

## arts

# Artist depicts emotions deeper than skin

by Emily Macnaughton

Artist Andrea Ward is ushering the present into the rooms of women's past. *Memories in Skin*, the third work in her series *Maintenance of the Gynaecium*, affirms a present-day context while bending the constraints of time and space, and with this the imagination of the viewer.

**Maintenance of the Gynaecium: Memories in Skin and Hairstories**  
Andrea Ward  
St. Mary's Art Gallery  
September 8th to October 17th

*Memories in Skin* explores five women's experiences with cosmetic surgery. The exploration has two routes. A gauzy curtain, encircling five television sets in the centre of the gallery, intrigues the visitor first. The screens' static illuminates the chiffon, the glow draws us into the 'operating theatre'. After the theatre, there's the picture/sculpture gallery.

There are rooms within rooms. The TV monitors tell the weight of the tenant's story. The paintings and sculptures retell their story through symbols.

"I wanted to have a diversity of women to talk about their experiences," says Ward. "I advertised for interviews everywhere, but not many peo-

ple were willing to come forward." The handful of interviewees fortunately represent a wide range of experience.

From Veronica, a transsexual who still can't consider herself a "real woman", to Elizabeth, who hoped to "erase what she'd been through emotionally" with a face lift, the interviews are brief but compelling. The video camera focuses on the subject in their home environments, the expressive movements of their hands, their surgery scars. The languid pace of the shots and bedtime darkness of the gallery hypnotize the visitors. It transports them into the world of the mind.

"It was a collaborative effort," says Ward. "I made the choice in terms of presentation, but the women were in control of how they were represented. I asked them to think of images that would represent their experience and these images are what were used in the paintings and sculptures."

The imagery may be one of the shortcomings of the exhibit. For those with only a seven-minute interview's worth of insight into the subject's personal life, the symbolism seems too opaque to penetrate. Messages are made less accessible by the secretive element of the collaboration.

The more accessible side of Andrea Ward's work emerges in the adjoining exhibit, *Hairstories*. Compared to the

unsettling intimacy of *Memories in Skin*, *Hairstories* is fun. The exhibit includes a gallery of text from interviews and fanciful hair mementos framed in mahogany and two sets of mahogany dressers filled with more frames.

The dressers are more cooperative than the TV monitors' temperamental timers, and the framed stories delight the reader. One woman tells about why she dyes her hair red: "I've always thought of people with a shock of red hair as invincible. I just wish mine was natural". One woman describes her hairdo as "the first physical statement I ever made about myself".

"Both *Memories in Skin* and *Hairstories* are attempts to show the huge and complicated way our physical appearance affects our personality," says Ward. However the familiarity of the latter exhibit's subject provokes more discussion on the issue once the visitor leaves the gallery. We know all about our hair. We're willing to self-indulgently discuss its affect on our lives.

The plastic surgery space in Andrea Ward's gynaecium felt like alien territory. The paintings and sculptures were like enigmas left behind by a previous tenant. But still, I'm was eager to sift through contents of the rooms, intrigued by what I found and what wasn't told.

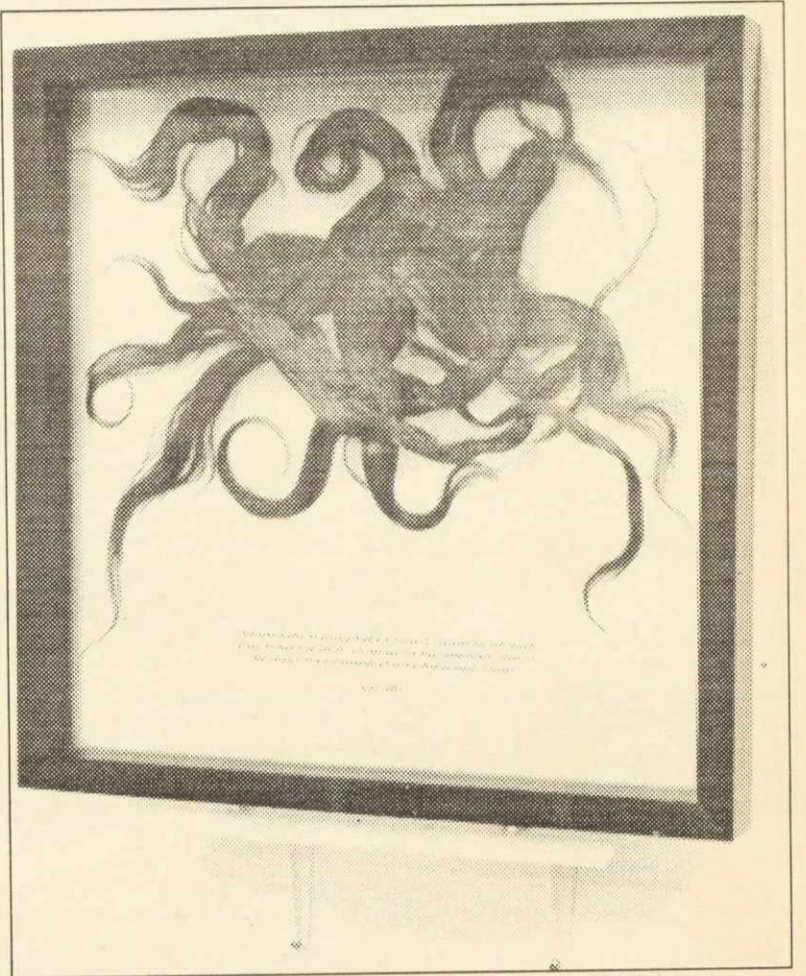


PHOTO: FRANCES E. S. ISAACS

## Cole back home

by Richard Lim

The Holly Cole Trio played its first gig six years ago at the Stage Door Café in Toronto. The group, comprised of vocalist Holly Cole, pianist Aaron Davis and string bassist David Piltch, was booked for six nights. The first night drew an audience of around 20 people, "mostly my friends," Cole recalls.

This past year, the Holly Cole Trio has played to capacity crowds across Canada, as well as four sold-out shows in Tokyo. That's right — Tokyo, Japan. The same country which bought over 100,000 copies of the trio's second album, *Blame It On My Youth*.

This summer was actually the trio's second visit to Japan. Last July, the group at least made it to their hotel before being surrounded by autograph-seekers, but this time they were met at the airport as well.

"I don't know how they find out which hotel," Cole comments, displaying an attitude very unlike other bands whose popularity might lead them to expect such receptions. The trio's approach has always been at a low-key, "grassroots level", says Cole, and consequently they were surprised by, and are still not used to, their sudden success overseas which culminated with Japan's Gold Disk Awards for Best Jazz Album and Best New Artist.

Reflecting on the group's experience in Japan, Cole notes that the notorious Japanese work ethic is as intense as ever.

In two trips to Tokyo, "I've seen mostly the inside of the EMI-Toshiba building," she laughs, explaining that her daily schedule often entailed ten or eleven interviews, doing promotion from 9 am until 9 pm. Even when travelling from one part of Tokyo to another, most of her impressions are based on what she is driven past, as there is little time given to pause for breath. She does expect to see more of the culture and people in the trio's future visits.

In contrast to the Japanese experience, the inroads made by the Holly

Cole Trio into the US market came about in a more gradual manner than was the case in Canada.

"You have to get to the main of your audience," Cole says, noting that the trio's initial appeal in Canada and the US was largely the university and young professional audiences. Campus and jazz radio in the US embraced the trio quickly, while mainstream radio airplay only came about recently, with the release of the band's third album, *Don't Smoke in Bed*.

Many Canadian bands will modify their sound to gain an audience in the US, and many Canadian entertainers will move to the US to make it 'big', but the Holly Cole Trio did neither and still made a big noise commercially and critically, as evidenced by their well-received concerts in Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and New York City in 1992.

Yet despite the trio's success both across the border and across the Pacific, Cole still finds herself most at home in Canada, and all of her family ties are in places one might call 'smaller-town Canada'. Her father lives in Winnipeg, and one of the first things she said in her interview with the *Gazette* was, "I just got off the phone with my Mom in Fredericton."

And although business requires Cole to operate largely out of Toronto, Los Angeles and New York City, Nova Scotia is still her sanctuary-of-choice. She tries to get back to her home province every summer, just to "throw sticks with my dog, hang out [and] go swimming". With her relatives on the north shore, Cole does the "earthy" things, like going clamming with her grandmother and riding in the tractor with her grandfather. The more urban and political side of her family includes provincial NDP leader Alexa McDonough, Cole's second cousin.

As for her hometown of Halifax, Cole says, "I love playing there... it's always great to come back and see my family and my friends."

The Holly Cole Trio performs at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium at 8 pm on Sunday, September 19.

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