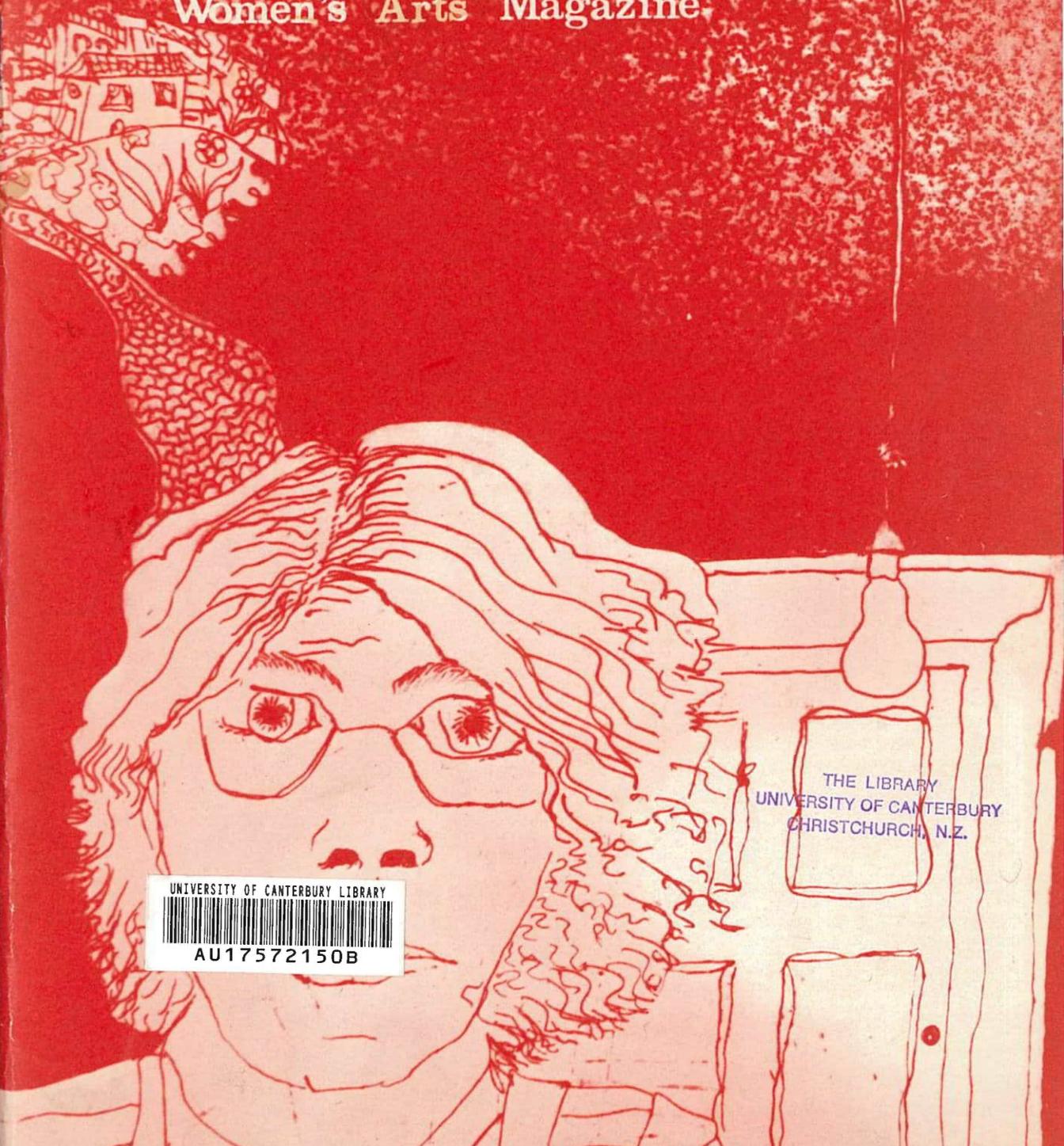


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Women's Arts Magazine



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Editorial

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This is the fourth issue of Spiral, and may well be the last. For various reasons several members of the Collective are withdrawing from producing the magazine and it does not seem likely that a new collective will be formed in Christchurch.

As the only women's art magazine in New Zealand it has a unique contribution to make to the growth of artistic and feminist awareness. It provides an outlet for women artists whose work might otherwise not be sufficiently acknowledged; it provides a forum for women's ideas and work to be presented in a more caring and sympathetic way than most of the conventional male avenues available; it allows for a new, fresh approach to the whole area of creativity and self-expression; it has given us better self-images as creative, exploring women.

In producing Spiral we have tried to maintain a balance between presenting the work of women whose art is their life work and who are known as artists and that of women who would never give themselves that title. We have begun to break down the aura surrounding art while at the same time not demeaning the role and importance of the artist.

We have always had to rely on the local women's community to support Spiral and finance has always been a problem. Spiral has, unfortunately, never managed to be self sufficient. We would love to see Spiral continue. But unless some other women, perhaps from another centre, are prepared to take on publication, and more financial help is forthcoming, it seems doomed to follow the fate of many other feminist magazines. If you are interested in the future of Spiral and have ideas for how it could carry on then write to us at P.O. Box 21069, Edgware.

Ruth Lawley

Credits

Published by Spiral Collective:

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Rosemary Seymour

The Rebel Bee: A Song of Liberation

I might as well
Have been dead
As alive
The life that I led
In my hive.

It may be a bee
Spends hours among flowers
But not every bee
Wants always to be
Just a honey-body.

I'm a bee who knows what she missed:
Sisters, alive, -- I wasn't alive
Not till I
Got away from my hive.

And all you, drones there, -- look alive!
Come on, brothers,
Move on over, -- come on brothers,
Make room for others.

Come on, sisters! Out of the hive!
Come on, bees, -- be bees alive!

Come on sister, -- be a bee alive
Don't give all your
Honey to the hive.

Come on sisters, the floor's all yours:
Put some buzz in it, -- wing it,
Zing it, -- everyone's
A dancer. What else
Do we care for?
What else are we here for?

Come on brothers, move on over.

Come on sisters, -- be bees alive
The sweetest honey
Is out of the hive.

Evolution

She was the one, the only one,
The first one,
The figure of fun,
The lonely one, --

Who steered toward
Warm light of the sun, who
Waded ashore on her fins and looked with fear
At what was there, at what was not
Sea.

They began to jeer, they began to sneer,
Her gilled brethren,
For her thinking that she
Had discovered heaven.

But she didn't care,
-- Time's enquiring daughter --
The figure of fun, the lonely one,
Warm in the sun; aspiring to rise
To clear her eyes
From walls
Of water.

"What's wrong with it here?"
Rippled jeer and sneer
Of those floating brethren. "It's cold
And wet, -- and never yet has fish desired
To leave the water.
Never yet has fish enquired
What lies beyond
Water."

The daughter of time, the lonely one,
The figure of fun
Lay in the slime, -- lit
And warmed
By sun.

"It's a crime," one said
"To lie in the slime. Be like me --
Stay in the sea. What's wrong with it here?
My dear?
Why aren't you content, my daughter,
With water?"

That daughter of time, the only one,
The figure of fun, the lonely one,
Left the slime,

She left her gills in the sea behind;

While her elders clucked
And tut-tutted their tongues:
"My dear," they uttered,
If God had meant us to breathe
Air
He would have given us

Lungs."

Nothing daunted,
She reached what she'd wanted; -- found
What she had expected to find:
That there there was
Air
Warmed and lit by the sun.
She drew in a breath
And sighed in relief
That breath wasn't
Death.

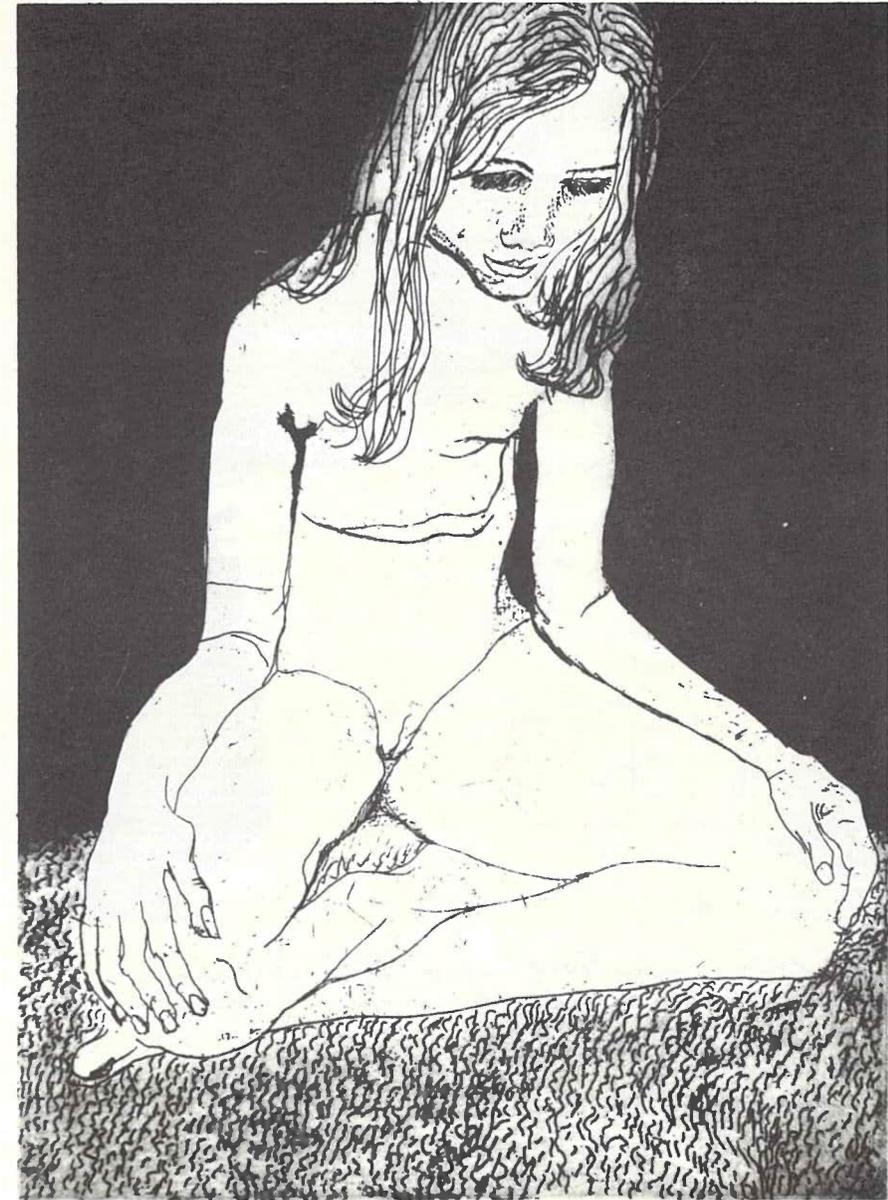
The only one, the first one, the figure of fun,
The lonely one, -- who crawled ashore
And opened the door, --
Who ignored the lore
Of her floating brethren.

Biography.

Born Gisborne, N.Z. 1919. Listed in International Who's Who in Poetry. One booklet of poetry, London. Lived 20 years in Greece, Spain, Turkey, Lebanon. Scholar in Literature, Language, Philosophy, Sociology. Has taught Sociology and English Language and Literature in Universities; English as a foreign language, and Literature and Social History

in British Institutes. Special interest: Women's Studies (political, economic, creative, historical, cross-cultural, ideological). Current activities: editing Bibliography of Women's Studies in N.Z.; Convenor, Women's Studies Association; research, ideological cross-currents in misogyny and philogyny; lecturing Waikato University, Sociology of Women and Sociology of Literature.

Tiffany Thornley

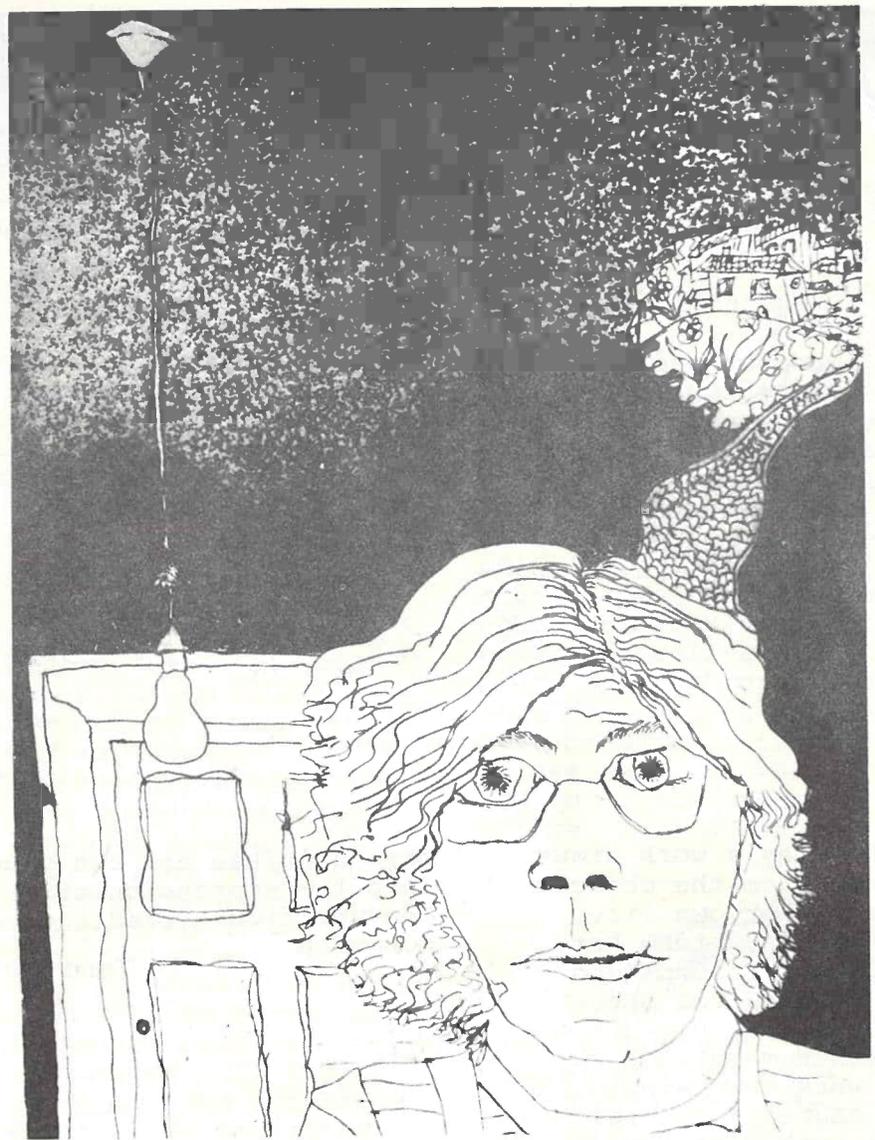


Bridget 1

Tiffany Thornley



I've been waiting for this moment
since the day I was born
Tiffany Thonley



Self-Portrait

Tiffany Thonley



Tiffany Thornley's work draws its strength from the objects and people of her own life. She draws her daughter, her lover Paul, her friends and herself. The mediums she works in are difficult and exacting and some of her strongest work has been in colour lithography. Unfortunately Spiral magazine does not have the means to reproduce these domestic interiors.

The etching of her daughter Bridget exists on a very pure and sensitive feeling level. Tiffany's best work all evokes this basic 'gut', intimate, emotional response. Her imagination and creative awareness of her life enables

her to infuse her own vigour into the expressionistic 20th Century figure tradition she works in.

Jane Zusters

Maggie Eyre : Interview

What do you call your workshops?

It depends on the workshop. I will be running specific workshops (clown, mask, dance). At the moment I am fully into what may be termed body workshops for all women regardless of skills.

I use several different mediums: music, movement, improvisation, massage, verbal and non-verbal communication. The workshops I run promote mind and body awareness. I encourage women to become self exploratory. I feel understandably ambivalent or downright suspicious about certain kinds of therapy and therapists. I like to stress that I am not a therapist in the sense of purporting to cure deeply disturbed women. But I believe that by working at these basic levels of communication many problems are resolved before they fester into deeply disturbing ones. The workshops are aimed partly at making us feel good about our voices and this is why I emphasize body work, body awareness. When you enjoy your body it gives you confidence to go into other things, as for example finding your voice and not overly worrying about what people are thinking of you. I feel pre-occupied with "doing". It brings about change, positive change.

What kind of change?

Well, I press buttons, emotional buttons. I guide the women to channel their emotions by providing them with techniques designed to release anger, frustration, joy, pain, laughter, elation and so on. The workshops help in the full development of personalities and are concerned with developing the powers of self-expression and imagination through mediums such as movement and sound. I provide opportunities for women to use their senses. To think and concentrate on everyday things, to express their



Drawing : Sharon Alston

thoughts and feelings about themselves and the world around them. At the end of a day we discuss what has been said and done. This feedback is important because it enables us to see ourselves more clearly. Everywoman has talent and creativity in some area or another. The way our society is structured these talents are left largely untapped. Our educational system doesn't encourage ongoing creativity.

How did the focus of your energy come to be workshops for women?

When I left the state school system I became a drama teacher. I taught at the Ponsonby alternative school. Then I was employed by Mairangi Players to hold children's classes for a year, and that was a year of listening to their problems and guiding them to express fears, insecurities, dreams, anger, joy. I have worked with Theatre Action and political theatre groups. Then with feminist women I initiated the Back Street Abortion Theatre group. I identify with people moving away from professional theatre because of its lack of realness, lack of politics, lack of guts. My classes are open to all women.

I don't charge a lot of money because I go according to my needs. I don't want it to become an elitist or simply money-making thing. If women can't afford the required fee I am open to bartering. This has happened quite frequently.

What else goes on in your workshops?

The workshops/classes are not

about 'performing' - there is no failure. Nobody is forced to do anything. Although I'm interested in theatre and use theatre skills occasionally, my workshops at present are quite distinct from the art form of the theatre which is obviously concerned with "performance" and "showing". Of course I will take workshops for women who are interested in furthering theatrical skills. But here again I would be dealing with the concept of non-traditional training and working very much on confidence and self-expression.

Although I emphasize the distinctions between my present workshops and the ones promoting theatrical skills there are times when they are in fact very closely associated. For instance a clown workshop can be a liberating experience. A clown is bound by no rules at all. We may get in touch with our sense of humour, our clown. We tap a dormant part of ourselves and having released her we are free. For the clown everything is possible - the sky is the limit. When we fully comprehend that part of ourselves we can never forget it. That playful essence has been largely conditioned out of us as adults. If we look closely at the antics of the clown we see a buried part of ourselves to the point where we actually envy the clown's wild freedom.

I feel very open to women's needs and wants. This is challenging for me because I need to extend myself - for example acrobatics. This brings me to the whole vulnerability thing.

It is important not to be afraid, to build up a trust so that if you are prepared to be raw and vulnerable you can change and learn. We have in common that everyone is nervous and inhibited about exposing themselves - the parallel might be the half-way house for women who have been beaten up by husbands; being together is not so lonely. Being together is to enjoy ourselves too, if only to play, or to laugh, as a child, with spontaneity of reaction. In one workshop I was a lion, roaring, and making spasmodic movements, and then we had 20 women being lions, feeling and looking ridiculous but loving it, cracking up. I continually ask, what do you need, what do you want to do? The facilitator needs feedback. It is a learning and growing process for me too. I intend to go further into meditation and massage because it is important for women to be able to centre themselves. Some women have started to incorporate the exercises into their daily lives and this is how it should be because the workshops are not isolated from the real world. We are constantly dealing with reality.

Maggie Eyre.

Comments from some of the women who have been in Maggie's classes:

"I liked progressing into feeling less responsible to others and more in tune with myself, and it has been good to feel self-conscious and notice others feel self-conscious but not so much that it directs energy

from the exercises. Seeing other women do all this, exposing themselves - especially the incredible circle where the woman in the circle gave her dance to the next woman - the transforming exchange was so tenuous and sensitive and moving and it made me feel this was equalising my giving....." I want to be in situations like this - to receive back
feel more equal
feel other women drawing out their feeling/spiritual/creative resources, showing unabashed where they are. No score." No right or wrong. Yes."

"I enjoyed the sharing which Maggie initiated in us, no pressure of performance - the safe environment."

"I discovered - areas of conflict, the need to push through to overcome bashfulness."



Photos: Anne Speir



Anne Coury

The indestructible female principle
in wild beaches
and the inevitable flow of the sea,
The surge of waves
as' it pulls away my fears
Watching each star appear in the deepening sky
I sense a submerged power in the grass, in the sand and whittled
driftwood
a power essentially untouched by the continuous male batterings
The fire I build warms us;
a small fire - its dear flames allow my mind to wander around friends
my years of struggles will add to the shifting
forever beach of woman power
and the moment of patriarchy will become one small worn beach pebble.

I wanted to paint you
and capture perhaps that expression
that I catch myself imitating
(all my photographs seem to have missed it somehow)
But my brush keeps slipping
and putting the wrong shapes to the paper
So I return to words
to describe
to imitate
to claim useful analogies
But my pen seems to slide away from the letters I want
-refuses to flow into lines that would
surprise strangers

Precious views of lady-moon spreading a hail of silver
flinging out her tresses so the drops will fall more heavily
and be noticed on the clear sea
some float on top, a glowing oil-slick, but I see those that
drift downwards to settle and slide among the rocks below.
From the hill on which we stand, we are on a level with this
rich creature, so carelessly casting away her jewels
her culture is hers alone... invented by her own hands and
ritually practised every night with her rising
- the slow magnificence as she gathers her yellowing robes
and lifts her head far into the waiting sky
the hesitant movements between clouds who would wish to hide her
and the climax from the centre when her light is brightest
as I lie on my back in the dew-wet grass, she is above me
in command of my night.

Songs of praise should be written to all strong women
to those who flash in anger
and raise tear torn faces
to all strong women who come out from the back rooms
and stand in unbroken lines
wave upon wave
of lined hands
(and caring arms)
To all those who reclaim the front lines
and the rainbow patterns of real dawns
Songs of love should be printed and distributed
in night long paste ups
declarations of love to the battered and confused
Let the silent wives emerge
blinking in the stunning sunlight
Saturday morning's papers will carry declarations of war
and the words to the new freedom songs
The midday news will report sweeping victories
And News at Ten will show ten strong women
renaming the streets where our blood has flowed.

Rosemary Johnson: Interview

A Projected Sculpture for the
Christchurch Teachers' College
at Ilam.

Rosemary Johnson talks to
Heather McPherson.

(I went with Rosemary to look
at and photograph the model of
her construction in the admin-
istration block of the Teachers'
College.)

H. My first impression is of
symmetry, of a geometrical
design.

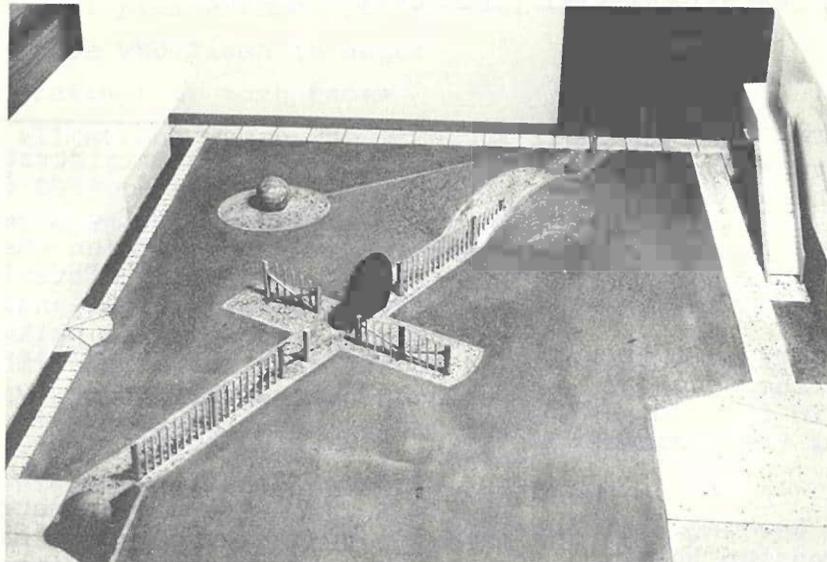
R. This is imposed by the
buildings which are of
geometrical design.

H. Does your scheme rely on
harmony then, rather than
contrast?

R. Yes, but you notice I use
round shapes too, I like
them and use them a lot, and they
provide the contrast within the
overall conception. What I am
working on is that the college is
a series of walkways. The
students walk a lot from building
to building and to the lunchroom,
library, wherever you look there
are people going along covered
walkways. And these are inter-
spersed with earth works. Both
of these elements are part of my
work. All these square rigid
lines, the geometrical buildings,
are defining the spaces available
and I am making a link with them.

(Coming out of the administration
block we turn from a covered to
an open walkway bisecting a yet-
to-be grassed area between the
library and students' cafeteria.
The path turns at a right-angle
to cross another covered walkway
and follow the line of the library
to an open area surrounded by
buildings, the projected site of
Rosemary's sculpture. At the
beginning of the first open walk-
way is a large round stone about
three feet in diameter. It has
a flaky textured surface with
distinct but inconsistently
aligned strata, and is a washed
brown-grey colour, like mud or
sand. Rosemary explained this
is similar to the ones in her
project and would be her first
focal point from which to take a
sight line.)

R. I take a sight line - it can
be anywhere between spaces,
but looking from here towards the
sculpture area, the focal point,
the stone, would probably have to
be beside the tree planted there.
Then the first post would be
here, a little outside the second
walkway. It creates the visual
link between the stone and the
sculpture area which begins with
a post and ends with a stone.
The first post in the sculpture
area is the axis or anchor point
for the whole. From it radiate
lines which link with the build-
ings and the buildings with each
other. Along the main sight line
between the library and auditor-



ium would be the structure of the sculpture.

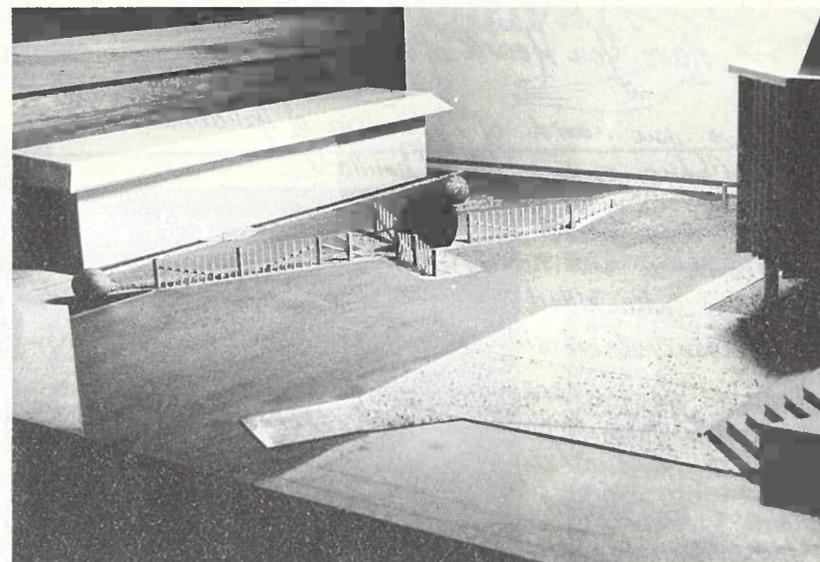
It is set on a shingled path crossing the centre of a mound, three feet high from ground level at the centre. The mound is an extended circle, almost an ellipse. Running from this mound on the north side is a fence sloping upwards to a steel circle, on edge or vertical. It would be made of corten steel, which turns a bronze colour eventually to blend with the natural wood of the fence, the shingle and the buildings. Extending from the circle are arms, northeast and southwest. The whole thing is lined up to the nor-west, the circle edge-on to our Canterbury nor-west winds. It would have to be constructed to withstand a 90mph gale.

Short runs of fence carry on the line of the sculpture which ends with a stone. The fence is a conventional rural one, of

wooden posts, battens and wire ... the kind that usually encloses farm land in the central North Island. The stone to the right or east of the main body would have a base defined by bricks harmonising with the steps of the auditorium.

H. Apart from the environmental links what other ideas lie behind the sculpture?

R. There are several concepts implicit in the sculpture. The circle and the cross are basic elements. I see them as powerful symbols of the natural life or creative force. The circle as a basic design element was inspired by stones, natural round stones. I found them up near Amberley where they fall out of the cliffs like big eggs and lie in the riverbed. They are a composite of sandstone and mudstone, about 4-5 feet in diameter.



The egg motif is also continued ... the mound is an egg pushing through the ground and yet to emerge, the steel circle is growing, still partly sunken in the ground, and the stones are out of the ground ... full-formed...

H. The steel circle also reminds me of a rising moon - or sun?

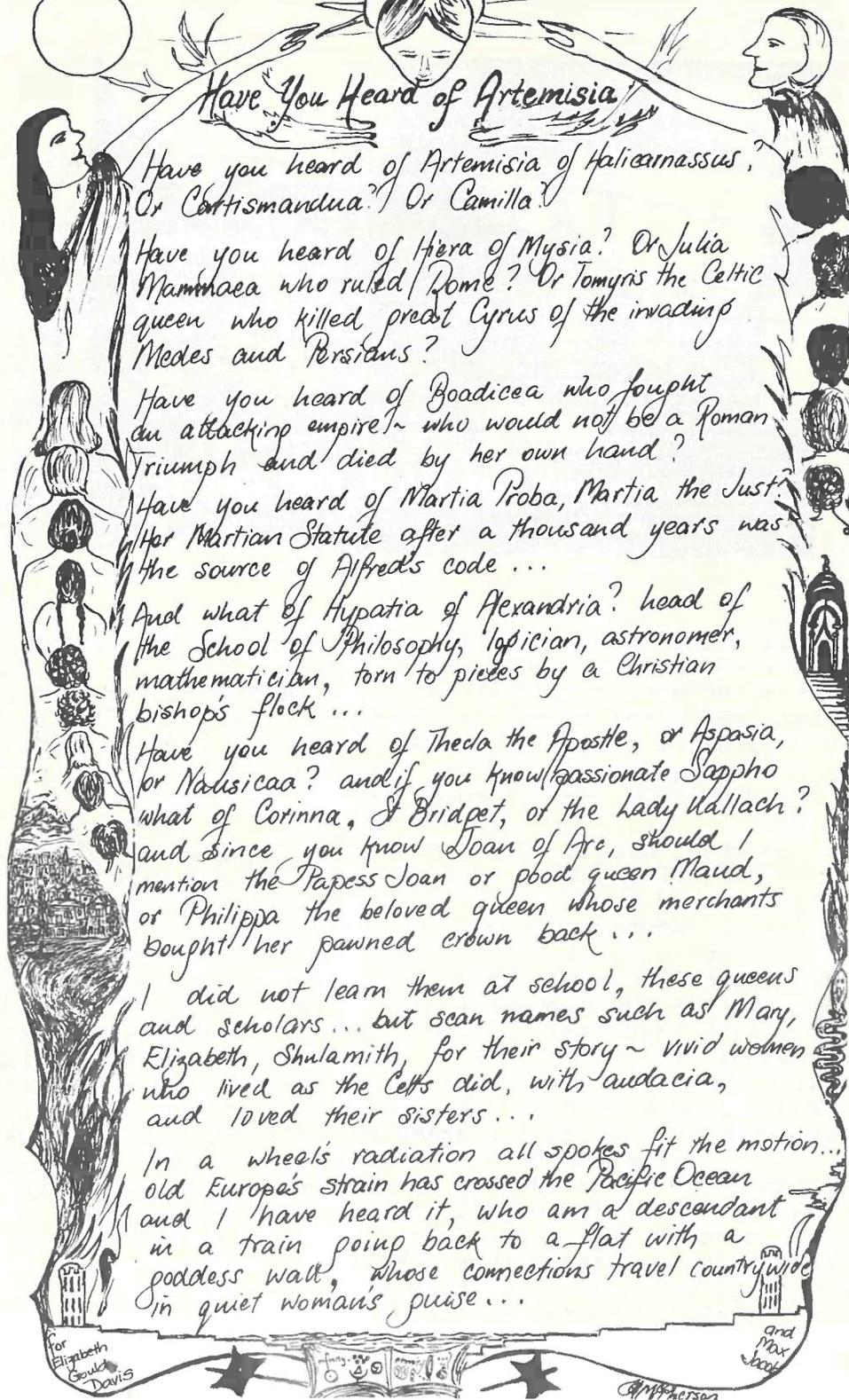
R. Yes. I wanted to humanise this space, giving it a scale that related to people where so little of the whole complex does. I envisaged that people could pass through it, sit on it, hold theatre - theatrical activities based on it. Something like the stations of the cross for example. My original idea was to have a central stone engraved with the words "At the centre of all things is the circle", but I couldn't find a suitable large stone. This idea could be used ... perhaps a small circle or spiral on the

steel circle, perhaps in a future project.

And sometime I would like to work with an architect, perhaps a woman, who uses round forms.

Born 1942. Studied Canterbury School of Fine Arts and Central School of Art and Design, London. Interested in journeys, physical, or progression from one point to another, or journeys of the mind, stages in personal development towards self realisation. Likes gardening, to see things growing, believes in intuitive link with nature. Has husband and two children. Widely represented commission works and pieces in public galleries.

Women's Arts Festival



The first time I thought about what became the Women's Arts Festival was after the Cottage Industries Fair, held last spring at the Arts Centre. Some women were talking about organising a women's craft fair, so I thought why just limit it to craft, why not hold a women's celebration that will encompass many examples of women's creativity? Well, this broad scope of creativity was expressed by women at the festival, though it is hard to believe that it all did happen. The Christchurch Women's Liberation Collective did not do very much last year.

The Arts Festival seemed an ideal, if rather ambitious project to give our "group" a sense of reality, and also to dispel some of the inevitable isolation that arises between "feminist" women and "non-feminist" women. Hopefully,

an exposition of women's culture would be a base on which to build a meeting ground.

The Festival did not aim to be political in the sense that the Hamilton Convention in April will be, but nor was it to be merely a "feminist" Nambassa, as was implied by some who had their doubts about our political purpose. The fact that we chose to exclude men from the event was a very important political decision, and one that most women who came to the Festival agreed with afterwards, if not beforehand. There is no denying that the weekend would definitely have been spoiled for the majority of women there, had men been present; it simply would not have been a "women's festival". Another very important political aspect of the Festival was the emphasis placed on participation. "Arts Festival" was in a sense a misnomer, because this was not a conventional cultural event with a few celebrities performing to numbers of passive, paying spectators. The non-professional nature of much of the "women's culture" displayed in the art environment, and the provision for participation in the workshops, meant that women who joined in could experience their creative potential as women via others verbal and visual expressions, and by their own explorations through actual involve-

ment. After all, it is common knowledge that uninhibited self expression is a vital element of individual growth, and to be a woman growing today is a step towards real feminist strength.

On a less theoretical level, the Festival achieved much, simply by attracting the number and variety of women it did. I feel sure there were many useful contacts made and friendships formed. Even though the media made us notorious they could not avoid stimulating sympathetic curiosity in women who came to find out what we were offering; a proof of the readiness in many women to be open to new possibilities and to seek changes in their lives. Personally, being involved with making the Festival happen was one of the most rewarding and moving experiences I have had with women. As a feminist I have discovered that unless a sense of effectiveness is achieved in proportion with the growth of one's political awareness, then frustration and disillusion can result. Helping to bring about the Festival has encouraged me, and given me a concrete conception of how positive and creative women are.

Belinda Meares

The Women's Arts Festival provided a unique opportunity to foster women's art and culture. Over the weekend this desire to learn and explore the potential of women based creativity was (for me) a conscious political statement. All of us were made very much aware of the whole cultural feminist perspective. This belief that women

will achieve liberation through an alternative women's culture has an inherent danger; that of falling victim to the same complacency that is held by alternative life-style people - quietly grooving away, drinking herb tea, looking to the vegetable gardens and CHALLENGING NO-ONE.

Just getting high off the festival isn't enough. It is important that this energy be directed into conscious projects that will extend the women's revolution and that we don't give ourselves a pat on the back for the good feelings we got.

To a certain extent, the women's culture is legitimized, simply by being an "Arts Festival" we were accepted more easily within the 'liberal arts context'. It is this we should fight against because any legitimacy we gain is male, and, as such will be on male terms. The women's movement must work to make its culture more political rather than state cultural feminism for not being political enough.

The Women's Arts Festival was one step in this direction.

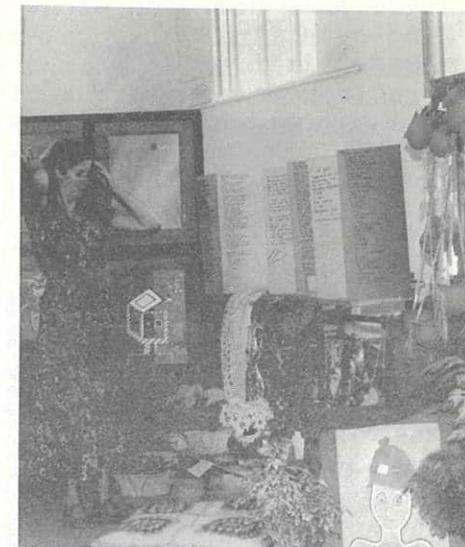
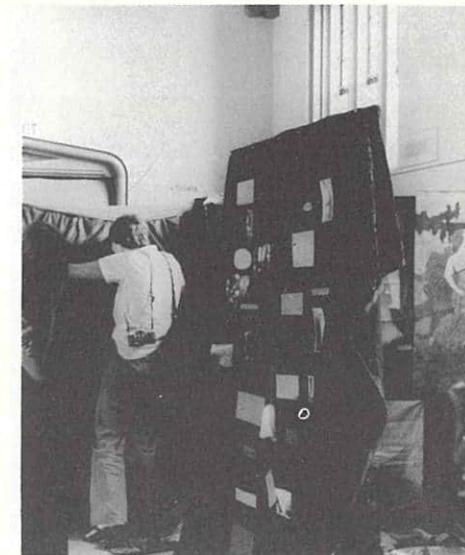
Kathleen Quinlivan



Being involved in the organization of the Women's Arts Festival had important repercussions for me both personally and politically. Although I have been an active feminist for about two years I had never before worked with women as intensely for a space of 3 months. I found that my ways of relating to women, my personal politics in relation to feminism, my 'woman identity' and my ideas about cultural feminism were all being challenged. I had given some of these issues theoretical consideration in the context of a feminist theory group, in 'heady' discussions with other feminists and from my reading of feminist literature. The festival was a time for me to test out and translate into everyday practicalities what I knew intellectually. For example, just how do you make a 'concensus decision', what does it mean to work collectively, how do we deal with the tensions and conflicts that arise between us.

I started feeling the contradictions of the position I was in about a month before the festival, realising that although I had helped organise this festival I really knew nothing about the ways in which women's art was a challenge to the patriarchy and how important it is to build a women's culture. A lot of my feelings and thoughts about cultural feminism have become clarified as a consequence.

As few of us had been involved in the women's art movement we had not thought through sufficiently exactly what we wanted a women's arts festival to achieve and what was women's art anyway. We ran into difficulties as we





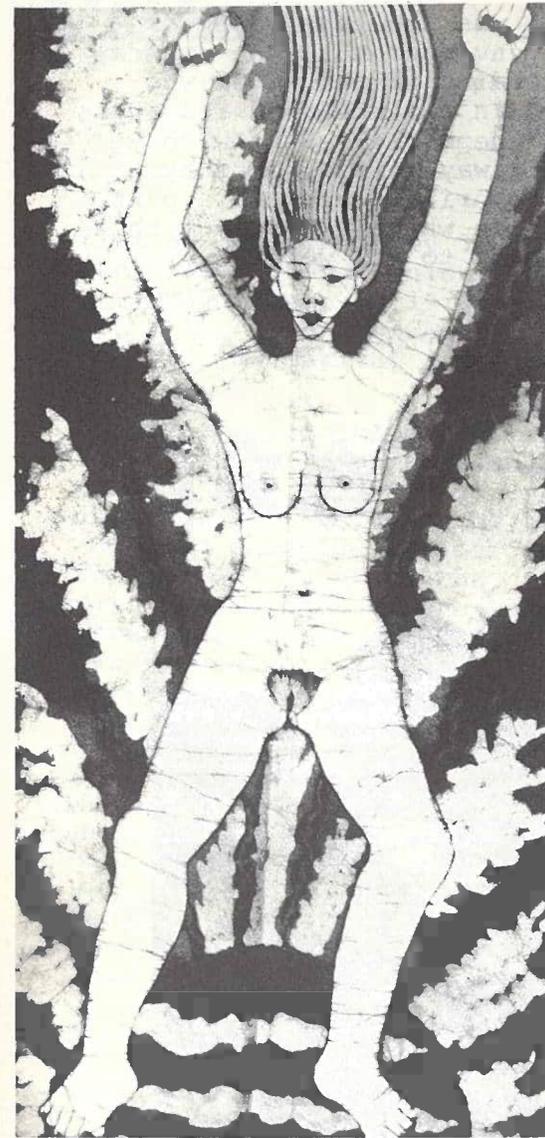
had avoided making any policy statements of aims and objectives and by trying to hide our feminist intentions under the guise of a purely cultural activity. This was due to our inexperience, we did not anticipate the kinds of problems that would arise, and to our concern that women may have felt alienated by strong political statements. We were also aware of the sources from which our grants were coming and were careful to give the festival the kind of legitimacy i.e. a cultural activity - that we felt they could accept.

From this complications arose - one woman offered a christian workshop, the media did not ignore us but were persistent in their attempts to find out exactly what we were doing and who we were. Women wanted to know why they couldn't bring men along. Our policy formulation was haphazard and not totally satisfactory but for me it has been one of the most important learning consciousness raising experiences I've had.

Annette Mortensen.



Photos : Stephanie Beth
Ruth Lawley
Julie Lambie
Sue Lytollis



The Women's Arts Festival meant a chance to create a women's space, a women's environment. A place to nurture women, where women could feel women's support and show their own work, ideas and creativity. We use these words - nurture, support, space - they are important. I know

that women support art, the arts and artists (usually all male) as well as nurture - that is give food, comfort and succour to everyone else first and lastly to themselves. Their giving is ignored and devalued. The nurturing or homemaking is considered nothing in our world which puts a monetary value on all work except the work of a wife, mother or daughter. The crafts of the home from the simplest cookery to the finest needlework are not only neglected but downgraded in women's eyes as well as in men's - unless men do it. The craft of pottery traditionally done by women has seen men claim it as their own. As for the High Arts - what women lately has had her 'One Man' show that drew the crowds.

In New Zealand Art is downgraded and subsidised and therefore not real work. Another contradiction that we live with is that though on the whole only men make it our most famous artists have been women such as Katherine Mansfield and Frances Hodgkins. At Art School most support is given to men. However I don't wish to be drawn into defensive discussions on "look at so and so and all the support she got" and "obviously there are very good men artists and we can't neglect their talent". I am a woman and I have arrived at a point in time where I want to give my energy to support women's talent. I want to break down the hierarchy of art which says that painting, sculpture and writing are at the top and crafts at the bottom and I want to support women who

are devoting their lives to being creative women artists. The Art Environment was a starting place for me. A group of us got together and discussed what the environment could mean. We decided a 'women's room' so all women could feel they could show a picture of themselves in their own space. This sets the question. Does every woman have her own space and why not? Idealistically I expected floods of photos, drawings, ideas, feelings from thousands of women showing themselves, their rooms and their work.

Realistically on Thursday night I was in despair - a group of us had brought in soft materials and created this beautiful entrance into a huge gallery of nothing - all the walls were made of plaster and impossible to hang pictures on. Besides we only had three pictures to show and I was the only one with other work.

However on Friday, women - fantastic, beautiful, creative, daring women came and brought themselves, their rooms, their thoughts, feelings, creativity, their pots, paintings, drawings, photos and made moving personal statements about their lives, their mothers, their grandmothers, families and their children. The whole became a work of art and an enchanted space for women by women full of softness, colour, texture and warmth of materials covering the walls and floors. The statements pictorial and written opened women up to other women - so more women brought in work on Saturday and even Sunday.

This was the true worth of the environment. The natural unfolding of the women who came in and absorbed the parts and the whole. I know they went away strengthened by discovering they were a part of this whole experience that belongs to all women.

Tiffany Thornley



Maidens

A film by Jeni Thornley 1978.
(Best Film, Greater Union Awards, Sydney Film Festival 1978, Best Short Film, Gold Hugo Award, Chicago Film Festival 1978)

"...Suddenly it happened. The encounter became a family, passion a work of love. Once hesitant sisters, each of us adorning ourselves in our own feathers, each of us the prisoner of her own pretended strength, in the heat of what was happening we found ourselves touched by, revealed in the common childhood that we made it our task to discover - going on from accusing our mothers to accusing each other to our faces and discovering that we could tolerate this, and that is how we made each of ourselves the mother and the daughter of each of the others, and sisters..." (From "The New Portugese Letters" by the Three Marias⁽¹⁾)

If anyone were to ask what impressed me the most at the Christchurch Women's Arts Festival, I would reply that without a doubt it was "Maidens". I must have seen that film at least five times, and each time I seemed to gain a new insight, to catch yet another reflection of my own life in the film. More than once I found myself moved as some previously hidden



emotion was gently drawn out of the depths and I felt locked into the images, aware that they would stay with me, for a very long time. It was 'one of those' films.

"Maidens" is a very intimate film about the film-maker and her family. In the format of a compilation documentary, Jeni Thornley traces the herstory of her maternal family through four generations - from its extended family beginnings on a Tasmanian farm through two wars and a depression to her own immediate family living in the city. It is the story of seventy years of change and upheaval, the gradual disintegration of

the traditional family and the search for new forms and ways of relating as typified by Jeni's attempts to break with the pattern of the past and to create a new identity for herself. It is an ambitious film - using many of the experimental techniques largely abandoned since the 'underground' film movement reached its peak in the late 1960's. Jeni draws on a wide range of material to recreate her own herstory and her maternal heritage - she uses old family snapshots, letters and home movies; documentary footage filmed during the making of "Journey Among Women" (a film about pioneer women convicts who escape into the bush and make a new life for themselves), as well as excerpts from films which she herself has appeared in. These images are woven together by her intensely powerful and poetically evocative narration. She clarifies the images to us, and relates them to herself in a very self-revealing and honest way. Her narration made the film probably the most personal statement I have ever seen in the cinema. As well as extracts from her own writing, Jeni integrates excerpts from the Three Marias into the narrative. These three women writers - to whom the film is dedicated - were imprisoned in 1972 by the Portugese Government for publishing their feminist writings which were considered an offence to public morals. The music is by Aurora Bell, Anne Bickford and Clitoris.

Jeni Thornley originally conceived making a dramatised narrative about her abortion, but (she told

Camera and Cine⁽²⁾ magazine) "I came to realise that I could not get others to act out experiences of mine, to say my words - that seemed really artificial to me", so she decided to use filmed material of herself, excerpts from films she had acted in. Her original conception gradually expanded: "As I thought about the film I started to look at old family photos of myself growing up, and I got interested in my mother growing up and in tracing the family photos and maternal ideas, so I collected up all the family history."⁽²⁾ Jeni also wanted to convey the intensity of her personal experiences while she was working on "Journey Among Women", the origins of the majority of Australian women in the convict heritage - "this film made me feel somehow that women were still second class citizens or convict women - and I wanted to work towards freedom."⁽²⁾ The film's prologue begins with a montage symbolising a growth of a child: a silhouette of a pregnant woman, and images of women and children together. Maidens is then divided into four parts - Parts I and II (1900-1945) are a chronological journey through the family album - a series of still photographs, and letters tracing the lives of Jeni's grandmother and mothers, and the men of the family seen through the women's eyes. They live on the land, self sufficient and hard-working. Twice the men go off to war leaving the women to run the farm and to wait. Alone together as in their school days, the women are happy working and playing together,

"maidens again". Each time the men return the women are divided from one another by the bonds of marriage and the conventions of society. The pattern of life conveyed by the static images seems established and unquestionable.

Part III begins in 1945 with the marriage of Jeni's parents. Violent drum music introduces the nuclear family and the film form becomes impressionistic and fast moving, the narrative is irregular and erratic, creating tension between the images. Photographs, slides and home movies of Jeni and her family leave us with the impression of isolated contact between people, and a sense of something lost.

Jeni uses film clips from "Film For Discussion" and "Take Five" to convey her inner struggles in late adolescence, and her uncertainty about the roles expected of her as a woman - her tentativeness about men. We gain impressions of the effects that events in her life - her abortion, her brother's death, her pregnancy, and her relationships with men and with women - have had on her own sense of self, and her struggles to create a new identity.

In Part IV (1969 on) her inner struggle seems heightened by her own growing feminist awareness, and the film reflects this new way of seeing. By using dramatised film segments from "Secret Storm", "Jealousy" (an unreleased film by Martha Ansara), "Beach" and "Frances Farmer", and creating a dialogue

with the images, Jeni is able to convey a wide range of emotions such as insecurity, fear, loneliness, rejection and jealousy as well as expressing some of the hope in the new bonds which she is forming with other women.

"Maidens" real strength lies in its ability to universalise the experience of one woman through her herstory that she has in common with all women. It exposes the feminist struggle in much more personal terms than it has ever been shown before, and in depicting her own life in such a candid and courageous way, Jeni Thornley has opened the way for a whole new perspective on the use of film.

"We know for certain that we are leaping hand in hand towards depths that we have not yet created and are still not certain that we will be able to create ... but we are sure of one thing at least. The leap has begun."⁽³⁾

- (1) "The Three Marias : New Portugese Letters" Paladin, 1975)
- (2) Camera and Cine, Oct 1978 - interview with Jeni Thornley by Gabrielle Dalton.
- (3) ibid. note 1.

("MAIDENS" is available from: The Sydney Film-Makers Co-op, P.O. Box 217, Kings Cross, Sydney, and will be featured in a national women's film festival in June.)

Jeni Thornley is a feminist filmmaker, a member of the Sydney Filmmakers Co-operative, and an active worker in the production, distribution and exhibition of feminist films.

Her early films include "Film for Discussion" (with the Sydney Women's Film Group) and "Still Life". She narrated the film "Living Together" and worked as a camera assistant on "Journey Among Women". In addition she has appeared in the films: "Film for Discussion", "Women's House", "Take Five", "Secret Storm", "Jealousy" and "Frances Farmer".



Jools Topp

Dragons

I've talked with dragons
Taken them for walks
In thickets of velvet thorns
I've wiped away their tears
Tickled their soft bellies
Played hopscotch and made tree houses with them
So let me tell you
That dragons are not dangerous
You see - the fire
Is in me.

Womanly Words

1. Woman is the sea
I am just getting my feet wet.
2. Womin - save each other from your sleepless nights.
3. Womin loving Womin
Sleep in your womin-made bed
And if sleep comes easy
Then dream all your womanly dreams
4. Going home to your sisters
Have you ever been away
Or have you just come back.
5. WOMIN
i will fight
cause that is why
i am

on this earth
but not with weapons.

Crafty Womin

joined together by a lady
they are extremely close knit
they needle each other occasionally
and although a lot of people cast them off
plain and pearl

are lovers.

Branch Managers

Take a tree
Take a man
Both will live
And grow
Branch out in life
Have you
Ever
Seen a tree kill a man.

My Poems are for Womin.
If this small paragraph is for you
to learn something about me
Then all you need to know is that
I love my sisters That tells it all.

WOMIN IS THE SEA - I'M JUST
GETTING MY FEET WET.



Mike Minehan

Waiting I Am...

I spend much time amongst my herbs
muttering incantations under my ageing macrocarpa...
I tend my plants as i do my wounds,
taking care not to bruise nor stifle.
one day a letter may come
or you may arrive to take my hand..
sit silent watching the blue hills
darken with night,
lay your head upon my breast
and i, whisper soft,
how glad i am you came.

Shopping...

i'm trying it all on for size...
size ten shoes & size nine dresses...
karangahape road & colombo street
red, green & chartreuse buses.

just so i'll know.

i'm experiencing;
getting in to the FEEL.

one day i fast & i'm starving in asia
then it's hamburgers for a week
& i get the feel of the great SATURATION...

i've been through my arty-farty stage.
i was a beatnik for weeks in 1963
carried dante's inferno around for ages
& a satchel full of poems.

nothing ever changed though.
even when i REALLY tried for authenticity...
never felt RIGHT.

when i married & joined the PTA
the family, nearly gave up
but i rallied & carried a banner into jerusalem
soon enough,

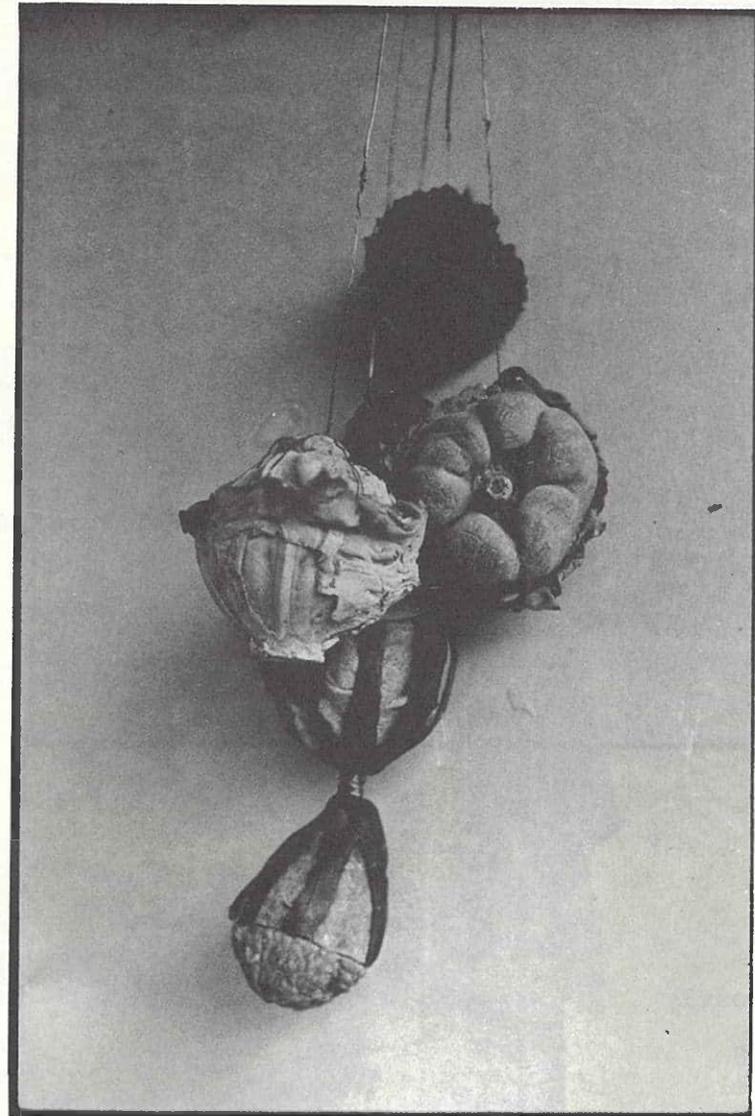
that was my 'enlightened' age.

it's all come back to window shopping again.
trying it on for size
hoping like hell one day it will fit.

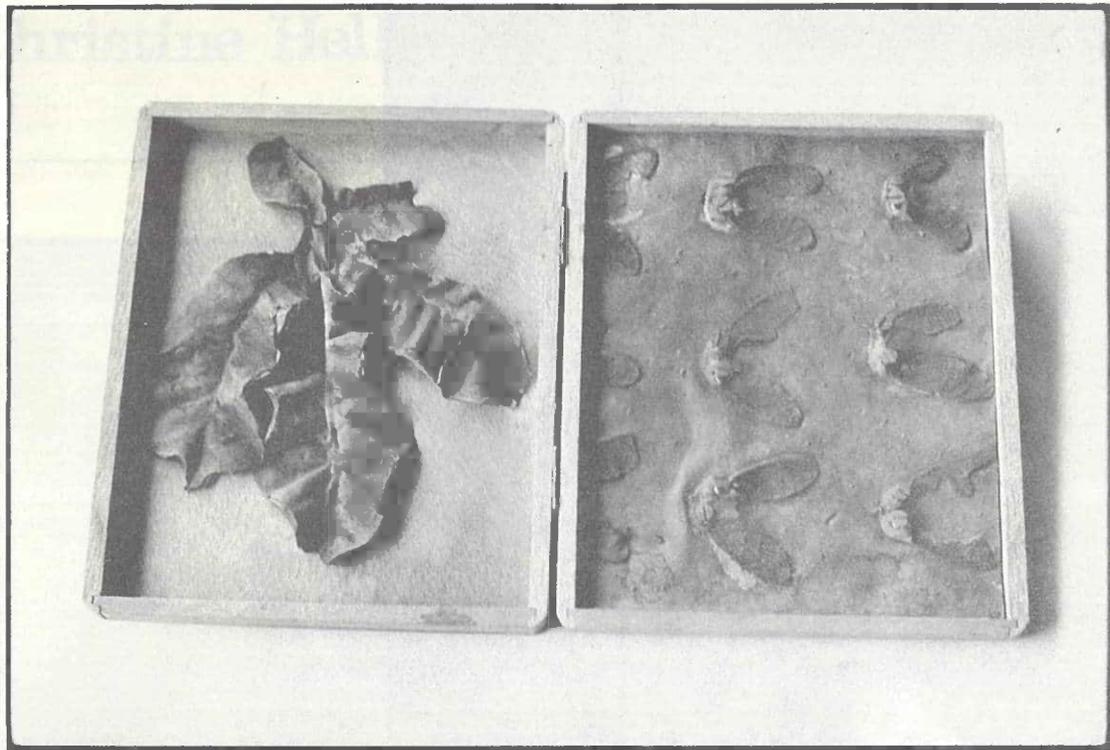
Christine Hellyar



Push & Pluck 1975

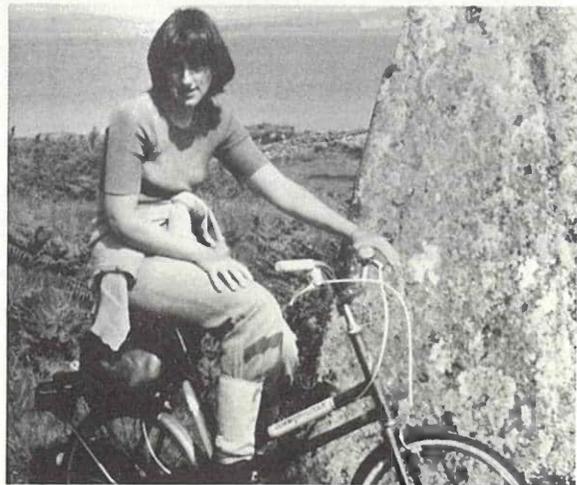


Babylon 1975



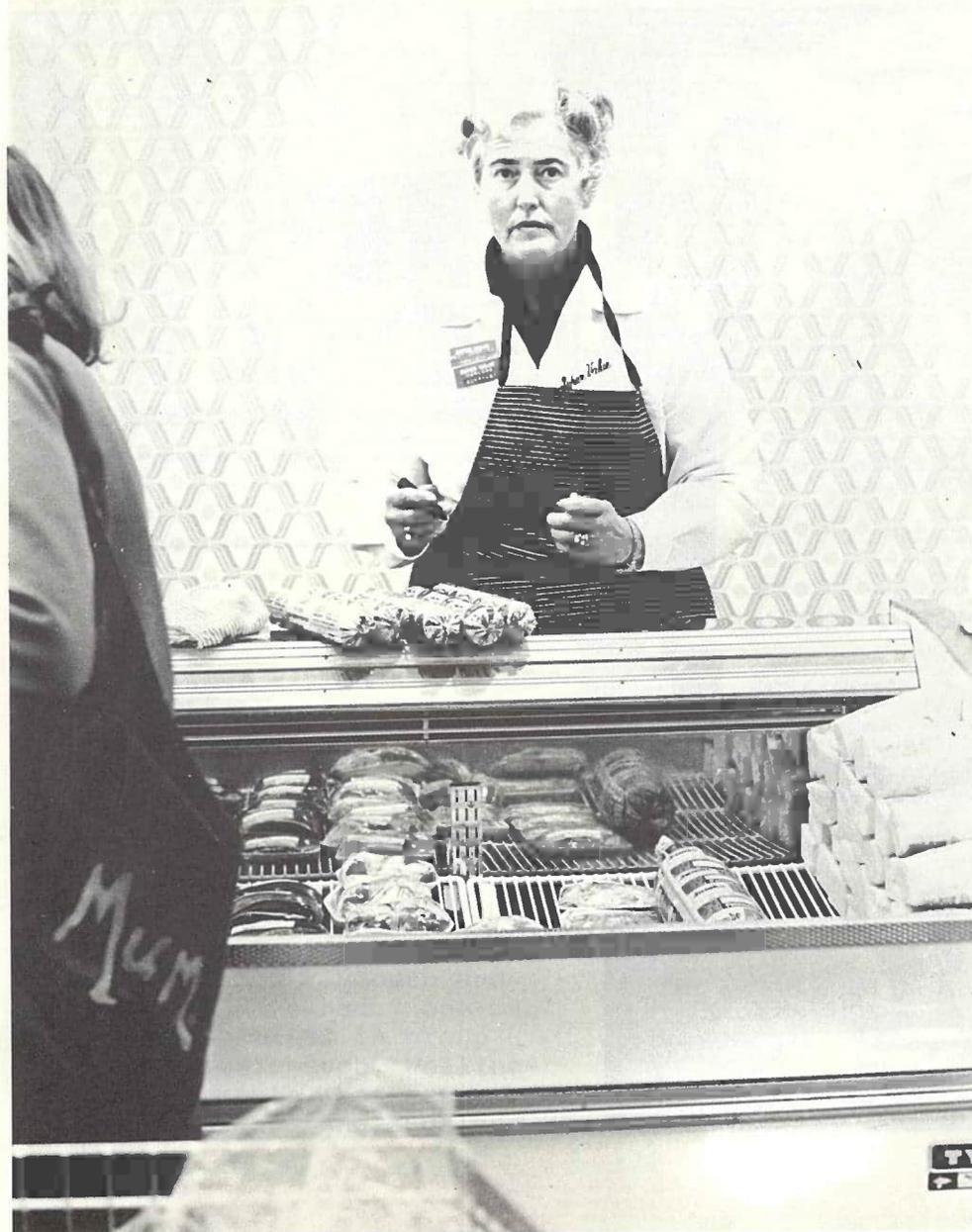
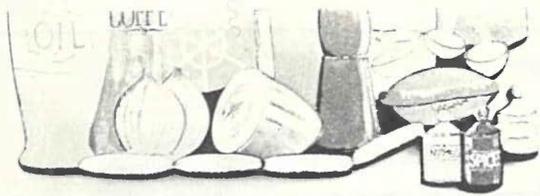
Little Icon 1975

Born 1947 (New Plymouth)
At Elam 1966-69
At Christchurch Teachers
College 1970
Lived in Britain 1974 (mostly
Cornwall)
Lived in Scotland 1977-78
(married during that time)
Usually based in Auckland



Ruth Bruhns: Women and Work





Supermarket Blues

I was born in England and transported to Christchurch at the tender age of 8 years and have been a resident in Christchurch since. My interest in photography is comparatively recent and still very tentative. I am interested in using photography as a medium for social change and to allow people normally ignored by the media a means of expression.



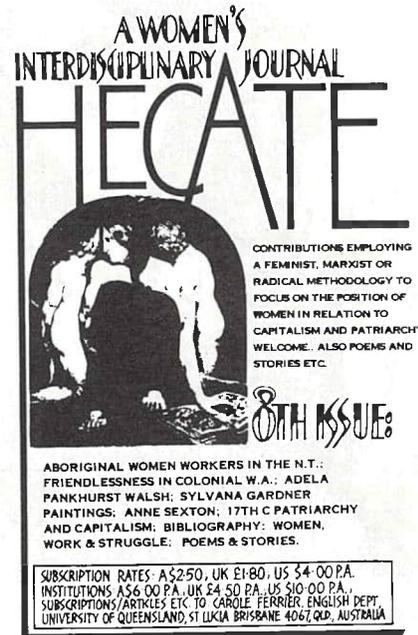
Reviews : Hecate

Now a solidly established publication, Hecate continues to publish solid critical analyses "employing a marxist or radical methodology." The journal mixes present politics, herstory, and creative work, the latter including short stories and poems.

With its high intellectual standard and content Hecate is an invaluable reference source for scholars, particularly Women's Studies researchers. Past issues have presented papers on Janet Frame and Christina Stead; this issue prints a recorded interview with Violette Leduc in which the writer talks of the sources and purpose of her work, its contradictions and liberating marks; and a monograph on Australian writer Katherine Susannah Prichard. Other articles include a questioning view of Comrade Chiang Ch'ing of the Gang of Four, Women Workers and Trade Unions in the 19thC Britain, and a review of recent science fiction by women.

An absorbing interview with two Australian women artists, Rosemary Maclennan and Fiona McDonald, touches on the knotty question of individual and social import, "women's work" and initiative, and its cooption by the art establishment.

Hecate is printed biennially in a clear and attractive format.



HECATE. A Women's Interdisciplinary Journal. Vol. IV No. 1 Feb. 1978. P.O. Box 99, St Lucia, Brisbane, Queensland 4067 A\$1.50.

Heather McPherson

Heresies

Is There A Feminine Aesthetic?

"...the handicaps and the absences are also part of women's history, and perhaps even the greater part, since women did not clomp through history in combat boots, and their traces are fleeting and obscured. To be sure, we do not complain as much today because we have a movement making demands that will change the future."

"...the exclusion of women from the artistic realm could not extinguish their aesthetic needs. These creative impulses, however, were shunted off into the 'pre-aesthetic' realms, where they evaporated under the strain of women's daily routine."

"Is there a feminine aesthetic? certainly there is, if one is talking about aesthetic awareness and modes of sensory perception. Certainly not, if one is talking about an unusual variant of artistic production or about a painstakingly constructed theory of art."

These excerpts from an essay by Silvia Bovenschen introduce the theme of Heresies 4, an American "idea-oriented journal devoted to the examination of art and politics from a feminist perspective." This issue looks at women's traditional arts and among articles on the politics

of aesthetics, the "martyr arts" and historical demands, there are geographic and personal accounts of domestic, decorative and functional arts traditionally women-made. Textiles, ceramics, carving, embroidery - these, the civilising arts, are gathered and recorded within the context of a feminist political analysis. The view ranges from Maori weaving to Western Europe lacemaking to Kongo pottery, validating all such work within its cultural setting and the identities of its makers.

All Heresies magazines are rich and thoughtful explorations of aspects of women's art in western and wider cultures. They are an invaluable resource and stimulus for feminist artists, and, being committed to the process of change, help to bring it.

Heresies. P.O. Box 766, Canal Street Station, New York, N.Y. 10013, U.S.A.

Heather McPherson

Private Bag,
Wellington.

1 February 1979

The Editor,
'Spiral',
Women's Art Magazine,
P.O. Box 21069,
CHRISTCHURCH.

Dear Editors,

We are compiling a dossier on women artists and women artists' works in New Zealand as well as a reference on women's art groups, festivals, etc.

It is planned that when the library is established at the National Art Gallery, the librarian Lindley Turnbull will continue to add to the dossier hence providing a resource/reference centre for women artists and women's art groups.

We would be most grateful if you would forward to us any articles, information and references you have on women's art both in New Zealand and overseas which would be relevant; for example, articles on women's video groups, art festivals, biography and autobiographical notes on women artists, women's painting, ceramics, sculpture, weaving, photography, crafts, prints and drawings, films, etc.

Yours sincerely,

Janice Antill,
(Temporary Researcher)

Kidsarus 2

I.Y.C. Project P.O. Box 9600 Wellington

This project has two aims

To publicise the need for a body of indigenous literature for children which reflects the multicultural nature of New Zealand society, and

To produce picture story books of high quality, in association with established publishers.

What sort of stories do we want?

We are looking for stories children aged 3-8 will enjoy. Fantasy, songs, poetry, historical and contemporary stories, myths and legends all work as picture story books, if written simply, clearly, vividly and rhythmically. We prefer humour and social realism to whimsy, people stories to animal stories. Children seem to like action and dialogue more than description and explanation; it's important to keep in mind the complementary nature of illustrations in a picture story book, and to note the illustrations you envisage throughout a story. We expect manuscripts of about 200-1500 words. Stories in languages other than English are welcome, and will be published with parallel English text. There is no vocabulary limit.

Many imaginative and beautiful picture books are already available to our children. But these come mostly from overseas, and we hope the books we produce will be clearly of New Zealand and the South Pacific, and show that we are a society enriched by

many ethnic groups
a diversity of life styles and experiences
people of all ages
a variety of landscapes (urban, rural, suburban)
historical and mythical tales from many backgrounds

Please send copies only of stories, typed if possible and with a stamped addressed envelope. Please let us know if you'd like to be in touch with a local writing group, too.

Illustrators

We expect some writers to work in collaboration with illustrators already known to them. However, all illustrators will be asked to send three sample spreads to show they can produce illustrations which

are congruent with the text and complement it
contain enough action and movement to interest a child not yet able to read
gently stimulate a child's imagination
show character, not caricature

We'd be grateful if illustrators who'd like to participate in this project (but are not already working with a writer) would send samples of their work, and/or details of where it has been published. Once a story is ready we'll send copies of it to three illustrators whose work we think might suit it. Each illustrator approached will be asked to do three sample spreads for the story, and given a small payment to cover expenses incurred in doing them. We'll then discuss the samples with the writer of the story before choosing the illustrations to be submitted with the text and book design to the publisher.

Already we've had a good response from people we've approached for help, but we need
more stories
more illustrators
more people to try stories with children
more people skilled at helping would-be writers, and institutions prepared to organise and sponsor children's writing groups.

al

P.O. Box 21069 Edgeware Christchurch