mean to me. I did it because I feel 'modern' art is not easily understood or read. And I want it to mean something to the women I care about, even if they aren't used to looking at it. I don't want to STOP painting abstract expressionist painting - I'd rather make a path in, so that this reality becomes part of more women's experience, feeling comfortable in reading and understanding our own symbols.

I used tablecloths embroidered by Pearl when she was a young woman to cover two 'altar' tables - set with sprigs of parsley in water, a moon goddess symbol and a kaleidoscope. I showed my broom, my pelvic xray, my sciatica liniments, walking stick and surgical corset - and paintings and a drawing related to an injury and the process of healing I was going through. I showed my mother Goddess paintings and a large oil painting called 'commemorating women who work in dark, artificially lit concrete buildings.' I wanted also to make a natural fibre shelter recalling primitive woman - in touch with her body, menstruation, creativity, the moon, seasons, cycles - a tepee calling on the repossession of ourselves. Ngahuia and Ali helped me make it

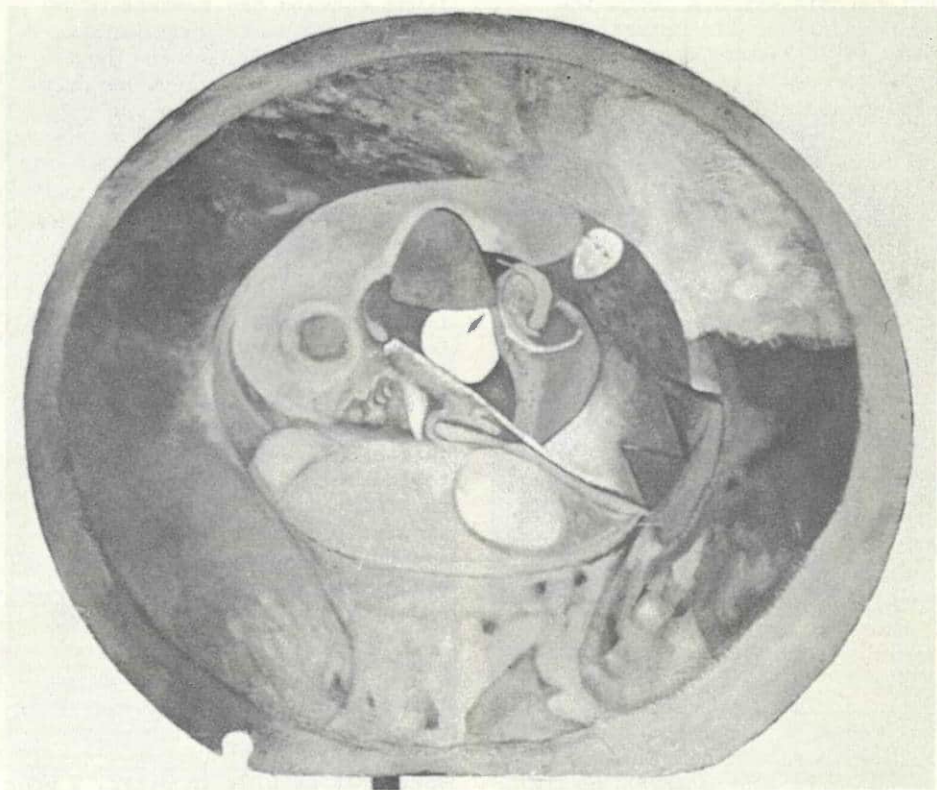


Photo: Toni Shuker

out of flax sticks and leaves. It was a spiralling contemplating womanspace, ancient menstruation hut, medicine wheel, healing place, in keeping with the simple workings of nature. A celebration and a reminder that life in concrete buildings, the madness of this macho money mad society is not the core or spirit of our woman selves. There was an amazing response from women to the tepee. It wasn't just looked at. It became a place and part of many women there. We sang and danced and played around it - as our womanscircle.

How much this entire event could be termed political women's art, depends on what you mean by art and politics.

Mostly the images and messages we made were not simply illustrated, crude propagandist statements, but instructing and revealing and often shattering statements about womanhood. They admitted, publicly to private parts of women's experience. Things we are used to concealing about ourselves, to preserve our 'dignity' of which we are robbed daily. In itself I think this is

'political'. When women begin sharing private experiences safely we begin to seek and hold onto ways in which that kinship (power) can be fostered and maintained.

Probably not all the women who came to the C.S.A. over that weekend felt totally comfortable with what was showing and what was happening. We were presenting real images that do not correspond to the illusion of patriarchal kiwi life. There were images for all women. There was Olivia Spencer-Bower's water colour of an elderly woman, Zuster's etchings, Rhondda Bosworth's and Jan Geary's photographs, patchwork, crochet, sewing.

I think what could be seen and felt was some linked understanding between women about our common oppression - unpaid labour, child care, house care, being intimidated by male world values. It wasn't till last year we actually did something about it. I heard a lot of women say 'why haven't we done this before?' WHY INDEED? All women are potential rape victims. Our male dominated culture has various ways of enslaving us and denying us a woman's culture.

I liked the women's environment because we made it a safe place for women to experience a vision of a pro-woman culture. Where the processes of feminism and change could be experienced. I see feminism as more than the demands for women's rights.

It's a sense of who we wish to be as women.

The environment was 'political' in the way it provided a place for women to share and communicate with a gut level involvement. We created spaces for the dialogue, put the politics of women's communication into action. Unless we feel and know what we want and how we wish to change we will not move from where we are. Our feminism,

(that is a much more whole total vision of what femaleness is than the man's world allows), is infused in our art. I see the WHOLE woman struggling to survive in all women's art - the message of that struggle for liberation, spiritual, emotional and sexual is communicated as we share it. And it becomes a clearer message the more we create women's spaces to do it in. Perhaps we should have distributed/had more literature at the time on the whole art HERSTORY, art HISTORY conditions. Certainly there are large gaps to be explored e.g. the way the collective male psyche promotes woman/oppressive/sexual/consciousness in HIS IMAGERY. And we need more visual guides and studies in this country to show how women have been taught through male art/music/culture to submit to male needs.

There is so much else we could have done, so much yet to do ...

The crucial political feature of this exhibition to me was that we made woman-positive statements in a space and age where increasing alienation happens between women and between artist and community. We protested about that alienation and we drew together to form a place where women and children

could break those barriers. It is important women further challenge the narrow limits of what the patriarchy allows us creatively. Why do our booksellers and libraries stock so few women artist books? The galleries so few women's works? etc. etc. These are things that MUST change. In order for WOMAN'S VISION TO BE SEEN, HER RIGHT TO CHOOSE, we must create spaces for that to happen.

The woman's environment was such a space. May there be many many more.

Allie Eagle

### Reality 3

My idea was a hut framework, 9' by 9', (ancient wicca measurements) to symbolise the half-built structure of the feminist aesthetic. Open to inspection and to sky. (Or skylights) Flax on one wall as the natural material, an Indian quilt over one end of the roof, below it a couch covered with my mother's handsewn patchwork quilt; round the lintels natural and craft objects - blue pottery bowl, shells, pinecone, dried sunflower heads, a fishbowl with painted paper fish made by Anna. My typewriter on a plank across two bricks. Domestic objects: clothes basket, sewing basket, teapot, my son's fat Gonk made by a friend of my mother's, a patchwork cushion made by Fran, friends' and my own drawings.

Gladys helped bring the timber in; she and Ellie helped nail, saw and balance the A-frame.

Satisfying work. On the front I painted: From the scraps of the patriarchy I make myself anew - to redefine the poem as open as a doorless frame and riches in it.

I had wanted to bring my washing machine as a central item of the environment but transport costs and two week's deprivation made me decide perhaps not.

The structure became a meeting place for small groups, a playhouse for the children. A virtual convention committee meeting was held there. Messages were left in the typewriter.

And the environment overall: the tall bare main gallery was perhaps not as transformed as we had first envisaged but was warm, intimate, humanised as no other art show I have seen ... with patches of beauty and power.

Rosemary's entrance drapery set the mood - the delicate colours and textures felt intimate, making a mysterious enclosure.

The 'courts' stay in my mind: Allie's teepee surrounded by her life articles: broom, straw bale, compost; the powerful moon images of her paintings; Anna's trees and altar-like treasure cabinet; Joanna's grief exploration, memorial white objects hanging from pink boards; body diagrams, brown pregnant belly; Jackie's mandala mat in the centre of her dual images; a few only of the riches...

And in the main gallery the washing pegged among intimate sketches, photographs, grey crochet shawl

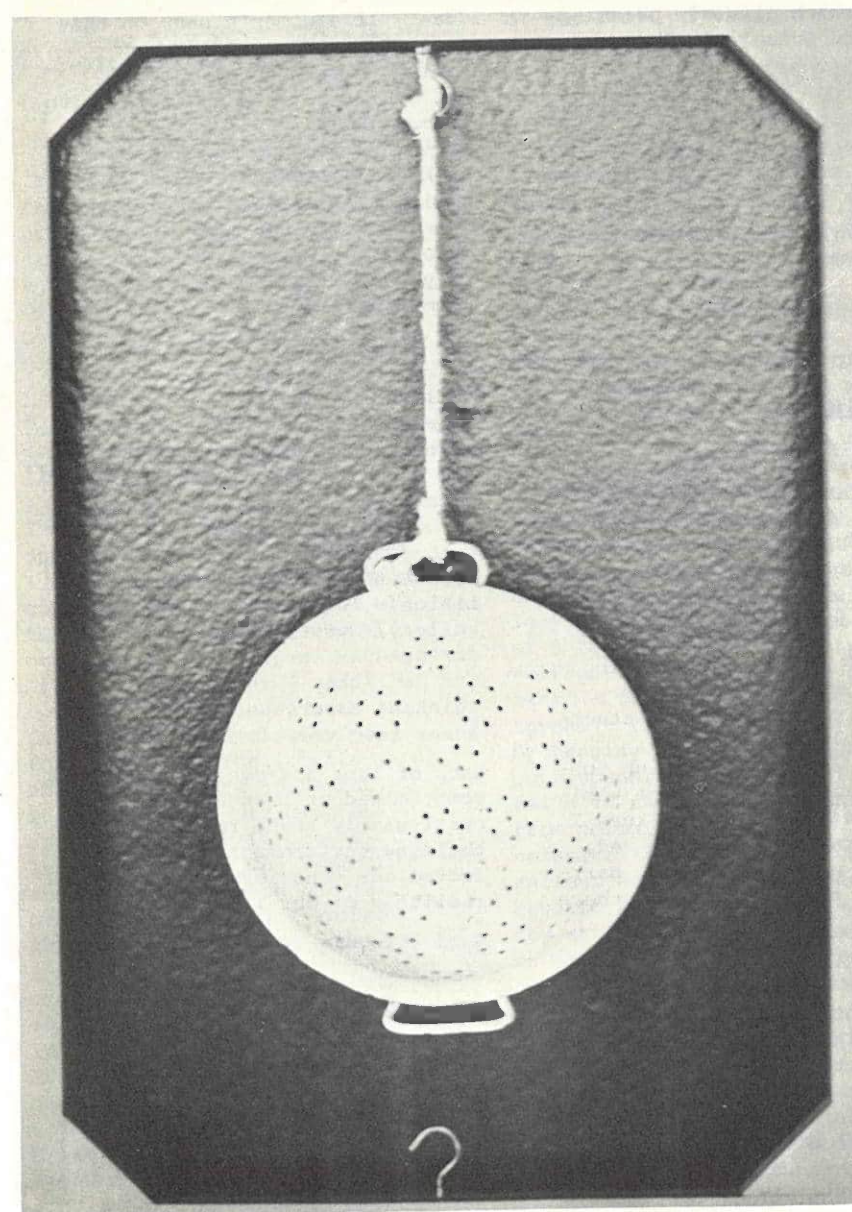


Photo: Michael de Hamel

through which Olivia's painting of the old woman looked down ...

Then there were the crowded evenings of talk, music, poetry, hugs, dancing ... days talking, arguing, anxiously counting pennies ... the few waiting spaces ... and throughout the convention, a focal point of new creative energy.

Heather McPherson

---

## The Reality 4

My reactions to the women's art environment are so tied to my involvement in its organisation and to my feelings of the time that even now I find it difficult to see the whole thing in any kind of perspective.

I had been involved in helping organise the show since the beginning of the year: contacting possible contributors; arranging freight; wording publicity notices. I saw the whole idea as being important, knew I could learn by being involved, and, as I was working only part-time, had the space which others lacked.

Despite this, the realisation that other women sometimes expressed enthusiasm more easily than commitment was frustrating. Once we actually moved into the gallery many women became excited by the possibilities and all sorts of good things began to happen spontaneously - proof, I suppose, that it is much easier to identify with a practical reality rather than an abstract

idea. If a women's show on this scale was attempted again I wouldn't worry about numbers but would advocate beginning with a core group of 4-5 women and trying to make decisions/solve problems/delegate responsibilities collectively. This would allow women outside the core group to become involved as they felt they wanted and as their other commitments allowed.

The other problem seemed to me to be lack of time. I felt this as lack of time to think about or work on my own contribution; a feeling of losing my creativity and becoming bogged down in practicalities. Generally, so much of our energy and time seemed to be consumed by trying to assure there would be an exhibition - negotiating to get the gallery; writing submissions for grants; organising work and publicity - rather than thinking about the concepts, ideas involved.

Lack of time and money and numbers compromised or changed many ideas particularly those relating to building environments which reflected our consciousness and the realities of our lives.

Good things:-

That the gallery became a centre for women rather than for the work - a place to be, to sit around and talk, and to come back to.

That women didn't just come and look but took part in creating the environment - by their responses to the work, their enthusiasm and the spontaneous things that happened - the sing-

ing and music and enjoyment.

That so many women who hadn't previously seen women's work in such a context or thought much about women's culture came and were involved rather than alienated.

The last minute things that happened to make the environment come alive - women bringing in knitting and photos for the washing line and boards, making collages, making connections ...

Anna Keir

---

## Unpacking the Body

I had never understood science and was even proud of the fact. I disliked science, technology and detested the intrusion of the manmade into the natural order.

O.K. But too simple: as I found when confronted with an infant with a hopelessly malformed heart. The inevitability of a heart operation. I was afraid of striking an attitude and sacrificing a life. So during the 9 months and my 2 months with her in Green Lane Hospital I worked hard to choose and to understand. I had to understand in order to accept. And having accepted I had to understand in order to share. Even after the operations the death and the mourning I returned to books and libraries. I had discovered the internal logic and beauty of science. Also I think I still sought communion with my child in

probing the intimate secrets of the body. I thought the piece that came out of 6 months mornings reading in the medical library at Dunedin was about science: anatomy, physiology a bridge between the languages of science and imagination. I think I was also building a shrine/temple/body for my dead child. How poignantly those etymologies occurred:

INFANS- UNSPEAKING/EMBRYO  
A FRUIT/FETUS - 1 BEAT

The work itself consists of lists of anatomical words with their Greek Latin Anglo Saxon or Sanskrit roots and the root meanings. In systematically uncovering these meanings I found a poetry of the body. What was opaque and a barrier became on unpicking transparent: a lens. Nearly all the terminology of anatomy hinges round 7 or 8 basic symbols (archetypes, perhaps). These images - cup - sword - tree - wheel - house - thread - ring I made manifest by hanging in frames (STROMA) corresponding objects, painted white to remove them slightly from normal reality: a colander (incidentally a very ancient artifact) - a wooden handled knife - a branch - key etc. Above these items in their flesh coloured frames hung the list of terms and etymologies. What was in the pink wooden CHEST was the hub and node of the exercise.

If there is a thesis somewhere it is that knowledge and feeling must run together. To me these lists and frames were dry bones - in respect to the

splendid flow of imagery and life-blood the rest of the exhibition held. To my pleasure some people responded not simply with 'I see' but with emotion.

Joanna Paul

## Birth

BIRTH is a transition from one form of existence to another, in a long cycle of metamorphosis; a human existence being but one brief stage. Birth is significant as a beginning of a new consciousness, of a beginning to a new sequence of experiences. The passage into the world outside is made through a narrow tunnel, and through the physical barrier of the cervix.

Each layer of the hanging fabric represents a different aspect of this transition:-

the pink panels, impeding flesh; the dark interval panel an unknown or forgotten area; the mauve panel which has to be passed by, to the patterned outside panels, which lead to emergence into the outside WORLD.

Rosemary Johnson



Photo: Janet Hart



Photo: Jackie Sullivan

## Rosie Scott

---

### Loneliest Sunday of My Life

Waiting in my small house alone,  
Hoping someone will come,  
The radio murmuring  
to itself in the kitchen,  
and me wanting to be anywhere else.

Walking the grey Sunday street  
two kids playing football  
in the park  
trees as bare and cold  
as rags, my hands  
as cold as ice.

Waking alone on Sunday morning  
the concrete yard thru the window,  
slippers, three jersies, coffee,  
a Sunday newspaper. The heater  
close to my feet like a little  
warm cat.

Harsh as winter wind  
the cars roar past,  
I am listening in the dusk.  
An old man coughs just  
outside my door, and waits -  
I would like to say,  
come in and warm yourself,  
I am as lonely as you.

In your last letter, you said you wept  
when your pregnant cat was stuck behind the  
water cylinder in your crummy bathroom.  
AND THINGS LIKE THAT you wrote in block letters  
at the end.

What did you think when you sat in the waiting room  
and all the people stared so indifferently, and you  
in another world?

Did you weep as you walked down the road  
from the shop? Please tell me  
were they in your hand or bag,  
and did they rattle when you walked so fast?  
And then, little sister, the unspeakable  
Because then you swallowed every one. Dearest, were you afraid  
as you lay there all alone, the noon traffic outside  
and feeling sleepy?  
Did noone know how alone you were,  
was your cat there with you,  
or had she gone too?

I have not become more beautiful  
The years have added a subtle strain,  
A sharpness to my mouth and cheekbones.  
My face is twisted with deprivation and  
The eccentric timidity of a maiden lady.  
No womanly graces to soften my sad self  
The stamp of failure in my anxious eyes.  
I stumble thru my time, & most keenly  
Feel the loss; to come so far & then to crack  
The single quality I do have; only that  
gentleness which hides complete despair.

Born 1948. Graduated MA in  
English from Victoria University.  
Done publishing and newspaper  
work in London and Sydney,  
then four years social work in  
Buckland and Melbourne. Now  
live on Waiheke Island with the  
father of our two small daugh-  
ters. Like reading, music,  
gardening, writing. Do some  
journalism for the local paper  
and a very part-time degree by  
correspondence.

Feel very involved with left-  
wing politics especially after  
the latest Abortion Bill fiasco  
(although have not been active  
due to physical isolation and  
small kids). Have had two  
stories published in Islands,  
and some poems in Pilgrim.  
Would like to write full-time  
as it is very important to me -  
but so far seem to lack the  
dedication and single-mindedness  
necessary.

## Merlene Young

---

### Pictures of an Afternoon

early afternoon saw you on the beach  
hair a mass of curls/ lips curled too  
and all the land lay back at the  
feet of the sun to break  
the cold fingers of winter

winter here/ there midsummer  
together would autumn prevail  
the smell of your hair  
alive and aware

an afternoon in the pages of a magazine  
a solitary traveller stepped out  
to meet a wide-eyed model girl  
and wound up bleeding -  
the car was a write off

obituary of a star studded rock 'n roll career

the elvin king began  
in the streets  
and left for the moon  
in the shape of Pan

while a lonely lovely  
Scottish farmer  
strides the highlands  
I am aware of changes

read the runes  
in a driftwood newspaper

late afternoon sound  
of wood being chopped  
for the fires of tomorrow  
the smell of cattle on the road  
and the distant cry of a child



starfish permeates sand  
with its magic while  
the sun god strides  
along the mountains  
with a flaming head  
brushing aside the mists  
like obtrusive cobwebs

across the frozen rainbow  
in the shadow of the sun  
we lay down on the earth  
to taste the afternoon  
and spread the sky like  
a blanket across the  
back of yesterday

### Mina

when I became aware  
of the golden aura  
surrounding you  
and when you spoke  
my magic secret  
I knew we were  
on a collision  
course for heaven

to know that  
the meeting  
was intended  
and the spirit  
was present

I trod lightly  
on your memories  
and spoke softly  
of the future  
for fear of injuring  
the divine but fragile  
white flower that  
grew from our love.

the waves stretched out  
their lacy fingers  
pigeons flew in unison  
and the moon and sun  
came out together

cold lips on the flesh  
cannot kill the pain yet  
the dog barks at nothing  
as the spirit moves  
so do I

all around my lovers eyes  
are big stars and the  
universe is my friend

### Concrete Karma....Or Disaster in Darwin

in the trees  
along the coast  
the hippies built their  
happy tree homes/ but the  
townspeople came with an axe  
to grind and bulldozed them over  
later when the wrathful winds  
blew and knocked down  
the houses in  
the town  
it was  
an  
act  
of  
god  
the insurance man said

### Warning Light

we are going to the promised land  
to pioneer and seek fresh pastures  
as we prepare for departure not  
unannounced an arrival at the door  
like an enemy from the past  
old words to greet a tired world  
famine

depression

doom

and disaster

nourished on greed flourished on hate  
feasting still on ignorance and pride  
biblical brutal but real and now

wake up world or there will  
be no daylight to save

enlightened/the children of the sun  
have already departed taking the time  
to leave all the clocks behind.

# Alison Wright

## Lemon Balm . . . . .

Sleep would be best  
just a gentle closing of eyes  
a rhythmic breathing  
limbs relaxed  
mind floating  
weightless  
in space  
in a never ending alchemy  
in colours dreamed but never captured  
in patterns played on the blink of thought  
in a forever rest  
where there is no dawning  
no morning rising up ready to battle  
no children to demand  
no cars to break down  
no bosses  
no bus tickets  
no trains running early  
no watches slow  
no traffic snaking out its daily cultus rite  
no endless gulps of job hungry days  
consuming sacrificial or reluctant slaves

Yes sleep would be best  
death is no way out  
offers no euphoria  
why start the body cycle pulsating yet again  
why set a new motion  
lay a new life  
try a fresh start  
why draw birth out of death

Yes sleep gentle sleep sweet sweet sleep . . .

## 14 years gone . . . . .

at 2 o'clock in the morning  
all I want is a cup of tea  
you have other things  
on your mind

at 2 o'clock in the morning  
I have a poem coming on  
you have other things  
on your mind

at 2 o'clock in the morning  
when the night riders fly darkly  
through stonewalling sanity  
and dip into shadows of dreams  
when the air roars with the quiet breath of silence  
and nobody cares why  
the lost children of tomorrow cry

at 2 o'clock in the morning  
I still love you  
but I have other things  
on my mind

As to who I am and what I do . . .  
after vowing that work must stand  
alone, I do underneath my resis-  
tance, agree that it is satisfy-  
ing to read about fellowoman and  
draw strength from likeminded  
feelings.

I am recently entered the madness,  
though been infected for many  
years through theatre work and  
have come to the conclusion that  
in the beginning really was the  
word. Now the question is . . .  
what was THE word? Inbetween  
searching I 'work' at an ultimate  
art . . . life, believing in  
one true truth . . . death/  
birth, one true beauty . . .  
silence. The journey is one long  
hell and one long heaven . . .

but who can tell which is which  
and experiencing the which is one  
long, eeeeeeeeeeeee . . . and  
as you can see, when put into  
words is one long bllllllllerck . . .

I love my guys and girls . . .  
every rumbubbling, dewfaced  
soulful . . . what more can I  
say to you . . . Life is.

I find it so difficult to get  
down to details of me. but for  
this moment there is no more . . .  
nothing . . .

# I am Giving Birth to Myself

## Wendy Laks

Women's poetry and the feminist movement. The second instalment of a paper done for part of a Masters degree in Sociology at Waikato University.

It is characteristic of the women poets of the late 1960's and 1970's that the response to their situation is one of anger. There is the same outlining of the problems that women face in a patriarchal society that characterized some of the women poets of the middle of the twentieth century but much of the despair has been replaced by anger and defiance. As Nancy Jo Hoffman has said, "Among the female poets where we seek images of the inner world, we have consistently seen the consequences of despairing womanhood in eccentricity, madness and suicide." (1972:49) This has been largely true until the last ten or so years with the mushrooming of the women's movement. Although the poetry still communicates pain there is much positive strength, and even hope. Susan Sutherland suggests in her following poem that anger is necessary to a sense of self that women are looking for:

today I found my temper.  
I said,

you step on my head  
for twenty seven years you step  
on my head  
and though I have been trained  
to excuse you for your inevitable  
clumsiness  
today I think  
I prefer my head to your clumsi-  
ness.

today I began  
to find  
myself.  
(in Bass and Howe, 1973:297)

In "Monster" Robin Morgan does not dwell on the suffering of women but instead calls for a revolution:

I'm not about to run down the  
list  
of rapes and burnings and beatings  
and smiles  
and sulks and rages and all the  
other crap  
you've laid on women throughout  
your history  
(we had no part in it - although  
god knows we tried)  
. . . women . . . must now invent  
a revolution  
so total as to destroy maleness,  
femaleness, death.  
(1972:81-86)

Some poets threaten revenge:

When I think of the President  
and the law, and the problem of  
feeding children, I like to  
think of Harriet Tubman  
and her revolver . . .

I want men to take us seriously  
. . . I want them to fear.  
I want them to know  
that there is always a time  
. . . for retribution  
and that time  
is beginning.

("I Like to Think of Harriet  
Tubman", in Bass and Howe.  
1973:307-309)

Above, the poet is not just  
feeling helpless, she is angry  
and has before her the image  
of Harriet Tubman who "lived  
to redress her grievances".  
Barbara Lipschutz issues a  
warning to men:  
We watch.  
We wait.  
We grow in strength.  
We have stockpiled  
Secret weapons.  
We will not declare  
An amnesty.  
We watch.  
We wait.  
Beware.

("To Men Re Women", 1974:10)

Jean Tepperman, like many  
feminists, see the image of a  
witch as a positive one and the  
tone is one of defiance:

I want my black dress.  
I want my hair  
curling wild around me.  
I want my broomstick

from the closet where I hid it.  
Tonight I meet my sisters  
in the graveyard.  
Around midnight  
if you stop at a red light  
in the wet city traffic,  
watch for us against the moon.  
We are screaming,  
we are flying,  
laughing, and won't stop.

("Witch" in Bass and Howe, 1973:  
333-334)

Women poets of the late 1960's  
and 1970's are beginning to  
speak about their sexuality and  
this aspect of their poetry  
also distinguishes them from  
their predecessors. Very  
often there is a tone of anger,  
but more likely there is a  
tone of celebration. Barbara  
Lipschutz expresses her  
frustration with her lover  
and her anger:

. . . years ago, when you didn't  
need an anatomical chart  
to find the parts of my body  
which give me pleasure  
I was much too retiring  
To insist you do it  
My way.  
So now, of course, it makes per-  
fect sense that you should be  
threatened  
Make that chagrined  
When I tell you that I don't  
like what you're doing . . .

("We Haven't In Three  
Weeks", 1974:11-12)

Alta's poems often express her bitterness but she has a way of using humour which is very effective:

such, are you having your period?  
why didn't you tell me?

I shoulda            him in a dark.  
He coulda thot bloody sheets  
look ma a virgin

(in Bass and Howe, 1973:294)

Alta enjoys her sexuality:

he asked me what I was fantasizing  
when I beat off  
in his friend's bathroom  
and I knew what I was supposed  
to say so I said  
"I was thinking of you dear"  
but that was a lie.  
I was just looking at my pretty  
titties  
and feeling generally good.

(in Gill, 1973:17)

Women poets are exploring many other areas of their experience and I will briefly discuss some of these. As I have previously suggested the main theme of the feminist movement is the search for a new identity for women, a new image. This is a theme of many poems. One book, in fact, is titled "Woman In Search of Herself" (Toni Ortner Zimmerman, 1973) The idea of 'woman giving birth to herself' is a common one: (Adrienne Rich)

your mother dead and you unborn  
your hands grasping your head  
drawing it down against the  
blade of life

your nerves the nerves of a  
midwife  
learning her trade

("The Mirror in Which Two Are  
Seen as One", 1975:195)

There are several poems about  
or dedicated to Sylvia Plath.  
There are poems about the poet's  
mother, and her children, and  
all children:

why is it this way?  
this world.  
that we have to  
give up our lives  
to protect  
our beautiful children  
whom the world  
clearly  
does not care about?

(Susan Griffin "The Snow",  
1973:56)

Many poems mention well known  
women: Nina Simone, Angela  
Davis, Harriet Tubman, Susan  
Anthony, Gertrude Stein,  
Margaret Mead etc. There are  
poems on abortion, pregnancy,  
and childbirth. There is even  
a poem called "On Pissing":

For  
that's how it is, boys:  
Women shall piss in the open like  
men;  
Like women.

(Lucille Iverson, 1974:12)

There is much sifting over of  
past experiences in a new  
light:

I pierced my ears  
for somebody else  
lost weight  
for somebody else  
studied yoga.  
Now i say no  
for myself.

("Totem" by Sheila Raeschild,  
1974:42)

The poems are very often spoken  
as one woman would speak to  
another of her day's chores and  
activities and feelings or as  
a woman would speak to her  
husband or lover:

You grind your teeth in your  
sleep.  
The sound is like a train's  
brakes or gunfire.

(Sheila Raeschild, 1974:22)

A man's pants  
hang in the bathroom  
I search them  
for money  
(there isn't much)  
thinking  
this makes me a criminal  
(thief)  
I take what there is.

(ibid:9)

Women still write love poems but  
with new awareness:

But now at this late hour,  
I have a price of my own to set,  
For people in love, even women,  
Cannot maintain  
Hysterical blindness  
Forever.

("Hysterical Blindness" by  
Barbara Lipschutz, 1974:7)

Prior to the late 1960's women had begun to explore the female experience but it was not until the growth of the second wave of feminism that a proliferation of women's poetry occurred. This poetry is not simply describing women's situation but is a way of changing one's definition of self - by expressing what has been largely un-named. This expression is a communication to other women and men which serves to change society as well. As one woman artist said "By expressing our sense of self through art, we challenge prevailing ideas about women." (Judy Chicago, 1975:64) Thus women's poetry must not be seen as merely a reflection of the woman's movement for the poetry itself is affecting the woman's movement and society as a whole. Women are writing poetry as one way of grappling with the insights that the movement has brought forward, and as a way of communicating with other women. Each woman's discoveries are shared and thus affect all the women who read her words. As one poet writes, ". . . this is a revealing, essential, transforming experience to be living and writing, during this change in the consciousness of women . . . The risks other women take in their writing, casting off the Academic shroud over our feelings, naming the unspeakable, moving with courage into new forms and new perceptions, make me able to write what before could not be written. In every sense we

do not work alone." (Susan Griffin in Larkin, 1975:93) The poets then see themselves not as solitary artists but as part of a dialogue with other women." (Fran Winant in Gill, 1973:116) As Virgiline Small has pointed out, one of the main attributes of feminist art is the "concern with clarity and sharing of intimacy rather than obscurity and egotism." (in Silvermarie, 1975: 114) This poetry is a communal process - in the sense that it is often published and printed by a small group of women, it is addressed to other women who provide the feedback, and who perhaps are stimulated to write themselves. One poetry anthology published in Nashville, Tennessee was the result of the women there being encouraged to write by Robin Morgan who had come to town to read her poetry. Their book is called, "The Night Robin Morgan came to Town". The introduction to the anthology "Woman to Woman" illustrates well the anti-elitist and anti-commodity orientation that many women have towards traditional art: "Many people have questioned why "Woman to Woman" gives no individual credits to poets and artists for their work, even though we believe very strongly that women deserve recognition as individuals and that women have been anonymous too long. We know that 'famous' women are used as tokens in the publishing world, and our attempt in "Woman to Woman" is to reject the exploitive standards of that world and at the

same time reject the divisions which fame creates among women . . . We believe that any poetry or drawing that talks to people is good art, living art . . . This book was compiled for many reasons, the most important being to give women a chance to get their poetry and drawings published - not for the sake of honour or prestige, but for the sake of reaching other women with what they feel. Women who write, draw, paint, dance and just live have something to say and what they express should be available to other women at a minimum of cost and a minimum of hassles to them. . . . Another purpose of this book is to help bring women together much in the way it has brought the women who worked on this book together in a concrete bond - as sisters. . . ." The emphasis here is on art as communication, as part of every woman's life, as part of a network of women. Newsletters and directories help women to get in touch with other writers and outlets for their work. An extension of the sharing process of feminist poetry is the poetry reading which is very popular in the United States. As one poet describes these readings: "The poets have become performers; their 'readings' are no longer advertisements for the written word but are cultural rites of passage, geared to engage the 'audience' as sister performers. These rituals are taking place with little publicity except word of mouth, with nominal or free admission, and frequently

with the agreement that any women may share her work." (Silvermarie, 1975:114) This is also an extension of the effects that women's poetry is having upon the movement as a whole - getting women together to express themselves and to communicate with each other.

Thus poetry is seen as not only an effect of the woman's movement but as affecting the movement as well. Poetry is a

personal attempt to grapple with the ideas of the movement; as it changes the poet so it changes the movement as a whole. The movement also makes use of poetry as a tool of change. As the feminist press KNOW has said about publishing their American Women's Poetry Series, "The publication of this series is part of our commitment to spread the revolution by sharing challenging expressions of awareness." As Robin Morgan said in a poem, "Poetry can be quite dangerous propaganda". ("Letter to a Sister Underground", 1972: 58)

Betty Friedan (1963) *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin Books Harmondsworth.

Lois Banner (1974) *Women in Modern America A Brief History*, Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich New York.

Viola Klein (1946) *The Feminine Character History of an Ideology*, Routledge, Kegan Paul.

Jo Freeman (1975) *The Politics of Women's Liberation*, David McKay, New York.

L. Goldman (1968) "Criticism and Dogmatism in Literature" in Cooper, David (ed.) *The Dialectics of Liberation*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.

Anne Snitow (1973) "Women's private writings: Anais Nin" in Koedt, Anne Levine, Ellen and Roysone, Anita (eds.) *Radical Feminism*, Quadrangle Books, New York.

Elaine Showalter (1973) "Women Writers and The Female Experience" in Koedt, A. et. al. *Radical Feminism*, Quadrangle Books, New York.

Suzanne Junasz (1976) *Modern Poetry by Women: A New Tradition* Dept. of English, University of Colorado.

Erica Jong "The Artist as Housewife/ The Housewife as Artist" in *Here Comes and Other Poems*, Signet Books, New York.

Adrienne Rich (1972) "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision" in *College English*, Vol. 34, No. 1, October 1972, pp. 18-25.

Mary Daly (1973) *Beyond God the Father Toward A Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, Beacon Press, Boston.

Sue Silvermarie (1975) "An Alternative Network for Sharing Our Poetry" in Rennie and Grimstad (eds.) *The New Woman's Survival Sourcebook*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Bazin and Freeman (1974) "The Androgynous Vision" in *Women's Studies* Vol 2, pp. 185-215.

V. Woolf *A Room of One's Own*

Linda Nochlin (1971) "Why Are There No Great Women Artists?" in Vivian Golnick and Barbara Molan (eds) *Woman in Sexist Society*, Mentor Books, New York.

Jacqueline Stiles (1972) "The Women's Artists' Movement"

Adrienne Rich (1975) *Poems Selected and New* W. W. Norton, New York.

Robin Morgan (1972) *Monster*,  
Vintage Books, New York.

Nancy Jo Hoffman (1972) "Reading  
Women's Poetry: The Meaning  
And Our Lives" in *College English*,  
Vol. 34, No. 1, Oct. 1972.

Florence Howe and Ellen Bass  
(1973) *No More Masks! An  
Anthology of Poems by Women*,  
Anchor Press, New York.

Barbara Lipschutz (1974)  
*Contractions*, KNOW Inc., Pitts-  
burg.

Elaine Gill (1973) *Mountain Moving  
Day Poems by Women*, The Cross-  
ing Press, Trumansburg.

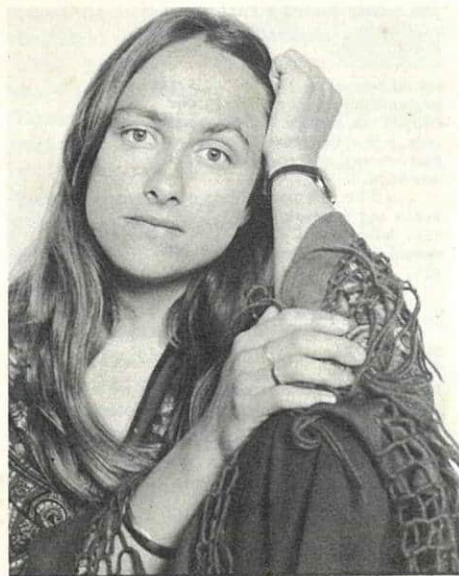
Susan Griffin (1973) *Let Them  
Be Said. Mama's Preser*. Oakland

Lucille Iverson (1974) *Outrage*,  
KNOW Inc., Pittsburg.

Sheila Raeschild (1974)  
*Lessons in Leaving*, KNOW Inc.,  
Pittsburg.

Judy Chicago et. al. "What is  
Female Imagery" in *MS*, May 1975,  
Vol. 111, No 11.


Joan Larkin (1975) "Taking  
Risks: Underground Poets from  
the West Coast" in *MS*, Vol. 111,  
No. 11, May 1975.



I changed my thesis from study-  
ing the feminist movement in NZ  
to a theoretical topic on the  
foundations of sociology which  
fascinates me, but which I am  
still working on and going slowly  
crazy with it.

A biographical note - ? -  
well, more and more I'm moving  
away from academic work - I would  
be happier to see one of my  
poems in *Spiral* than the essay!  
I am very interested, involved,  
committed to womens health in  
the broadest sense of the word -  
have started a self help health  
group and plan a therapy/support  
group.

A WOMEN'S  
INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL  
**HECATE**



CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOMED  
IN ANY AREA OF THE  
HUMANITIES OR THE SOCIAL  
SCIENCES. WE ARE ALSO  
INTERESTED IN ARTICLES ON  
WOMEN'S POSITION, OR  
INVOLVEMENT, IN ANY OTHER  
AREAS. REVIEWS OF FILMS,  
PLAYS AND ORIGINAL  
POEMS AND STORIES ARE  
ALSO WELCOME, AS WELL AS  
GRAPHICS, PHOTOGRAPHS ETC.

**BOTH ISSUES**

POVERTY AND WOMEN IN EARLY W.A.; TEACHING  
LESBIAN LITERATURE; WOMEN'S EMIGRATION TO  
CANADA; BIOLOGY AND FEMINIST IDEOLOGY;  
POLITICS OF RAPE IN P.N.G.; WOMEN ARTISTS;  
WOMEN IN S. ITALY; IDEOLOGY OF LOVE; JANET  
FRAME BIBLIOGRAPHY; POEMS AND STORIES.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: A \$2.50; UK £1.80; US \$4.00 P.A.  
INSTITUTIONS: A \$6.00 P.A.; UK £4.50 P.A.; US \$10.00 P.A.  
SUBSCRIPTIONS/ARTICLES ETC. TO: CAROLE FERRIER, ENGLISH DEPT.  
UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND, ST. LUCIA BRISBANE 4067, QLD, AUSTRALIA



## Broadsheet



New Zealand's feminist  
magazine

For the latest in news on the women's  
liberation movement, here and overseas,  
how government moves and new  
legislation will affect women, theory,  
articles, fiction, reviews.

Broadsheet is now in its sixth year of  
publication and appears 10 times a year.  
You can subscribe to Broadsheet by sending

\$8.00 to:  
P.O. Box 47-261, Auckland, New Zealand.

## Broadsheet

The magazine which takes a critical look  
at New Zealand — the magazine with the  
feminist perspective.

## DAYBREAK BOOKSHOP

207 Stuart Street Dunedin  
A wide range of feminist books.

## HERESIES: A FEMINIST PUBLICATION ON ART AND POLITICS

A collectively edited, idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art  
and politics from a feminist perspective—includes research, theoretical articles,  
analysis, fiction, poetry, visual art.

- Issue No. 4 *Traditional Women's Arts—The Politics of Aesthetics*
- Issue No. 5 *The Great Goddess—Women's Spirituality*
- Issue No. 6 *Women and Violence*
- Issue No. 7 *Working Together—True Confessions*

### SUBSCRIBE NOW

—one-year subscription/4 issues \$11.

Heresies - Box 766 - Canal Street Station - New York, N.Y. 10013

The spiral is a growth form. It is implicit in plants - in petal patterns, leaves and tendrils; it is found in sea shells, in hair and fur crowns, in sunflower heads. It can be a whirlpool or the way the water goes down the sink. It is a schematic image of the evolution of the universe. It is the earth's rotation, the moon's orbit, sun, nebula, web. It is a mystic symbol. It contains the circle which is infinite. It rises from and falls into the centre. As an Egyptian hieroglyph it denotes cosmic forces in motion or the relationship between unity and multiplicity. It unites opposite principles: stasis and motion, chaos and order, matter and energy. In its expanding and contracting labyrinth it is the pattern of magic dances, of healing and ecstasy, the motif of mandala and moko. It is snake, spring, electric coil, fern frond. It is woman's biological rhythm, the moon cycle, pubescence, menstruation, menopause. The creative spiral rising clockwise was attributed to Pallas Athena, among Greek divinities the personification of wisdom (her temple the Parthenon), whose matriarchal predecessor, the Great Goddess created her own substance. It is our symbol of rising and expanding creativity.

## ADDENDA

Titles of Women's Environment Photographs.

P. 25. Top right- The Mair Gallery- Maggie reading the poet's  
Woman Creation Saga.

Lower left- Rachel McAlpine reading her poetry.

Lower right- Heather McPherson reading her poetry.

Pp. 26-27.- Women in the tepee space.

P. 31. Top left- "From the bottom of a pond fixed stars govern a  
life" by Anna Keir.

Top right- Altar piece by Anna Keir.

P. 32. Top left- Ben's curtains by Fran Dudding.

Top right- Ngahuia and Diane; photo by Sandy Hall.

P. 34.- Autumn here, Spring there by Allie Eagle.

P. 37.- Colander by Joanna Paul.

P. 40. Top right- Untitled by Joanna Paul.

Lower right- Birth Piece by Rosemary Johnson.

Spiral Collective regrets that the printers disallowed us poetic  
license to print the title of one poem and the line of another. This  
was outside our control. We apologise to the poets and our readers  
and hereunder give the full title and line.

P. 49.- "We Haven't Fucked in Three Weeks"

P. 50.- I shoulda fucked him ina dark.