

Ageratos...The Art of Carol Taylor

By Shawn Malley (cool dude)

Through to September 28, Gallery Connection is presenting *Ageratos*, an exhibition of painting and collages by Saint John Artist, Carol Taylor. A related exhibition, *Toward Ageratos*, is showing at the UNB Art Centre until October 9.

Carol Taylor's art takes us on a Jungian excursion into primordial mythos, into a past beyond patriarchy to an essentially matriarchical ordering of the world. Her work, dealing almost exclusively with female forms, exudes an atavistic (almost) Blakian intimacy with ancient belief delineated in the material archetype of mother earth — goddess of fertility, life-giver, sustainer, and protector.

In this pictorial search through mythology, Taylor renders a poignant time-transcending statement of triumphal affirmation of woman's strength, resiliency, and sexuality.

Ageratos (meaning "ageless" in Greek) is a collection of Taylor's most recent work. Primarily portraying female fertility figures and primitive goddesses, these pieces represent a flowering of the artist's meditations on the

essential nature of woman, rather than studies of particular women.

Toward Ageratos gives the viewer a chance to explore the development of the artist into the mature vision of *Ageratos*. Roslyn Rosenfeld curator of the Arts Centre, has chronologically arranged Taylor's various periods, proffering the public comprehensive insight into the artist's evolution of style and sensibility from 1975, when she began to paint and draw on a serious basis to the present, with two studies for *Ageratos*.

Discernible in the exhibit are marked variations in style, but Taylor's unwavering thematic focus is woman. Her earliest works, such as "Awakening" and "Beginning", portray women in landscapes of fields and Sylvan streams - in complete harmony with creation itself. Taylor's study progresses to a series of figure - drawings, drawing which evolve into a focus on parts rather than the whole body. A charcoal study of a thigh is part of UNB's own collection.

Her penultimate study, "Nurturing", depicts a series of fertility images, a confident, fecund expression of her philosophy. "These are simple



Four Brides of Silence, from Carol Taylor's AGERATOS Series

forms," says Taylor, "for simple is often the more forceful". Pregnant figures encapsulated in womb like environs of rich ochre and exuberant vermilion create a fluid effect which bespeaks a calm, assured sense of feminine grace and beauty, while simultaneously evoking images of material strength and fecundity.

While Taylor's work has a distinctly mythic overtone (blatantly in "Numura," a pastel figure named after the ancient Babylonian earth goddess who

helped to create the human race from clay), she stresses that she has not surrendered thematically to mythology. Instead, she expresses a philosophy evolved from her own appreciation of the world and her relationship as a woman with it. "I am influenced in subconscious ways," she says "by images which are satisfying to me".

A first glance about the gallery gives one an initial (or perhaps a lasting) impression of a feminist statement. But while Taylor does share in

women's concern for equality, her work is not overtly a politically feminist statement. Taylor says her artistic expressions are "a personal working through of what I am and my influences. Women have influenced me, so have men. My art is a long personal development, and emotional working out of my reactions to the world around me."

For those interested in exploring Carol Taylor's fascinating works, the UNB Art Centre is open weekdays from 10 to 5 and Sunday from 2 to 4, or come to Gallery Connection.

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