



Mary Anne Barkhouse

11/04/99 - 11/30/99

NEVER MIND
THE BOLLOCKS
WAS THE
SEX PISTOLS

pelage

... now when beetles battle beetles in these puddle paddle battles
and they battle on the back of a noodle eating poodle, it's called a
tweete beetle puddle paddle ...

From "Fox in Sox" by Dr. Seuss

NEVER MIND
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SEX PISTOLS

When there's no future
How can there be sin
We're the flowers in the dustbin
We're the poison in your human machine
We're the future
Your future

From "God Save the Queen" by the Sex Pistols

NEVER MIND
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Well, it's been a long strange journey from Dr. Seuss to Johnny Rotten
to my current comrades who are a motley crew of artists and
restaurateurs. If nothing else, life is interesting. I was born in
British Columbia into the thunderbird and killer whale clan on my
mother's side - a Kwagiutl family renowned for their art, their fishing
capabilities and, unfortunately, also for their weak lungs, with TB and
asthma running rampant among our numbers. My father came from a large
family in Nova Scotia whose tradition was farming and logging. Within my
asthmatic frame collided the aspirations of two very diverse, but not
mutually exclusive, cultures.

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When I was quite young my maternal grandfather had a button blanket made
for me with, as the custom goes, my clan crests prominently displayed on
it. But clan affiliations have a way of mixing about, coming and going,
and aren't those necessarily dictated by birth. Bookworm, punk rocker,
metalsmith, installation artist, friend of animals, foe to evil ...
well, you get the idea.

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So how does one muddle their way through life, achieve some form of
progress while maintaining their own identity as well as retaining the
intrinsic morals and truths of their specific traditions as passed down
from those that have gone before? Good question to which I do not yet
have an answer ... In the viral community those "truths" would be along
the lines of "mutation is the key to success." In societal terms it
might be more proper to say "cultural evolution is facilitated by
adaptation". So perhaps the answer is "be flexible". Surf every wave
that comes your way (as opposed to, say, drowning) and if the occasion
calls for it - wear leather.

NEVER MIND
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Mary Anne Barkhouse, 1999



These Days

Morning seems strange, almost out of place
Searched hard for you and your special ways

These days, these days

Spent all my time, learned to kill is hard
Took threats and abuse until I'd lived apart
Can you stay for these days?

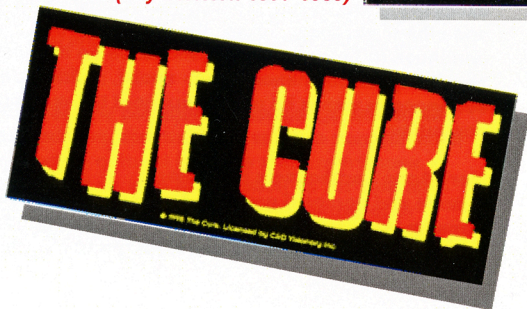
These days, these days

Use hard-worn deception to get away
Broken heart romance to make it pay

These days, these days

We'll tread through it all, this the modern age
Take care of it all, now these debts are paid
Can you stay for these days?

Ian Curtis 1957-1980 (Joy Division 1977-1980)



urban skins

pelage \ˈpel-ij\ *n.* [F, fr. MF, fr. *poil* hair, fr. L *pilus* - more at PILE] (ca. 1828) : the hairy covering of a mammal.

Coming of age during the “punk” scene in Ottawa/Toronto in the late 1970s, Mary Anne Barkhouse, like many other youth, was strongly influenced by the nihilistic musical architects of the time, challenging the complacent popular culture of the late 1970s. Playing in groups such as the Restless Virgins, Tuesday Club Murders, Full Leather Jacket and Chicken Milk, Barkhouse would emerge on the contemporary art scene with a raw freshness that rejected any notions of complacency and push the boundaries of contemporary Indian art. Her rejection of success/elitism and her embracing of the free-form/accessibility of the punk music scene, was an important factor in her approach to her art practice - a spontaneous/non-commercial/cutting-edge/accessible approach.

The “punk” movement traversed more than the contemporary music scene of the 1970s. Its raw fury, outrageousness, and cocky-attitude exploded onto the visual, literary, performance and fashion scenes, infecting all genres of popular culture. The Sex Pistols, Buzzcocks, Joy Division, Elvis Costello, D.O.A., and the Clash were a few of many groups who were responding to the decay of the nation state, social class systems, mega-commercialization of rock & roll, and consumer excesses of the 1970s. Society had reached a point of moral, cultural, and ethical vacancy. Today, the effects of “punk” are still felt, as it continues to be an oscillating influence on the contemporary art scene as a living fertile phenomenon - social, political and artistic rebellion continues to weave its way throughout the remnants of twentieth century pop culture.

Mary Anne Barkhouse’s exhibition **pelage** is about layering, adaptation, change and personal growth. A personal ceremonial journey transgressing social, cultural, historical and political change. It is about the metaphorical skins we don throughout our lifetime and about our

ability, desire and need to continually adapt and shed these skins. Drawing from her Kwagiutl heritage, northwest coast ceremonial robes become the basis for contextualizing and documenting her personal journey: an *urban skin* ledger drawing. The title for this exhibition emerged out of research for a new body of work concerning environmental issues, in particular the wolf. A reference to wolf pelage in an article in *International Wolf*, caught her attention. The study noted that a phenomenon is developing in western Canada and the western United States within the black wolf population. An increase in black wolf pelage is believed to be the result of a decrease in the maturation of the wolf population. Black wolves turn grey with age, and an increase in the number of black wolves denotes a younger population is emerging, due to increasing environmental pressures, marginalization, over hunting and the ability of younger more resourceful wolves to compete and adapt to rapid culture change.

Recent statistical data on the Indian population in Canada reveals a similar trend, where youth under the age of twenty years comprise the bulk of the entire Indian population. A lack of sustainable land base, housing, education and employment opportunities are resulting in an increase in urban migration, as youth are leaving the reserves for the city. Unquestionably, it is a growing trend in response to the escalating technological culture change of the late twentieth century. What is the impact of urbanity on our youth? How are they adapting? What new indicators will they create to communicate important aspects of their cultural heritage? How are they mapping out their own space within the urban center? Since no culture is static, it is the responsibility of our youth to bring those cultural attributes which they feel are important into the new millennium. They will borrow, revise and alter traditional ways of cultural expression and find new ways to communicate their individual and collective experience and cultural heritage.

Barkhouse is no exception, as she continues to challenge and break traditional and artistic boundaries, charting new ways to communicate her own personal and collective cultural heritage and experiences. Earlier works have incorporated various motifs such as the wolf and killer whale, where Barkhouse has juxtaposed them in unusual or peculiar settings and circumstances, where they become signs and



Reservoir (detail)
Mary Anne Barkhouse



Reservoir (detail)
Mary Anne Barkhouse

Wolves in the City (Detail)
Mary Anne Barkhouse



Wolves in the City (Detail)
Mary Anne Barkhouse

semiotics for issues pertaining to marginalization, tenacity or perseverance; or on a more subtle level, as surrogate indicators for Indians. In *pelage*, the motif of the raven is synonymous with Barkhouse; a symbol of constant adaptation and change, where she explores new ways of communicating and documenting her life's journey. Like the raven, Barkhouse collects and hoards stray fragments that many others have discard by the roadside, and presents her cache of memories and experiences as a visual auto-biographical travelogue. She presents her cache of memories in the form of ceremonial robes documenting four decades of her life. Recollections and references to each decade are incorporated into the borders of each robe; motifs of horses, books (Dr. Seuss' Cat-in-the-Hat), guitars, art tools among others are strewn about the periphery. The raven appears central, as guardian, orator and witness to her cache of memories.

Traditional ceremonial robes are worn to denote lineage through a family crest, depicting a flora, fauna or mythical motif such as the fire weed, killer whale or thunderbird image among others. Mother of pearl buttons were traded for and highly prized in the late nineteenth century and were (and still are) incorporated as the media of choice to depict imagery. A robe may contain in excess of a thousand of these translucent and luminescent buttons. The robe is an important mnemonic signifier transmitting a plethora of information relating to clan, lineage, relationship and status within a community.

In *pelage I*, wool and mother of pearl-like buttons, bear witness to Mary Anne's early developmental years and the warmth and protection of her nuclear and extended family. Memoirs of her early years are filled with hours spent as a bookworm, feeding her voracious appetite for stories as a young asthmatic girl. In *pelage II* and *pelage III*, leather and steel studs replace the wool and mother of pearl buttons, documenting her turbulent adolescent years and her coming of age, during late 1970's punk movement.

In *pelage IV*, she unites wool, copper, resin and salt together, referencing her emergence as a visual artist/metalsmith and her contemporary concerns regarding environmental, social and cultural

change. Aspects of chemical reaction: decay, erosion, and interaction become metaphors for personal growth, transgression, change and personal choices. *pelage IV* also relates back to an earlier exploration and body of work with the LICK Collective in Toronto, in particular, her work with Michael Belmore. In the group exhibition LICK, both Barkhouse and Belmore explored the commodification of the sacred object in their work entitled *Reservoir*. Belmore cast sweetgrass, bear claws and feathers in resin and salt, while Barkhouse cast a fragment of her great-great grandfather's totem pole, currently situated in Stanley Park in Vancouver. Salt became the metaphor for change, where an essential mineral to our biological survival could also become corrosive and deadly, if abused. The resin and salt castings, like the resin and salt buttons on her ceremonial robe can be read as indicators of culture change, fragility, death/rebirth and transformation, revealing the ever-shifting landscape of contemporary Indian identity.

A referencing to her Kwagiutl lineage appears in the top centre of each robe. A space is created and represented by the inclusion of a different fabric/medium. This space symbolizes the chimney or "smoke hole" in a traditional northwest coast lodge or "big house". Her great-great grandfather, Charlie James, a well-known carver, would sign his work with a killer whale inside the figure of a Thunderbird. Barkhouse pays homage to her great-great grandfather and lineage by including the symbol of the killer whale in this space, as a connection to her clan, family, and long lineage of artists in her extended family.

Aesthetic concerns regarding choice of media, colour, composition, subject matter, spatiality are all important aspects integral to the successful presentation of the work, while the juxtaposition of contemporary and traditional aspects are important in revealing the tension that exists between the traditional/contemporary and rural/urban communities. Is Barkhouse's recontextualization of northwest coast ceremonial robes challenging to traditional norms? Should contemporary Indian artists traverse new ways of communicating their personal and collective cultural heritage? Is it important to map out a new cultural space for our ourselves and

our youth within the urban centre? The answer to these questions is, unequivocally, YES! As we slam head-on into the new millennium, our individual and collective survival has never been more urgent. There is a concrete need to push the boundaries for new perspectives and approaches to cultural expression. A culture that is stagnant will not survive; only those cultures that can successfully adapt to change will survive into the next millennium. Like the wolf and raven, who have learned new ways to survive on the fringe of society, we too must learn to accept and deal with change. Just because the wolf and raven have altered their ways of survival, it does not mean they are no longer wolves or ravens. Just like the phenomena of the black wolf pelage, the youth are mapping out a new course and direction. Of course, certain aspects of our cultural continuity will remain integral and inherent, but how we chose to communicate these aspects will unquestionably change. The time is ripe to shed our old pelage and don new ones for the new millennium.

Barry Ace
Chief,
Indian and Inuit Art Centres

November 4, 1999

MARY ANNE BARKHOUSE

BORN: 1961
Vancouver, BC
Nimkish, Kwakiutl

ART MEDIA:

Sculpture/installation/jewellery/photography/
printmaking

EDUCATION:

Ontario College of Art, Toronto, Ontario
Harbourfront Centre, Toronto, Ontario

GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 1999 EMERGENCE FROM THE SHADOW: First Peoples'
Photographic Perspectives, CDN Museum of
Civilization, Hull, Quebec
- 1998-99 LICHEN, Toronto Sculpture Garden, Toronto, ON
- 1998 CU, YYZ Artists' Outlet, Toronto, ON
- 1998 YYZ Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 1997 LICK, Collective, Toronto, ON
- 1997 New Works, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay
- 1997 STAKING LAND CLAIMS, Walter Phillips Gallery,
Banff, Alberta, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, Thunder Bay,
ON, Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford, ON
- 1996 GHOSTWRITERS 2, Mercer Union, Toronto, ON
- 1995-97 NATIVE LOVE, Nation To Nation, Montreal,
Peterborough, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Victoria,
Brantford
- 1995 NATIVE SURVIVAL: RESPONSE TO HIV/AIDS,
American Indian Community House Gallery, New
York, New York

- 1995-96 ALTERNATIVE: CONTEMPORARY PHOTO COMMISSIONS, McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, ON, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography, Ottawa, ON
- 1994 VOLUME 1: BOOK ARTS BY NATIVE AMERICAN ARTISTS, American Indian Community House Gallery, New York, New York
- 1993 OBJECTS OF INSPIRATION, York Quay Gallery, Toronto, ON
- 1993 MULTIPLICITY: A NEW CULTURAL STRATEGY, University of BC, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, BC
- 1991-93 Toronto Outdoor Art Exhibition, City Hall, Toronto
- 1991 EXPOSED 91, Niroquois Gallery, Brantford, ON
- 1991 SHADES OF RED 91, Pow Wow Gallery, Toronto
- 1990-95 ART OF THE FIRST NATIONS, Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford, ON

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 1999 *pelage*, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Hull, Quebec

AWARDS:

- 1997 Ontario Arts Council Visual Arts Grant
- 1997 Toronto Arts Council Visual Artist Grant
- 1996 Canada Council - Project Assistance for Artist-Run Centres and Artist's Collectives Program Grant
- 1995 Ontario Arts Council Crafts Grant
- 1995 Toronto Arts Council Visual Arts Grant
- 1995 Exhibition Assistance Grant, OAC
- 1993 Exhibition Assistance Grant, OAC
- 1991 Jaguar Sculpture Competition
- 1991 Toronto Star Award, New Media
- 1991 Imperial Smelting and Refining Co. of Canada Metal Award
- 1990 Canadian Native Arts Foundation

COLLECTIONS:

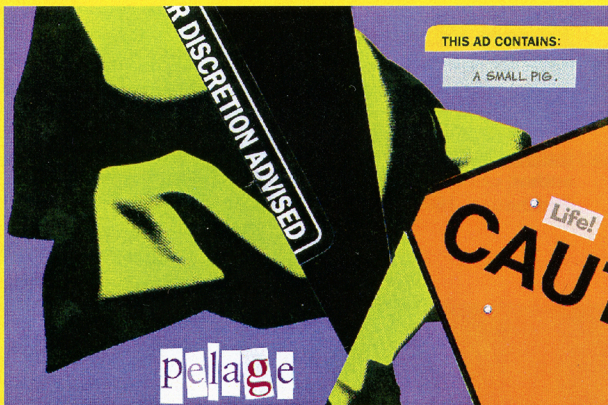
Thunder Bay Art Gallery
Indian Art Collection, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Walter Phillips Gallery, Banff Centre for the Arts
University of British Columbia, Museum of Anthropology

PUBLICATIONS:

Writing as Witness: Essay and Talk, Beth Brant, author,
cover design and illustration by Mary Anne Barkhouse,
1994, Women's Press, Toronto, ON

Brotherhood To Nationhood: George Manuel and the
Making of the Modern Indian Movement, Peter Fraser,
author, cover design and illustration by Mary Anne
Barkhouse, 1993, Between the Lines, Toronto, ON





THIS AD CONTAINS:

A SMALL PIG.

Life!

CAUTION

pellage

Acknowledgements

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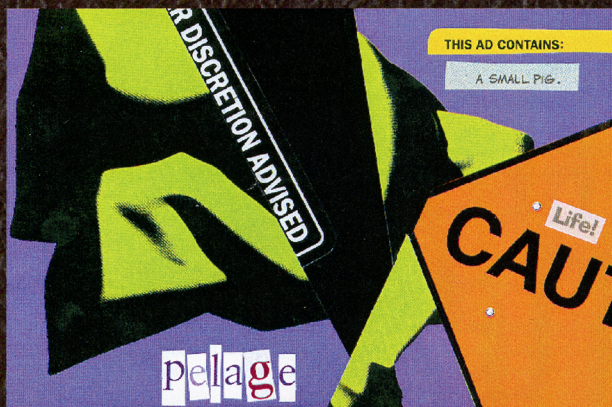
Mary and Alan Barkhouse for their unflagging support, above and beyond the call of duty ... and for buying me that first Sex Pistols record so many years ago;

Bruce Barkhouse, for always making me question myself ... as well as coming to my gigs (Engineers rule OK!);

Michael Belmore, for EVERYTHING;

Zandra Henderson-Paul, for her very timely advice, incredible enthusiasm, and for keeping track of the family - past, present and future;

and also Fred Cook, my grandfather, for making sure that I had a PROPER button-blanket at a very young age and who instilled in me an appreciation for the craziness of a raven and an understanding of where we came from and where we should be going.



Indian Art Centre
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND)
1999

stereotypes suck,



pelage

AV

Alien Voyeurism

SP

Smoking Pets

Mary Anne Barkhouse

pelage

Du 4 novembre au 30 novembre 1999
November 4 to 30, 1999

RÉCEPTION D'OUVERTURE / OPENING RECEPTION

le jeudi 4 novembre à 15h00
Thursday, November 4 at 3:00 pm

galerie d'art indien
Indian Art Gallery

10 Wellington, Hull, Québec
819.994.3725 www.inac.gc.ca/art/index.html

La galerie est ouverte du lundi au vendredi, de 09h00 à 17h00
The gallery is open, Monday to Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

L'artiste est reconnaissant de l'appui du conseil des arts du Canada
et du conseil des arts de l'Ontario.

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centre d'art indien (MAINC)

(DIAND) Indian Art Centre