

Jim Kempkes' political caricatures hilariously reveal the foibles of *Saints and Sinners*

by Sheena Jarvis

Even those of us who aren't political junkies can find something to laugh at in political commentator Jim Kempkes' newest exhibition. *Saints and Sinners*, currently at the Partisan Gallery, is a humorous presentation of political caricature.

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Kempkes, a graduate of York's Fine Arts program, uses cartoons, sculptures and other media to express his views on public figures. "What the sculptures are," he says, "is another outlet for my ornery political views — whatever's bugging me at the moment."

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Saints and Sinners
by Jim Kempkes
Partisan Gallery
until March 29

The exhibition is small, with only about 17 pieces on display. The medium of each varies, from pewter and ceramic to plasticene, which is not considered traditional. "I'm quick and dirty — this isn't like Ming Dynasty or anything," Kempkes said. "The plasticene isn't permanent. But, from a commercial point of view, it's very quick."

The caricatures themselves are very well done, leaving the viewer in no doubt of who is being satirized. The faces and figures of the characters are excellent.

One of the best in the show is a sculpture of Quebec Premier Robert

Bourassa sinking in water entitled "Bou-Bou walks upon the waters of Meech Lake."

Kempkes takes two potshots at Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. The first is part of a series of three, three-dimensional, framed plasticene works that also include federal New Democratic Party leader Audrey McLaughlin as Joan of Arc and Conservative Minister for Interprovincial Affairs Joe Clark as St. George and Parti Quebecois leader Jacques Parizeau as the Dragon.

Commenting on his reasons for portraying Mulroney as St. Sebastian, Kempkes said: "I get the feeling that's the way he sees himself, while most people think he's a jerk."

You don't have to be a political expert for this exhibition to be worth taking a look at. The humour of Mulroney caricatured as an eggplant, or a pewter bust of US President George Bush with a plaque that reads "George the Merciful and compassionate, Conqueror of Iraq, destroyer of cities, protector of the faith, King of Kings, shadow of God on Earth, Skull & Bones — Yale '44" won't be lost on anyone.



Brian Mulroney portrays St. Sebastian in a satire by York visual arts graduate Jim Kempkes. Seventeen of the artist's satirical barbs, in a variety of media, will be on display at the Partisan Gallery until March 29.

Images of vulnerability, loneliness

by Gina Hanlon

On the inner wall of the Student Centre Arts Gallery, there hangs a detailed pencil portrait of the artist, Tracy Rain, as a child. It is a picture perhaps taken by a parent. This is a "good girl," perched doll-like on a couch, in a traditional dress. The picture is framed in chicken wire over a pink wooden frame. It is a portrait my grandmother would approve of, missing the satirical implications.

It may be the only piece of work Rain's relatives feel comfortable with, judging from her comment "book" (a box holding stiff hand-made papers). Although the comments of fellow artsies are glowing, family members mix praise with queasy recognition of the conflict inherent in Rain's work: states of vulnerability, loneliness and depression explored through the vortex of the autobiographical female form.

Transparent life-size statues made of hexagonal chicken wire sit or crouch against a backdrop of crayoned paper banners which externalize the emotions of the figures through symbolic use of color and line. Crayoned notes on paper lay on the floor before the figures, turned towards the viewer. The paper is handmade by the artist out of old letters. The crayoning is a ragged print suggestive of childhood.

In one piece, a mesh figure slumps on the ground, legs apart, against a background of red paper as the crayoned notes complain of exhaustion: "slowly the blood/drains from my/body/drop by/drop."

Rain says she finds some of the statements in the comments book disturbing. Explicit, even microscopic detailing of the naked female form as object has been acceptable in Western 'male-stream' art since the fifteenth century, and loose, expressionistic representative work has also been common since the late nineteenth century.

So what is so controversial about Rain's work? Because here, the autobiographical, commenting artist's voice is united with the female body.

Durer represented himself as Christ in his interpretation of the autobiographical artist as masculine genius. Women, conversely, have traditionally

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Experimental Arts group show
Tracy Rain (contributing artist)
IDA Gallery
until March 20

been represented as clay, matter, and body. This has held true not only within the tradition of the female nude, but by trends within Western representation of the female nude as well; including the cropping or blurring of the head, closed eyes and recumbent postures which emphasize the weight of gravity on the body.

This representation is in Rain's work as well, but conflicts with the artist's self-awareness. Mesh wire is typically used for imprisoning small animals, for keeping things or people out or in. In another work about a chrysalis, the female body — or the outer shell of the female body seen by others — is shattered as the soul escapes. Shining past the broken shards onto an open egg-like plaster shape, are images of a female body, again presumably taken by the subject looking down at herself.

These stills form the base for Rain's "death masks" superimposed on the vagina or lower belly. Some of the masks are fully-formed wax imitations of the face, while others are the coarse external plaster shell. The smooth egg like wax death masks mimic, perhaps accidentally, the uterus.

Underneath a note states categorically: "it's not my skin you know/it really isn't/not mine/skin that is."

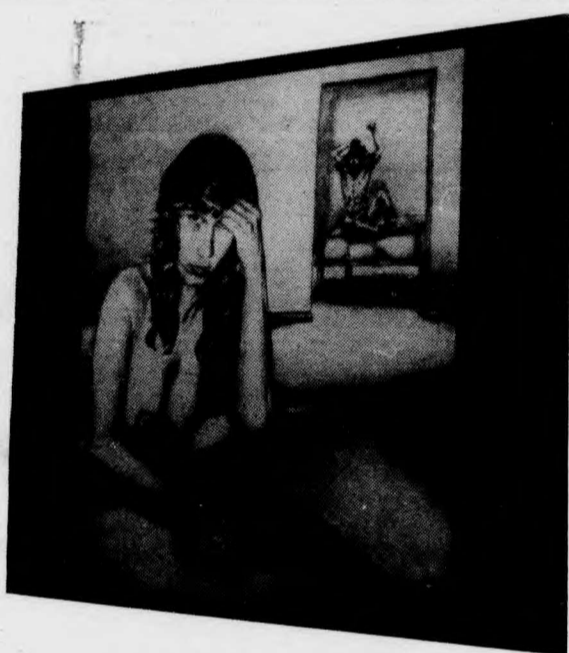
Rain's family is right to be troubled by the pain and body alienation in her work. The pain is social; the ability to express this pain so coherently, however, is unique and personal.

Rain held a one-woman show at the Student Centre Arts Gallery March 10-14; one of her pieces will be in the Experimental Arts group show, which runs March 16-20. There will be an opening night party in Room 338 of the Fine Arts Hangar, which is also the Video room for the show.

Winters work



This work appears in *By All Means Painted*, an exhibition of paintings by York students Verna Linney and Petra Nyendick showing at the Winters College Gallery until Friday, March 20. • photo by Alek Shama



Arts exhibition at Stong

The charcoal drawings of Nick Trendyle and Mark Tumber will be exhibited in the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery (Stong College) until Friday, March 20. The compositions are interesting, and the command of form impressive. • photo by Alek Shama

