

arts

SUB Art Gallery now in stitches

By Michaleen Marte

If you take a visit to the SU Art Gallery you might find some quilting ideas that would boggle your Grandmother's mind, but it may be the case that you are the one who will be amazed. The exhibition now showing is evidence of what can happen when common fabric and threads fall into the hands of innovative minds.

The works of Jane Thomas and Carole Sabiston are shown together for obvious reasons. For one, both make use of the same materials in their work. For another, both are equally imaginative in the means that they take to explore various themes. Scraps of bed blankets, colorful threads, fake fur, ribbons, twine all are incorporated into the most marvelous of things.

Apparently Ms. Thomas has an admiration for Carole Sabiston and attempted to imitate her work. It was not until the two were exhibited together that Jane had a chance to meet her in person.

The exhibition is a balanced one, although I would tend to take more time with the work of Jane Thomas. The material that she has used is only a physical display of a wealth of ideas. *Homage to Lodgepole* and *40 Mile Creek* are abstracted landscapes where texture is the virtue. *Mother's Sun Flowers Are Nice*, *Enlistment, Action, Returned*, *Man with a Golden Heart* are examples of Thomas' unique shadow boxes. Each one has a specific theme indicated by a figure and verse stitched into plush forms, all encased in a glass box. *Man with a Golden Heart* tells of a virtuous citizen of the Dirty Thirties, Charlie Murphy. His elegy appears on the satin hearts that surround him, ending with — "the night of his wake the sky was pink, orange, yellow golden."



It is apparent that Thomas enjoys the depiction of bygone days. This is continued in the collection of suspended pillows, which is mirrored by the enigmatic *Pattern with Space and Time*. They are separate dreams but in entirety, whisper songs of sweet, sweet nostalgia.

Thomas' works reflect people and events that are close to home. *A Tribute to Alberta Hutterites* is one impressive example. Perhaps the most involved and fascinating work is *Harambee*. It is composed of 48 photo images of the athletes and visitors to Edmonton's summer event, the Commonwealth Games. This is the result of Thomas' contribution to the '78 Games Visual Arts Project. From the people that were photographed Thomas requested a piece of cloth no larger than 3" by 3", such as in the case of the Gibraltar cyclist who sent fabric "from my shirt that I wear for work in the docks." Thomas has included the cubes of cloth with the photo images and immortalized them in pillows. On viewing this collection take notice of the captions stitched in bright threads. They range from comments of a personal nature to the discussion of topical issues. Under Berlings Kuanda of Zambia is "tsk tsk". As one might easily guess this refers to the embarrassing fate of his sculpture *Earth and Sky* in Edmonton.

Next to Thomas is Sabiston, who is no less

intriguing. *Woman In Time - Bodyscape* and *Figuring Softly* are all rich tapestries, crests of against land. Upon entering the gallery you will see the dramatic *Woman in Time*. It is composed of a woman being catapulted into the air above a crowd of males. Interpretations to this are open.

Extending into the next room is *Carole Love*, which seems to declare that our paraphernalia, mirrors, bits of letters, clothes labels—describe life. *Japan Journey* is a divided mural using a simplified approach to oriental form. Sabiston demonstrates her mastery of thread in *My Sea*, which is a four-section globe of the year. *Sun* radiates from the opposite wall. One is inclined to agree that it is the happiest piece of the exhibition—courtesy of the Grade 3 class of Green School. *Colorchuting Through a Year* is filled with enormous kaleidoscopic parachute that has fallen from the backroom. It might be described as a web of color spectrum, a calendar of events—where the universal becomes the universal. Indeed it is all spelt out in "Sun, spin, cycle, life."

The companion exhibition of Jane Thomas and Carole Sabiston runs until March 5. I would encourage everyone to take a stroll though before it closes. I bet that your delight and curiosity will make it a quick stroll but a lingering one.

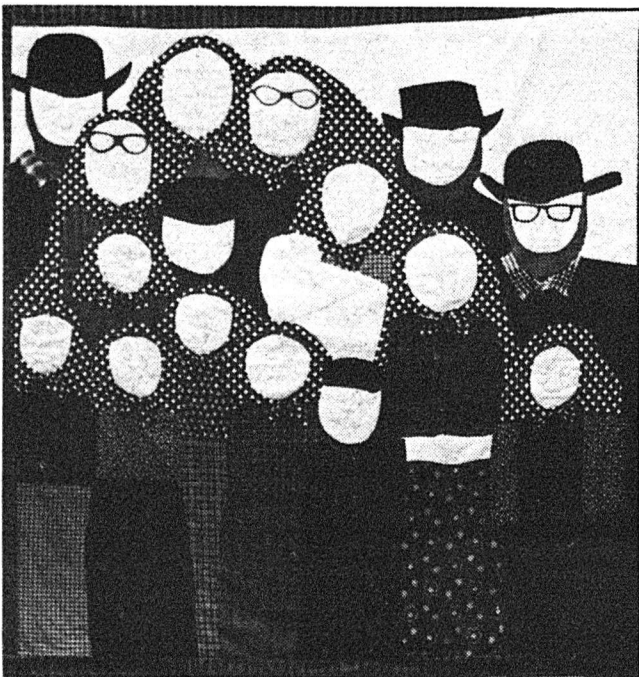


Photo Shirley Glew

Tom Waits: still waiting with the blues

Tom Waits
"Blue Valentine"

Record review by Rick Dembicki

At a time when government officials are in a clamor over increasing union demands for more civic holidays, Tom Waits has released his newest album — *Blue Valentine*. It is a holiday special, with songs about anniversaries, Christmas time, Fourth of July celebrations, and of course, Valentine's Day. But Waits fans know better than to expect a gala event. The LP is rudely depressing, spinning ten little tales of woe that are set in what are generally festive occasions, but which in *Blue Valentine* bear no affinity to that fact.

Listen to Waits. His gravelly voiced, "Louis Armstrong" style of singing sends most first-time listeners to the reject button, after which they either put on some "real" Louis Armstrong, instead of this cheap white upper middle class imitation, or go for Bruce Springsteen. Sure, his voice isn't a whole lot different, but at least his stuff "rocks". Well, if I may have a few moments, perhaps I can explain why both alternatives are wrong.

The old "judging a book by its cover" syndrome has never been more evident than with Tom Waits. After all, what could be more successful at turning off rock fans than the slow-paced effort of some pilled-up dude, trying to spill out his story about some hooker in Minneapolis? Or the fact that background harmonies,



and familiar chorus refrains are almost nonexistent? That's usually enough to banish any release into that heap of recordings that are too expensive to throw out (even if it was only \$1.49 at Kelly's), but hideous enough to be kept separate from the regular material. Those are all valid points, but *Blue Valentine* does

have a saving grace. After hearing ten stories of some people's personal hell, life at the unit doesn't really seem so bad. I mean, it's so easy to wander around, bitching about this and that — it's good to hear some really depressing stuff once in a while — just to bring us back to Earth. Waits is certainly successful at that, a passage from "Kew Avenue" reading: *I got half a pack of lucky strikes come along with me/lets fill our pockets with macadamia nuts/then go over to bobby gons/and jump off the roof*. Hardly typical lyrics for the hit parade's top ten. And the sleazy accompaniment by Da Willie Gongga gives an impression that one is in a smoky, but near empty lounge at two o'clock in the morning. Anyways, it has a lasting impression than a night out at the Park.

In fact, Waits has captured the essence of the "Saturday Night" theme album, and rendered a similar effort here on *Blue Valentine*. Expect a slow-paced and heavy bass and drums. The electric guitar is electric, all right, but it sounds like its operator has melted onto the floor. And the piano, well, I've heard that already. It is a nice record, because one feels better after listening to it. Awareness of someone else's style, and some interesting methods for coping with the ways of the world. WEA distributes *Blue Valentine* and its overall production quality is quite good. Definitely worth a try.