

# Shelley Cameron — Art is a thinking process

by Zoe Green  
Brunswickan Staff

Shelley Cameron chose to follow her creative instincts in 1979 when she began her studies at the University of Ottawa.

Explaining why there is a preponderance of images of women in her work Cameron said that she likes using women "because I don't like the conditions in which they are dealt with today— commercial photography is very sexist and treats women as objects rather than as human. I wouldn't describe myself as a feminist though, and I see my art more as a process to encourage people to think, rather than as being a statement."

Cameron uses mixed media "because I don't feel that I have enough years behind me to have settled for one or two. I like experimenting with non-traditional materials... I'm prodding people to accept new things— using one medium would be too stifling and orthodox."

The Brunswickan pointed out that Cameron's frames were sometimes decorated or made out of unusual materials suggesting that she does not

think in terms of pure paint. Cameron said that "I think it's important not to be narrow-minded about art; to avoid establishing boundaries. The frame of *Frigidity* was consciously part of the work— I wouldn't want the painting in another frame...I wanted something as unstandardized as the pictures, and I didn't want anything (like glass) to act as a barrier between the picture and the viewer because in some works the impasto surface is very important."

Cameron told the Brunswickan that some of her works, like *Frenzy* are emotional. "There are feelings behind them all, but I can't really generalize." She also sees photography and painting as working together for her. "I use photography as a finished product but I also use that photographic knowledge to produce paintings. I made one collage out of night photographs and then used that in the process of creating a painting."

Cameron does not see one art form as better than the other and "I don't think we should be snobby about making boundaries for art or even define it. I've been saddened by the narrow-minded com-

ments some of the young people have written in the visitors' book at the show — it seems that they are moulded and set in their ways when they should be open to different experiences."

The length of time Cameron spends on each work varies saying that "some work is very spontaneous, some needs a lot of re-working... I always do a lot of thinking before I put anything onto paper. This can be a little inhibiting at times; the sight of the blank paper or canvas seems terrifying — the first mark scares you to death! At times you develop an idea into a piece as you go along and so you have to abandon the original concept and move on."

"There's a lot of hard work involved in art — if the public realized how much effort goes into the creative process, I think the arts in Canada would have more public support, and politicians wouldn't be so ready to cut arts funding in times of recession. It becomes very obvious in times of economic difficulty that art and culture are just not priorities for funding yet they are crucial to Canadian life and must be kept alive so they can progress — so they can remain a central part of the way we live."



Shelley Cameron and an example of her work

Cameron ended by stressing that artists "should not have to leave our country so we can do well...we ought to be able to be self-confident enough in our community to do well in Canada."

Cameron feels proud of this exhibit of her works and

rightfully so. "I've had a diverse year, with a lot of different pressures on me, and yet I managed to pull it all together."

Students are encouraged to view this exhibit at the UNB Art Centre — Cameron's works will be on display there until September 30th.

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