

What's ON — At the galleries

Emotional quality irresistible

Twin bill shows connect on individual feelings

Framed in theory, but occupied with reality, the twin bill now showing at Latitude 53 Gallery has an irresistible emotional quality.

That's because there are feelings within these two quite different shows that connect on the most obvious of personal levels.

And they exert a staying power long after the individual images have all but faded from memory.

Simon Glass and Janet Jones are Toronto artists who explore the territory of self-portraiture.

Trick not new

There's nothing new about artists taking advantage of the handiest, possible model — themselves.

The gaze of the old and disappointed Rembrandt still reveals new truths about how the master of shadow really saw himself.

Velazquez was even more directly cheeky, painting himself right into the front of a large canvas of the Spanish royal family.

And the *pale, priestly* head of Andy Warhol is one of the most recognizable of our times, as much from his art-making as from his image factory.

So while styles and materials have definitely changed, artists haven't.

They are still struggling with how and where to fit themselves into the bigger picture, or even into their own small corner of the world.



Elizabeth
Beauchamp

Visual Arts

And because it's something we can all identify with, we respond.

Simon Glass's face is never a presence in his photographs because he's after a universal image.

To that end and using simple props, he works with symbol, ritual, mystery and riddle.

Only his torso appears and reappears, constantly transforming while never really changing at all, getting closer and closer to the space between the conscious and the unconscious.

Because he shows only the part of his body that is associated with the physical sensation of feeling, his work is both visceral and universal.

In his beautifully composed and lit photos, Glass captures, without uttering a word, something that is essential to being human.

Janet Jones calls her exhibition *On Shifting Ground*.

These six paintings, each with a floor piece in steel, taken together challenge the popular, romantic ideal of woman as earth goddess.

Examining and questioning the messages throughout art history led Jones to conclude that women have usually been portrayed apart from males, alone or with other women, nude and exposed for the viewing pleasure of men.

The modern opposition of this usually sees women in art forced to take on "false clichés of masculinity" in order to participate in culture.

Politics within the art world are hardly different than those in the rest of modern life after all.

New alternative

Yet Jones offers a third, more complex alternative.

One both beautiful and disturbing.

In her paintings, a shadowy, shimmering woman seems to be tumbling through nature.

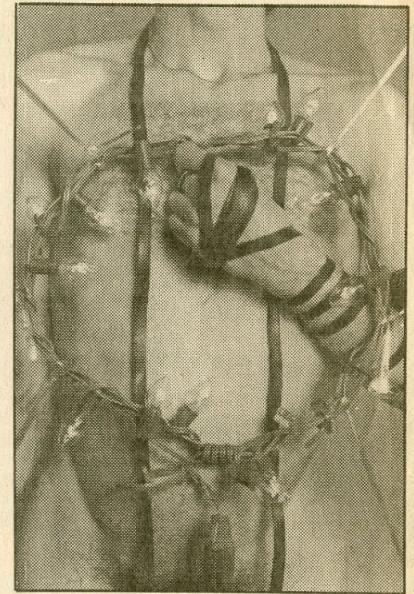
She's inside, but also separated from the natural environment.

At the floor beneath each work is a piece of hard steel shaped like a smaller painting.

Etched into its surface is the imprint of the woman's body as it would look if she suddenly bounded right out of the painting — and out of nature.

With this work, Jones suggests a dynamic process where women shift back and forth between nature and culture.

Neither completely sensual nor totally cerebral, Jones finally inserts herself into the tradition of painting in a way that reflects the



Simon Glass

Untitled self-portrait

post-modern dynamics of real life for women.

Both of these shows are worth more than one extended visit.

They manage to be visually rich without retracting from today's bigger concerns. They never hide inside their formal elegance.

Instead, the art proves to be a worthy vehicle for opening up a dialogue that starts to express our place as people in the complex scheme of things.

Both shows run until April 25.