

Juror's Statement

"Jurying is a painful process, almost as much so for the juror as for the juried. After the initial selections, the remaining decision can be really hard to make. I always choose too many, so this show will be crowded. I miss slides, which were bad enough as stand-ins for a direct experience. The digital format is even less fair to much work, but there is no other choice today for national competitions. That said, I also enjoyed reviewing such a vastly varied group of works demonstrating that feminist art and ideas are alive and well.

Interestingly these works radiate not much further from the center than they did in the early 1970s. There is more polish and perhaps less passion than in the wild and woolly early days of the Women's Art Movement. But just because some of these images have become familiar over the years, does not, alas, mean that they are any less relevant. At the level of social justice, a huge amount of progress has been made and a huge amount of progress remains to be made.

Of course every jurying process is immensely personal, and because of my own work, I tend to select pieces dealing fairly directly with content. A number of artists courageously confronted child abuse and domestic violence, cultural differences, family traumas. I was struck by a certain melancholy, balanced by an assertive independence and a welcome sense of humor. Another thread, so to speak, was the number of pieces on clothing, specifically dresses. How many of us wear dresses on a regular basis? Not me, for sure. Yet these dresses seem to represent fantasies. They are for little girls and sexy sirens, representing our childhoods (happy and unhappy) and the dreams of glamour and success that remain intertwined in the female image, often seen through a lens of irony or disillusion.

Given the fact that so many of the leading eco-artists are women, there were fewer images than I had hoped for dealing with environmental and political issues, which affect us as women as much as more intimate issues. (I've always agreed that the personal is political, but the political is also personal.) Overt Lesbian images also seem to have fallen by the wayside since the 1970s, despite the fact that Queer theory has grandly expanded that field.

I was given, of course, no names and no information whatsoever about the artists, so I have to hope that I've included some younger women whose feminism (or not) can be expressed in ways less visible to me in my own seventies. Not surprisingly, the videos were less reminiscent of feminist classics; this is a medium that has come into its own more recently. Nor was there any way for me to tell if any of the art selected was collaborative, a process I consider deeply feminist, brought home in the recent debut of *The Heretics* -- a film on the Heresies Collective, which provided many of my own epiphanies, a major inspiration to risk more, to support rather than to compete with other women, and to respect the power of more than one.

-Lucy R. Lippard