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## leisure

Despite the controversy, *Erotica* worth seeing

by Darah Hansen

In past years it's been called "hopelessly heterosexual" and this year's third annual *Erotica* show at the Quay Gallery does little to move away from that soon-to-become stereotype.

From the sexy seashell/flower analogies to the full-size oil paintings of man and woman embracing, erotica on the Coast, it seems, has few variations.

That doesn't mean the show isn't worth seeing. Some of the best pieces in the show are really very clever, with a gentle sense of humour that lends an element of fun to the whole concept of sex.

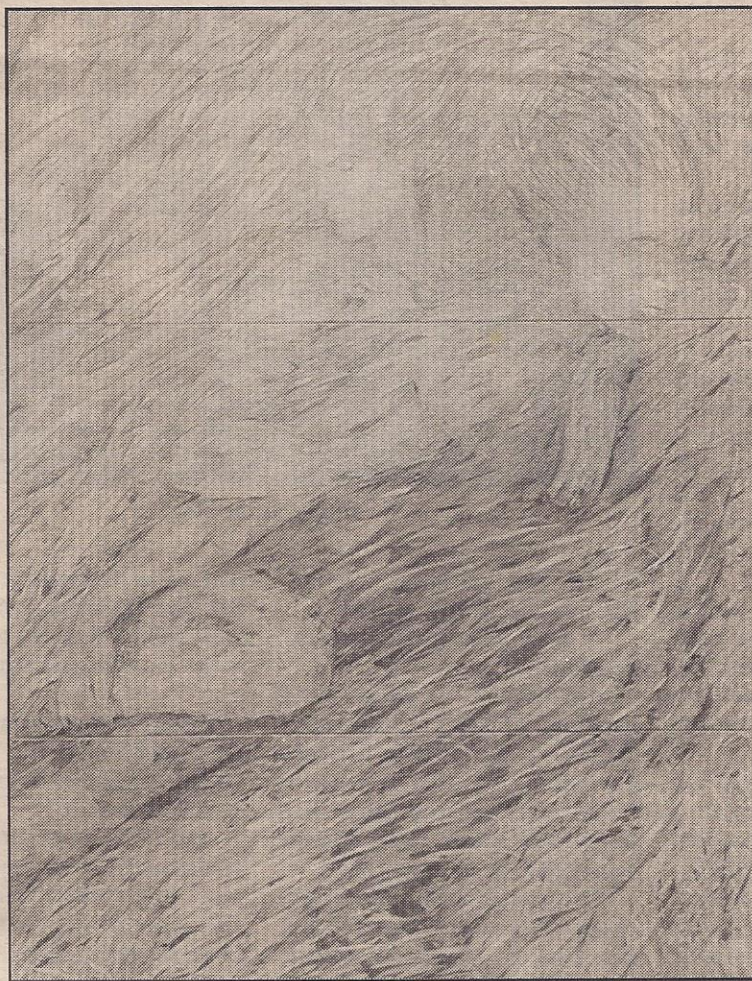
In particular, Carol Dunsford's "Ferry Fantasy" depicting a naked woman embracing a setting (rising?) sun while perched on the railing of the BC Ferry, is sure to bring a smile. Hand-painted on silk, embroidered and quilted, the image is very powerful, a quality many people in this power-driven world hunger for themselves, and are drawn to in others.

Two other pieces also rank high in the "humour" department, including Anna Banana's "Autoeroticxclist" and Elizabeth Simpson's "Erotic Encounters of the K9 Kind".

Banana's collage appears to be a comical take on the pleasure/pain aspect of grueling marathon sports, depicting a magazine image of a woman on a racing bike, the paper cut into shards highlighting phallic images like the bicycle seat and water bottle and the woman's own erogenous zones.

"Erotic Encounters" is more like a baptism into the strange, sensual world of the dog, where noses pressed into each other's sexual organs is the strongest sign of affection — an act humans tend to label distasteful, at least in public places.

In terms of raw sex, Marje Umezuki depicts it best in an untitled trilogy of pen and ink collages. The lightly-stroked images of bodies, alone or entwined, in various states of spent exhaustion and arousal, seem to suggest a



Grass Reunion, an acrylic on canvas by Gloria Masse

bounty of sexual activity.

"Marilyn" by Tracy Finnsson seems also to fit in this category. With a simple drawing, the woman is like a goddess emanating pure beauty, sex and desire.

Viewers should keep in mind this year's *Erotica* show is not complete. Several artists pulled their art from the walls of the gallery to protest the removal of a controversial painting

by Maurice Spira which depicts a small child masturbating Santa Claus.

If discussion and enlightenment is the quest of art, it seems a shame the one image that could have provoked all that and more was removed from sight so quickly.

*The Erotica show runs until March 13 at the Quay Gallery in Gibsons.*