

# Female aesthetic topic of chat

By **CONNIE BREDDING**  
Staff Writer

The general consensus given by participants in Wednesday's Women In The Arts Fireside Chat was that there does seem to be a female aesthetic. Some of the panel agreed more readily than others, and only one member opposed the idea.

While poets Carolyn Kizer and Diane Wakoski wished to establish a somewhat neutral position, playwright Myrna Lamb and artist Jackie McElroy strongly agreed to the validity of female aesthetics. Author Silvia Wilkinson was the only participant who disagreed. Suzanne Bennett, assistant professor of theatre arts, was the moderator.

When asked if she considered her work uniquely female, Ms. Kizer said, "My work has to be female because I am. But as far as the female aesthetic is concerned, I'll plead the devil's advocate. I don't believe in it, but this is not to say that there isn't one."

Ms. Kizer said that the female aesthetic was one that has been defined by men, adding, "which is not to say women haven't had their part in defining it, because a lot of women have consolidated and a lot of women have bought it. This is in regard to our alleged superior intuition, our alleged superior ability to nurture—to give suck—our alleged superiority at ironing. In general I think this is what is thought of. Female aesthetics is the product of the limitations of our situation, and we have far too often tried to make virtues of these limitations and to take pride in them when we should have tried to overcome them."

About being a woman in the arts, Ms. Kizer said, "I think there are a couple of advantages that women have as artists which are the product of the role that they have been forced to play. It's an interesting question as to whether in the new roles we are learning we may not lose something." Ms. Kizer mentioned that women have always had the role of by-standers, never really being involved in the mainstream of life and because of this aesthetic distance, they have probably seen some things more clearly.

While agreeing with Ms. Kizer's statements, Ms. Wakoski added, "I hate the idea of anybody reading my poetry just because I'm a woman and not because I'm a poet."

"Poetry is a very different art than almost all of the others," said Ms. Wakoski. "It's a smaller art and in some ways it's a bigger art because people respond to poetry in an extremely personal way that they don't respond to any other kind of art."

## Lamb on Aesthetics

Feminist Myrna Lamb viewed the question of female aesthetics as a complicated one. Ms. Lamb said, "I am a woman, defined by input, in every sense of the word!" She further stated, "The highest compliment that I could ever get in school was when the teacher would read my work and people would think it was written by a man. I was thrilled about that. That gives you an idea where I was twenty years ago. I don't feel that way today; I know that I am a mutilated creature because I am a woman. I think that my writing is a product of that mutilation. Out of mutilation and chaos comes some kind of art. I would hope

that someday there would be no female aesthetic, but today that's what we're dealing with."

Jackie McElroy agreed with Ms. Lamb saying, "It's something that I feel as an artist. I feel that there's a kind of critical judgement used about women's work. There's an assumption that there is a female aesthetic, but maybe that's something that has to be dealt with more than just the existence of it as a fact. If somebody believes it's there, then it's something you have to handle."

When asked if there was a difference between men and women's art, Ms. McElroy said, "If you are prepared to assume that women's art is different than men's, then you will see that. I don't think that if you saw objects under circumstances where you didn't know the sex of the artist that you could make that distinction." She further said, "I'm resentful of people who assume that the art of women will somehow have something to do with flowers and children. It doesn't! That's not part of my experience and that's not the part of the experience of a lot of women, and even if it is, it's not the central thing."

Sylvia Wilkinson disagreed with the idea of female aesthetics. "I feel that my success is not because I'm a woman, but in spite of it," she said. "My personal struggle is always second hand to my work. As far as I'm concerned, I would almost have to answer 'no' to the question of female aesthetics." Ms. Wilkinson talked about women in literature, saying, "I write about oppressed women, but I am not oppressed."

After discussing the question of female aesthetics, the panel turned to other topics. Their frequent digressions almost made for some communication break-downs, but nearly everything concerned the role of women in the artistic society. Myrna Lamb said of the male-female role situation, "The credibility in my time other than a woman being anything other than a wife and mother was extremely difficult. The pressures on the female creature as far as her future was concerned was entirely on the ordinary, on the make-shift. One did not have grandiose ambitions."

"I am writing out of the sense of oppression," said Ms. Lamb, "long years of oppression in

which I defined myself in sexual roles." Ms. Lamb discussed women's liberation saying, "It wasn't the women's movement per se that gave me courage, but if it hadn't of been for the feminist movement I would not be a produced and published playwright." "My fantasies are gone," she added, "I'm a committed feminist."

Carolyn Kizer summed up her attitude of the role playing by saying, "I was afraid to write about certain subjects because I was afraid of what people would think. Now I don't care if people think I'm a nice woman or not."

By the end of the discussion, most of the spontaneity was lost and the question of female aesthetics was dropped. As Ms. Lamb put it, "I feel like I'm supposed to be fighting something, and I don't know what it is."

**Letters to the Editor of the Dakota Student should be typed, double-spaced and submitted by 1 p.m. one day before day of publication. Letters should be kept to minimum length.**

# Women in the arts



Loyce Houlten



Sylvia Wilkinson

# The Dakota Student

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Diane Wakowski



Lois McGuire, Mryna Lamb and Carolyn Kizer

# Panel views women's art problems

By CAROL SWENSEN  
Staff Writer

As most of us are aware, UND hosted this past week a "Women in the Arts Festival." This festival was designed to tune in the campus and community to some of the very fine women artists among us and also to display some of their works.

Included in the agenda were noon Fireside Chats held almost daily. This article will deal specifically with Tuesday's panel which discussed the topic, "Problems Facing Women in the Arts." Panel members include Diane Wakowski, poet; Pauline Oliveras, composer; Loyce Houlten, choreographer; Crystal Miller; Marilyn Peterson, UND dance master; and Linda Brown student.

The discussion opened with Diane Wakowski saying that she as a poet never had any problems in her field because she was a woman. Diane felt that sex is not the major problem in the arts but rather "the artist" has a hard time making it in the arts.

Loyce Houlten contested her statement by saying that she as

a choreographer has had it rough because she is a woman. People didn't take her involvement in her profession seriously. For instance, the standard introduction she was subjected to: "this is Loyce Houlten, mother of four, wife of Dr. Houlten." Why not: this is Loyce Houlten, choreographer?"

It was pointed out that women artists usually were forced to sign only their first initial with their last name to their paintings thus preventing sex from becoming a deterring factor in gaining an appreciative audience for their works. Jackie McElroy, an audience participant working on her Ph.D. in art, cited that the instances of a woman being reviewed in an art magazine were 5 to 1 in favor of men and lines per article 90 to 1, also in favor of men.

Wakowski once again took a stand on her behalf that women in the arts really don't have it that bad. However, she felt that women in technology was another story and confirmed Pauline Oliveras's comment that,

"men are sitting on technology."

There was some discussion as to the difficulty of obtaining grants for further study and endeavor in their chosen areas. Once again the split appeared. Some felt their difficulty stemmed from their being women and the opposing view held that any artist faces this problem.

It seemed to become, more of a matter of personal experience than an objective outlook on the situation as it stands today. Surely problems do face women in the arts, and problems face men in the arts. The discussion revealed some of these problems but was not very conclusive concerning whether women in the arts have been passed by solely on the basis of their sex or on the basis of their work meriting attention.

## Dance proceeds go to M.D. Fund

About 40 couples will dance in a marathon at UND, March 16-18, seeking financial pledges for their participation. Proceeds from the marathon, titled "A Dance for Those Who Can't," will go to a fund to fight muscular dystrophy.

Area bands have volunteered to provide music for the entire 52 hours of the marathon, and local merchants have agreed to provide food for the contestants. The dance schedule includes rest periods at set intervals throughout the marathon and two four-hour breaks.

The couple left dancing after the 52 hours who has the most pledges will be the marathon winners. A special phone line will be set up to accept pledges during the marathon.

The marathon is sponsored by Panhellenic, a representative council of the eight social sororities on the UND campus and the Interfraternity Council, a representative group of the 13 UND social fraternities.

## Student art work wins purchase awards

Eight purchase awards totaling \$500 were made at the second annual juried exhibition of student art work in February at the University of North Dakota, according to Laurel Reuter, University art gallery director.

The awards were made by the juror, Tom Steger, a former UND art instructor now teaching at the Chicago Art Institute.

Award winners were: Bismarck, Keith Berg; Grand Forks, James Hendrickx, Peter Lockrem, Larry Nygaard, Peter Peebles, and Dennis Sorenson; Minot, Gerald Timmrick; and Rugby, John Thompson.

The paintings and prints which won awards will be added to the art gallery's developing permanent collection.

Other students, whose works were selected for the exhibit from the 128 pieces submitted were: Charleston, W. Va., Stephen Cockrille; Devils Lake, Judy Gerrells and Wayne Miller; East Grand Forks, Peggy Sundin; Grand Forks, Linda Brown, Gail Farmer, Lee Gangelhoff, Janice Hendrickx, Robert Jankel, William Lubitz, Jill Ruzicka, Debe Strausbough and Jon Swenson; Hallock, Minn., Denise Norling; Minot, Claudia Berg and Elizabeth Eaton; Oslo, Minn., Doris Hutton; Rolla, James Disrud; and Wilmington, Del., Michael Carlis.

## Whitlock album a see-saw; more Raw than Velvet

By JAMES W. YORK  
Staff Writer

"Raw Velvet" by Bobby Whitlock has its ups and downs. Unfortunately, they're mostly downs. It is definitely not material of the calibre I'd expect from one of Eric Clapton's partners-in-music.

The album is divided into two parts; side one labeled "Raw," and side two labeled "Velvet." Rather aptly named, as "Raw" consists of six hard-driving loud songs while "Velvet" is the softer, more easy-going group of tracks. There are also two lists of credits, one for each side.

The credits on "Raw" are, except for Whitlock on rhythm guitar and vocals, just some rather strange-looking symbols for lead, bass and drums. If they aren't the same musicians as on the "Velvet" side, I'd feel pretty safe in naming Eric Clapton as the lead guitarist on this side. At least, it certainly sounds a lot like him.

"Raw" begins with "Tell the Truth," a faster version of the

Clapton-Whitlock tune than on the "Layla" album. This and "Bustin' My Ass" are the best songs on the record.

The rest of the songs on this side are also very good when taken individually. However, when the side is played through the basic sound is so much the same throughout that it degenerates into a cacophony that soon becomes boring.

By and large, "Velvet" is worse. The guitar work, credited on this side to Rick Vito, is far inferior to the lead work on the first side, whoever it is.

"Velvet" is a mixture of relaxing and tiresome, with the accent on tiresome. As a matter of fact, it is generally downright boring. Like the first side, it all begins to sound the same. Even Whitlock's keyboards are far from being as good as usual.

Woefully ineffectual is the best term for this hodge-podge of sounds that comprise "Velvet." This is especially true of "Dearest I Wonder" and "Start All Over." Here there is none of the tight-knit sound of his days with Clapton.

The only songs that come near to saving this side are "Satisfied" and "You Came Along"—which sounds a lot like "Thorn Tree In The Garden" from the "Layla" LP. These two aren't too bad. By God, they actually border on being good.

This record of Whitlock's is a let-down. Perhaps I expected too much. No, I do have faith in Whitlock's talent. Anyway, I sure hope it grows on me.

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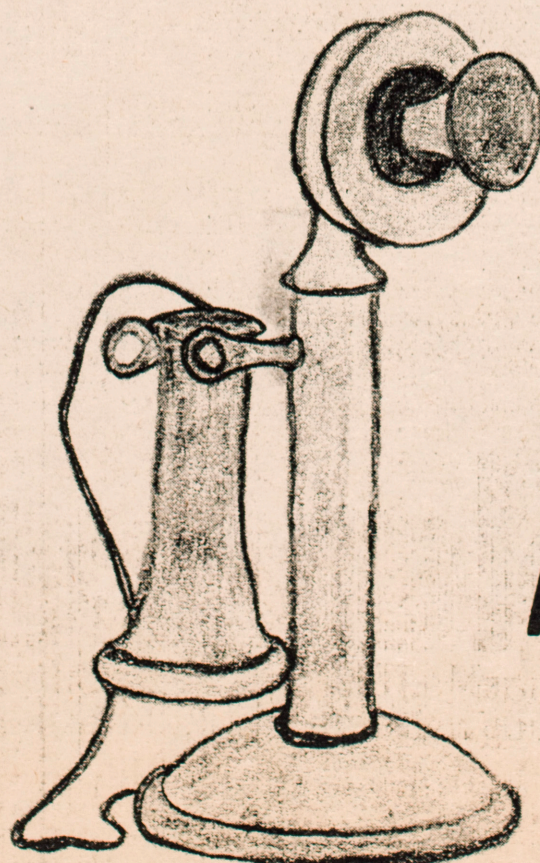


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