

THE MOTHER IMAGE

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Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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ABSTRACT

The Mother Image

Laura Endacott

“The Mother Image” is a corpus of work that explores my identity as a mother since the birth of the first of my two sons twelve years ago. I became interested in the social and cultural experience of contemporary motherhood based on my own trajectory and as it relates to family. The body of artworks I produced in conjunction with this written thesis was exhibited at The Quebec Craft Museum (Le Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec) in Montreal, from September 24th, 2009 to January 10, 2010. My French-Irish heritage is rooted in my Montreal ancestry and is emphasized within the museum space, an historical Neo-Gothic former Church. These specific histories act as a timeline that extends to my present day experience and includes them within the larger archive that is represented by the museum’s collection. The encounter between my work and this space, further dialogues with the Christian elements of my Catholic background as they relate to both the architecture and the objects of the permanent collection found within this former church.

My feminist research concerns itself with the woman both as an individual and a maternal subject. More specifically I am interested in the process of becoming that is particular to the feminine experience. By looking at the artworks of Canadian artists Kati Campbell, Aganetha Dyck and Jin-Me Yoon who also include the mother image in their works, I endeavor to position my perspective within a larger context.

Further I examine the link between my fibre art practice and the history of women's textile crafts in Quebec, based on one of the textile objects found in the museum's collection. I also link this object to my own position as a Quebec-born Canadian woman whose history is intrinsically linked to this object's representation.

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DEDICATION

To my grandmother

Alma Tremblay

As an extension of the mother image I am thankful for her example as the family matriarch. I still carry my childhood memories of her as a precious gift and recognize the energy, caring and investment she placed in her family to carry on.

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INTRODUCTION

The Mother Image is a corpus of work that explores my identity as a mother since the birth of the first of my two sons twelve years ago. The impetus for this work was my realization as I contemplated the many aspects of my new life as a mother and artist, that my maternal selfhood has been a transformative experience. In my application for the SIP (Specialized Individual Program) I stated my intention to study images of mothers in 19th and 20th century art by women artists and produce artworks that responded to my findings. It became clear to me early on that my research was motivated by a feminist interest in the woman both as an individual and a maternal subject. My trajectory led me to examine and contest the idealized mother role and the “institution” of mothering. I was interested in learning about the process and meaning of becoming a mother that is specific to women, and how my newly acquired collective identity seemed to limit rather than expand my identity.

When I secured the Musée des Maîtres et Artisans du Québec (fig. 1) for “The Mother Image” exhibition I entered into a dialogue with the architectural components of this structure, formally a 19th century Neo-Gothic Church, and the craft objects of the permanent collection. In this space I was propelled to analyze the histories specific to my French and Irish roots and Catholic background, and how my sense of self has been constructed by these childhood influences.

My thesis is divided into the following chapters. In this first chapter as a means of contextualizing my production within a larger framework I will present the mother image in the works of three Canadian artist-mothers, compare these works with my own, and

examine my art practice within a feminist perspective. Chapter two will continue this feminist approach with a discussion of my research into the history of women's textile crafts in Quebec as it pertains to the permanent collection of the Musée des Maîtres et Artisans du Québec and my own work. In chapter three I will present my *The Mother Image* exhibition with an emphasis on how these works evoke Christian elements of my Catholic background within this former Church, and express my on-going exploration of fibre art practices.

CHAPTER 1

The Mother Image in Contemporary Canadian Art

The artists and works I consider in this chapter are: Kati Campbell's *Dyad* (1988), Aganetha Dyck's *The Extended Wedding Party* (1995) and Jin –me Yoon's *Intersection* (1996).

I begin with *Dyad* (fig. 2) an installation at the Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta that was part of a group exhibition in 1995 entitled "*The Embodied Viewer*". This work is a metal structure attached to the wall with a horizontally framed photograph of a pair of closed eyes at its outer end. This cage-like apparition appears to float above a second photograph mounted on the wall below and to the left of this strange object.

In *Dyad*, Campbell suggests the moment of Lacan's "mirror-image," the immediate point in time when the infant, through sight, first comes to separate herself from the mother.¹ In this piece the protruding structure supports a photographic image of the mother's closed eyes whereas the other photograph is the child's eyes. In this juxtaposition Campbell is suggesting that the mother's eyes are nestling the child's as though they are cheek to cheek (fig.3). The mother and child are both simultaneously subjects and objects of their own and each other's gazes.²

Campbell explains that, "*Dyad* is about a physical relationship, taking place at the level of the body, which is a screen for and a site of reproduction, but which Campbell³ can only make present through a structure."⁴ The artist's interest is in defining the spatial relation of the mother and child (fig.4). In Campbell's study of the conventions of family photography in advertisements, magazine images and religious paintings she observed

that the child usually responds to the gaze of the photographer and viewer but the mother by the child's side hardly ever looks out. Campbell concludes that it is not the mother's gaze that caresses the child's face, but rather the relation is cheek to cheek. This is the bodily connection that marks the mother-child relationship.⁵ For Campbell the emphasis is on maternal sight and the angulated movements of seeing that define the position of the mother in particular codified ways.⁶

While Campbell's *Dyad* explores the visual and spatial dialogue of the mother and child Aganetha Dyck's *The Extended Wedding Party* (1995) first exhibited at the Winnipeg Art Gallery before touring nationally considers the woman as maternal producer within the context of nature and society. *The Extended Wedding Party*, made up of objects placed in beehives and covered with honey, explores the idea of the bride and the institution of marriage in relation to the queen bee and the communal activity of the hive. The dresses of the bride and bridal attendants hanging in cages like beekeepers' hives are covered with bee's wax and segments of honeycomb (fig. 7, 8). In the centre of the installation is an extraordinary size 7 wedding dress made out of a wire dress and large glass mold.

This dress with a set of pearls inserted within was placed in a beehive where the bees filled the skirt and bodice and the outside of the glass dress with 300 lbs of honey and wax honeycomb (fig. 6). The dress sat on top of four hives filled with ca. 50,000 bees in each hive for a total of 200,000 bees working on it. This occurred each year for at least ten years because the beekeeping honey flow seasons are generally only July and August (fig. 9). Beside the dress a clear Plexiglas evening bag and a pair of delicate women's shoes (fig.5) are also included.

As Shirley Madill describes this installation in the exhibition catalogue, Dyck thinks of the honeybees as “both a giant humming brain and a sensuous procreative body”.⁷ The food of the wedding feast, the various wedding gifts and the shoes, however, introduce a haunting discomfort. In contrasting these left-over elements and the absence of human bodies with the “sensuous” and “procreative” constructions of the bees Dyck creates an image of communal productivity that is in decay. The dress with no head or limbs creates the sense of a female psychological and physical presence that has gone missing. In *The Extended Wedding Party* Dyck contradicts the idyllic classical myths associated with the bride and nuptial ceremony by bringing attention to the emptiness of the maternal body stuck in the activity of the beehive. The hive is symbolic of the woman’s sweet home, whereas the “Queen Bee” is the honey wife and mother. At the same time this woman is invisible, her sense of self vacant like the wedding dress.

Aganetha Dyck’s *The Extended Wedding Party* references women’s works in the domestic sphere and the rites of becoming that lead to this state of being. In Jin-me Yoon’s *Intersection*, a work consisting of two large C prints that was exhibited at the Agnes Etherington Arts Centre in Kingston, Ontario in 1996 in a group show called “*Fertile Ground*,” the tension is between the woman who works as a mother and outside the home (fig. 10, 11). Jan Allen describes and interprets this work in the exhibition catalogue.

Intersection is a photographic diptych that uses humorous reference to undercover operatives to subvert the prescribed relationship between the biological imperatives of reproduction and the social imperatives surrounding working women. The shallow field of the image and its

saturated red ground refer to the compressed, emblematic visual language of commercial advertising in public spaces. The form reminds us that commercial imaging is part of the stream of mutually reinforcing conventions that shape how we move in the world.⁸

In these photographs of the back view of this woman, in a dress carrying a baby-identified only by its one leg (fig. 10) and the other in a male suit, holding a breast pump (fig. 11) Jin-me Yoon plays with stereotypical images to attack social norms. In speaking about this piece and related work the artist explains that her interest in the relationship between maternity and work is partly due to her Korean heritage. As a woman who expected to have children and assumed she would continue to develop as an artist while being a mother, she was dismayed by the North American presumption that she could not, if she bore children, accomplish serious work. According to Allen, this is a premise that has discriminated against the mother-artist in the competitive male-dominated art market. A mother cannot be an artist but a man can flourish in both capacities. The prohibition does not apply to men because in our culture a man's progeny is seen as an act that complements his creative force.⁹

The works of these three women artists speak to me in different ways about myself as a mother and artist. Jin-me Yoon's photographs express the constraints society imposes through advertisements that try to prevent mothers from participating openly as mothers in the work force. Her portraits represent the fragmented identity of a woman who has to position her own lived experience as a mother against the expectations of a working person. This tension reflects my own experience. The dominant patriarchy is the accepted

model for women who labour; the reality of the mother's life at home is supposed to be private and invisible.

In *Facing the World as a Mother I* (fig. 12) I sought to make visible the institutional spaces that I occupy and confront as a mother. I staged a series of performances where I drew two dolls (symbolic of my children) as "guns." Then, my second series, *Facing the World as a Mother II* (fig. 13) I explored the reciprocal relationship that my sons and I share by giving them a large-scale doll (symbolic of myself) to interact with. These visual enactments were the raw material for the textile banners I created for *The Mother Image* exhibition that I will describe in Chapter Three.

My affinity with Jin-me Yoon comes from my interpretation of her photographs and my own as evidence of a feminist performance. This is an interventionist performance that negotiates a new relationship between art and cultural politics by bringing about what the feminist scholar Janet Wolff has called "the contestation of the social arrangements of gender."¹⁰ By adopting this art form I put something "out there" that reflects my own reality. I introduce a different kind of discussion about the intersections of motherhood and art making.

I see my sons' involvement as a critical element in this performance. My boys' faces help to put a face on the mother-child relationship, something more substantial, active and concrete than the incognito baby in the arms of an adult woman so often used to represent motherhood. Their reciprocal role as caring, contributing and creative participants stretch the boundaries of traditional family portraiture. The presence of my children in this work is much more significant than their simply being an extension of me

as a mother. They are partners in my creativity with responses worth recording.

Significantly, their performances communicate alternatives to the limitations inherent in the highly celebrated model of mothering. In these images motherhood is no longer a mother and child staring into each other's eyes in loving bliss so typical of religious art but photographs that present an expansive view of the artist as mother.

Including my own children in *Facing the World as a Mother II* (fig. 14) corresponds to Campbell's approach in that we both use images of ourselves and our children as part of our process. By this I mean that we both draw on family photographic documentation to locate and represent processes that start with our own bodies. As such, our art can be categorized as a form of interstitial art. This is an art work that cannot be categorized as within the boundaries of an accepted genre or media, but falls in between. While Campbell addresses the physically inward movement of maternal experience, I see movement as an outward extension by taking my sons with the large doll into the various spaces of our community. We invade the status quo of these places and the social praxis of everyday life that they represent.

For Campbell the maternal body is the visually tactile movement of the body in space as represented by the seeing eyes of the child and closed eyes of the mother. As an artist she explores the physicality of "maternal" identity and offers a new definition of that relationship. My performances are also devoted to redefining physical space but my emphasis is different. Rather than focusing on the baby and the mother's proximity, my interest is in my boys as pre-adolescent children and their and my own movements in social spaces. In my view this is where motherhood has been defined by limiting the

acceptable norms and behaviours of women in spaces outside of the home. This includes the spaces of the church and the university as well as the school and playground. By confronting these historical conditions head-on my work contrasts the subtle *mise-en-scène*, a more common strategy in the visual arts, and provides a means of enabling viewers to reflect on the meaning of these places and how they have operated to delineate who I am supposed to be as a mother and artist and how I and my children are expected to conform to these norms. The combative stance I adopt re-configures the mother-child relation. I step out of the mold; I become an outlaw mother (fig. 15).

Campbell's *Dyad*, is a reaction to the religious iconography of Madonna and Child images. In these paintings and sculptures, she explains, from medieval times to the present day, the representation is of the Child as an active subject meeting the viewer's gaze. In my opinion there are many different depictions of the Virgin Mary and Jesus. By far the most common is the image of the Madonna mother and baby Jesus looking into each other's eyes, oblivious to the world, so in love are they with each other.

Counteracting this typical interrelation, and in keeping with Kati Campbell's *Dyad* there is but one image among my fourteen banners where the spectator can meet the gaze of my children. This is the picture of my children and the doll sitting in our car (fig. 16).

One son is waving while the other looks directly out of the window at me. This photograph belongs to the tradition of the family album. By this I mean a photograph where the subjects know the photographer who is usually the mother or father. Often in this type of image there is a loving, playful relationship between the family member taking the photograph and the children in the picture.

This is a relationship I purposefully avoided in my photography. In my art historical research I encountered ideas about the family photograph that I applied in the analysis of my mother's family photographs. *Suspended Conversations, The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums* by art historian Martha Langford with its focus on the photographic album as a symbol of connections to the past¹¹ was particularly relevant as was the text of sociologist Richard Chalfen who characterizes the family photograph as the communication of cross-generational exchange and cultural continuity¹². The family photograph describes collective identity through a pastiche of moments, events and relationships. Primary individuals and important events are documented with the purpose of unifying and marking their stories in the world. While the photographs I produced share some of these qualities in the compilation of memories and important events, I wanted my pictures to do something more and different in my attack on social and cultural conditions that have marked maternal identity.

A look at three of my family photographs explains what I mean about the family picture and the constraining histories contained therein. The first is a small black and white photograph (approx. 4" x 3") of my parents sitting on the couch of their home, holding their two daughters on their knees (fig. 17). This is in some sense the iconic symbol of our family. The couch is covered with a large blanket so as to protect the piece of furniture from spills and accidents often associated with small children that are so typical of family life. My mother holds me at approximately one year old and my father secures my sister as a three-year-old toddler, holding her tiny hands. On the back, the handwritten inscription "La Sainte Famille" emphasizes my parents' Christian roots.

Another small black and white image (3"x3") portrays my mother in her Sunday best,

complete with white gloves and hat as she stands with her two daughters, my sister Lise at approximately four years old and me at about two years old (fig. 18). My sister wears a hat and white gloves to accompany her dark pantsuit and coat with silver buttons, and I have a white bonnet and purse. Behind us is the church we have just attended for our weekly Roman Catholic mass.

These two images dated between 1964 and 1966 call attention to the guidelines my mother used to raise her family. The photographs are proud representations of her contributions to family, to Catholicism and to the world at large. They speak of my mother's desire to recreate a close-knit family based on the Christian model. These images of us reiterate the adherence of these traditions. In the third photograph (fig. 19) of my sister Lise and myself for our First Communion, a colored image of 3"x3", we are both dressed in short white dresses, white sweaters, white shoes and socks, a symbol of purity. We stand in front of the Church where we have only minutes earlier, experienced this event. This proud moment is documented as a rite-of-passage in the life of a Catholic child. The symbol it carries as the Eucharist joins us most fully to Christ and into a larger community that of the Church, and further solidifies our identities within our French, Irish / English heritage.

The family album links the present with the past through the process of what Langford terms orality continuing to strengthen present values and steer individual choices. The attachment that fortifies nostalgia through emotions is absorbed as truth and thus becomes an influential tool for bridging past and present. In the photographic images of the banners in *The Mother Image* exhibition (fig. 20, 21) what I proposed was a breaking from the past, an assertion of new values and new choices. The following strategies serve

to emphasize this major difference between my pictures and the family photograph. The photos are taken as if there is no audience, that is to say, in a voyeuristic fashion. They are photographed from behind, at a distance, or in a more casual manner. I consider this kind of picture to be a more authentic testimony of the family and my intimacy with my children. The images of me alone are also voyeuristic in approach in that I see myself as an obsessive observer, an artist-mother who sees what others in our society refuse to or are prevented from seeing. In these acts of transgression as an outlaw mother drawing my “guns” my protest is solitary. It is a document of my private protest with little concern for an audience at that moment. My audience comes later, when viewers see these pictures in the exhibition space and in turn assume the stance of voyeurs as they encounter these images of me and of my children.

Nicolas Bourriaud explains in his essay on relational aesthetics that art is a state of encounter¹³. Relational art is art that takes as its theoretical horizon the sphere of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an autonomous and private and symbolic space. In our engagement with the dolls, my sons and my own, we take these material objects into a number of spaces and we relate to the people and particular aspects of each location. My objective in these spaces is to contribute to a larger view of the definition of motherhood by challenging the prescriptive ideals of motherhood. In this way my maternal activism makes use of material form to provoke encounters.

Aganetha Dyck's *The Extended Wedding Party* is also a provocation that challenges social ideals. I share her concerns and approaches, specifically, in how she examines the social structure from a woman's viewpoint and transforms sculptural media into works that are powerful expressions of feminist material culture. Like Dyck's critique of

domesticity in her use of a honey-covered glass dress ¹⁴my work also references fiber art. In knitting my dolls as an important part of my art making I transform a toy object associated with home culture, the girl child and play, into an actor who participates in my performances as a women artist and in the lives of my boys. This act of defiance is a stance I share with Dyck whose art is consistently a transgression of women's work

Also, like the absent limbs of Dyck's bride and attendants I am interested in the idea of the phantom as something that has been made invisible because it has been suppressed to behave in certain socially prescribed ways. I understand this to be what Luce Irigaray means when she speaks of ghosts within a feminist context. In her book entitled *The Speculum of the Other Woman* Irigaray explores these ghosts in relation to women's sexuality and masculine ideology and emphasizes that this phantom is constantly present.¹⁵ In my performances my sexuality contests the patriarchal definitions of social space. The banners purposefully made of cloth, to reference a textile art associated with women, announce my bodily presence in these places. My performances documented in these photographs are the traces of my maternal body haunting these spaces. This idea of a ghost also extends to the mother doll. She is my disembodied spirit present in the spaces that I connect to as maternal flux. Further, my children's involvement with this large doll signifies my maternal being as a creative force that contributes to the mothering I offer my children (Fig. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26). Thus, the ghost comes alive, as spirit and substance, marking my mothering as a work of art and my art as a work of mothering.

Also, in concert with Aganetha Dyck's *The Extended Wedding Party*, my work is a critique of cultural myths. Roland Barthes points out that myth is read as a factual system whereas in reality it is nothing but a semiological system.¹⁶ In his analysis of the process

of myth making, Barthes explains how socially constructed assumptions are naturalized into the social facts of a particular culture. I seek to unveil some of the myths about motherhood by producing images that act as a counterpoint to traditional representations that contain these imbedded concepts. By adding fresh meaning in new images my practice seeks to subvert historical representations with a contemporary system of values.

Correspondingly, the third artwork I made, a large-scale sculpture entitled *RibRaft* (2009) (Fig. 27), contests myths about the meaning of motherhood taught by Christianity and offers a new interpretation. To summarize (the complete analysis is in Chapter Three) I hand and machine sculpted high-density Styrofoam into a combination ribcage / vessel form, as a metaphor for my journey as a contemporary mother. I placed my sculpture on the altar of this former church that is the heart of the museum. It occupies this key site with its quiet but unquestionable presence. The need to climb two, then four more stairs leading to the work, informs viewers of the historic tradition of climbing toward something of value. The womb-like shape of the *RibRaft* with its referencing of Eve's rib converts this part of the Church, reserved for priests and other men, into a female space. The material of the drapery is sumptuous (Fig. 28). Connected to my femaleness is this soft, richly colored fabric that seeps onto the floor and down the stairs (Fig. 29). Its watery quality is there to be soaked up as it claims the space. The structure of this work and its placement in this sacred space contests the myth that women's roles should remain invisible within the patriarchy of the Catholic Church. In this work I assert the inseparable, me as both artist and mother. I connect my motherhood with the Virgin Mary as Mother of the Church and re-interpret this religious myth to mean that I am part of another sacred, life giving entity, the collective of artists-mothers. *RibRaft* is my journey

as a mother as well as the vessel for other artist-mothers searching for a more nurturing conceptual space.

In recent feminist writing, Rosi Braidotti proposes "the notion of woman as a subject-in-progress rather than the complementary and specular other of man." She puts forward a feminist philosophy that seeks to distance itself from past efforts to define woman in opposition to man. This implies recognizing the materiality of difference, resisting notions of sameness, and realizing that alternative views of subjectivity exist in what constitutes the "knowing-subject."

I understand myself as a "knowing-subject" who is both artist and mother. I believe that I am part of a collective, what Braidotti defines as a politically invested process of sharing in and contributing to the making of new narratives. My children are not a burden who cost too much or take up too much of my time. I take seriously what Braidotti says about the commitment to creating socially and politically invested work that aims to make a difference in the world. In my professional life I encounter people who have not experienced motherhood first hand and who in their words and actions adopt a patriarchal mode of thinking. I am made to feel that my choice to have children is not valued in the work place. I am evaluated as if I were a male artist with the "sameness" Braidotti insists we must resist. Above all, what angers me is the idea that I have interrupted my progress as an artist by having children, and that I had halted irreparably that rush or flow of creative production.

I believe that power is not handed to anyone; it only comes to those who take it. Power is available to those who through a series of focused considerations place themselves in a

position of power. In my work I extend this idea, in my understanding from Braidotti that female power comes through the interconnections of identity and subjectivity, and the desire for change and a new kind of normativity. From this perspective art making is an empowering process that is subject to change. This process is the “in-between” place described by the French philosopher Michel Serres where transformation is possible¹⁷. To transform means dissolving boundaries, finding ways to interrupt typical modes of thought, being open to the turbulence that results from the letting go of preconceived notions, and dissolving categorical definitions that suffocate our uniqueness. Such transformative acts allow for creativity, and a renewed consideration of issues relating to communication, interaction, participation and political choice.

As a vessel, *RibRaft* alludes to the in-between spaces I have journeyed through (Fig. 30). It is large enough to take both my individual and collective self through my community and beyond. It has travelled through the course of history to reach its present destination. This work along with the banners and my “dolls” in this former Catholic Church is my attempt to transform a spatio-temporal location embodied with myths and traditions into a new understanding of the maternal experience. In the next chapter of this thesis I will explore further how this body of work contests the traditional assumptions associated with the Christian family, the family album and the history of crafts in Quebec.

CHAPTER TWO

The History of Women's Textile Craft in Quebec

The craft objects in *The Mother Image* propose a voice, which contributes to the existing social structure and hence collective social thought (Fig. 31, 32). Liz Stanley's theory speaks of human agency, authorship and the construction of knowledge¹⁸. I believe in my works I am using my human agency, through my authorship to construct a parallel history. By contextualizing my work within a craft context, I wish to create a link to some historical traditions as well as with my personal history. My seemingly intimate, personal world is positioned to resonate and contribute to a collective memory. The meanings I imbue in my objects are meant to carry this craft tradition into the present and answer to a need to accord value to practices, histories and social placement that has been for far too long, undervalued.

In my work, I have adopted traditional feminine craft i.e. knitting and textile art, to create contemporary craft objects. By using my story I place myself both as subject and object of the work. I am creating a thread that weaves the past into the present. I am proposing my idea as a social product of my time¹⁹. By telling my own story I see my work making a place for my own history within the larger history of women. My attempt at instilling meaning into the object is based on the identity I have constructed for myself, and that is in constant flux.

As such my work creates a thread that weaves my history, as a woman, as an artist, as a mother and as a Quebec-born Canadian, with the craft objects of the permanent collection of the Musée des Maîtres et Artisans du Québec into the present. My self "role" in

constructing social structure permits me to focus on both the micro-environment (personal) and the macro-environment (social)²⁰. Inspired by the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, I am attempting to create a symbolic capital toward creating value for contemporary craft.

The importance accorded to the textile objects within the collection that is housed in this Quebec craft museum points to the value we ascribe to practices of yesteryears and the narratives found therein. Historically, Quebec textile practices were made by the women, while men dominated the crafts of carpenter and metal work (tinsmith, blacksmith) to name a few²¹. The significance of the number of textile artifacts found in this collection situates their value in an inferior position to that of the objects traditionally produced by men. The textile objects occupy an approximate 1% of this collection while the wooden furniture, sculptural religious objects such as a silver stoup or a metal weather vane, dominate at 99%.

The director of the museum, Pierre Wilson offers a reason for so few textile works. He suggests that the lack of textiles in the collection may relate to the difficulties in conserving textile works because of the nature of their usage and the inherent properties of the materials used to produce them. This corresponds with what we are often told - that textiles are very difficult to keep over the years. Yet there are examples of royal robes and tapestries that have endured centuries of conservation in difficult circumstances, throughout both Western and Eastern cultures, long before the invention of regulated climate control. Textile-making by women in the permanent collection of this museum with their direct connection to a woman's daily life appear to have less value because it is a woman's craft.

In my conversations with Wilson, he has emphasized the non-existent funding available to add to his collection even if he were to locate traditional textile items representative of women's craftwork. He relies heavily on donations and says that contemporary pieces are hard to come by. His efforts in collaborating with contemporary artists in staging exhibitions within the museum space is exemplary as is his interest in connecting the museum collection to current craft work. He openly supports and works in partnership with textile artists to circumvent these difficulties, as is evident by his willingness to promote my work in this temporary exhibition.

In placing my work in this small collection of women's textile craft, I am considering Liz Stanley's analysis of the auto/biography and its material production²². Stanley examines the idea of facticity, the facts and factuality found in the conventional form of written auto/biographies and contends that by nature these enterprises select, shape, and produce a very unnatural product. She considers the "great lives" that are most invariably those of white middle and upper class men who have achieved success according to conventional – and thus highly political – standards. In her determination to re-make the discipline of sociology from the standpoint of feminism she argues for a social science that makes the lives of women visible. She specifies how our time is concerned with the nature of "selves", and further examines "the self", "the subject" and her consciousness in relation to "the author".

Stanley prefers to evaluate the biographer's views as socially located and necessarily partial, as opposed to their claim to expertise. By refuting the notion of the biographer as someone who "reconstructs" a life, which proposes recovering the past, she prefers to look at their viewpoint that becomes more representative of their interpretation. In this

alternate view “ideas” are seen as the product of socially shared understandings reworked in different ways within particular cultural settings, although given a particular twist by the specificities of the life and work of a particular biographical subject. In feminist and cultural political terms, this means that people’s lives and behaviors make considerably more sense when they are located through their participation in a range of overlapping social groups, rather than being portrayed as somehow different, marked out all along by the seeds of their latter greatness²³. Finally, as Stanley points out, the notion of ““greatness” or “importance” is actually a historical, temporal and above all political product associated with particular persons but not others²⁴. In feminist and cultural political terms however the “obscure” can be at least and is sometimes considerably more significant historically than the famous or infamous.

Keeping in mind Stanley’s definition of biography as a collective identity craft’s distinct history can be understood as an emphasis on creating by hand an expression of human values that should not be lost by an increasingly technological world. Craft is about making connections between people across the divide of time and space.²⁵ Within this context, I determined to examine in depth an object from the textile collection that resonated with my own woman’s sense of self and history.

I chose to focus on a bed cover entitled “*La Paresseuse Boutonnue*” (Fig. 33). When I first inquired about the origins of this artifact, I was informed that it was made on l’Île-aux-Coudres, ca. 1900. The cover features the Charlevoix star motif that is particular to the Charlevoix region, north of Québec City. Both my maternal grandparents were born and raised there; it is an important geographical space for me with regard to my French Canadian lineage. As a white adult woman from a half French Canadian, half English-

Irish Canadian heritage, born in Montreal, locating my spatial-temporal family history has become more significant for me, since my birth as a mother.

Marius Barbeau, a self-proclaimed pioneer in the fields of anthropology and folk culture, was given the mandate by the National Museum (at that time part of the Geological Survey of Canada) in the early years of the 20th century, to collect and archive Quebec artifacts and traditions. His writings describe bed covers such as “*La Paresseuse Boutonnue*” that were specific to the Île-aux-Coudres area, and details the specific technique used to make this kind of bed cover²⁶.

The specificity of the technique is cited in the title “*La Paresseuse Boutonnue*,” loosely translated as “The Lazy Buttoned”²⁷. According to Marius Barbeau’s findings the women of l’Île-aux-Coudres discovered a way of producing these covers by accident. He describes this in this next passage taken from his published findings:²⁸

The island women used to adorn their covers with button-like knots which stood out in relief and formed broad patterns. One day circa 1831, at a time of political upheaval and great scarcity, they found themselves short of candlewick that served as material for the buttons. So they were forced to use their own local wool as a substitute. One of these, perhaps Pednaud or a Mailloux, dyed wool using the process of dyeing and boiling in salt water to stiffen the thread and give it more body for the knots. The experiment proved a success: it was a real discovery – a landmark for island handicrafts. The women marveled at the results, and would never again use candlewick which they had to buy when money was scarce.

With their hands, for their own use and pleasure, these “habitant” mothers fashioned for many years one of the finest decorated textiles. Their creation has given rise to the well-known “boutonné” blanket of Murray Bay. Further, the “boutonnue” or folk-tapestry of Charlevoix may be derived from tapestry making, because the process of introducing colored threads with fingers into the fabric while it is made on the loom is used in tapestry making.

In researching “*La Paresseuse Boutonnue*” several factors pointed to the possibility that this object was made at the *École du Meuble* here in Montreal, in 1941. An image in a book *École du Meuble 1930 to 1950* depicts a cover identical to it in front of an altar (Fig. 34). In discussing my findings with Wilson, he agrees that this “boutonnue” could be a traditional technique made at the *École du Meuble* during the craft revival of the 1940s and 1950s. He admits thinking it was an original bed cover from the turn of the century. Hence my longing to connect to this geographical location as a female, French-Canadian craft artist is also perhaps re-routed via this new information.

Nevertheless, the importance accorded to this textile object by its position within a collection that is housed in this craft museum in Quebec, points to the value we ascribe to practices of yesteryears and the narratives found therein. The Charlevoix star, with its eight-pointed limbs alludes to the skies of the Charlevoix region. The star motif became very popular in this region’s weaving traditions in the 19th century, and dominated their bed covers, lending its symbol to their specific identity²⁹, albeit it bears other significance as found in older cultures.

My analysis of “*La Paresseuse Boutonnue*” is but one example of the research that enters my art making process in attempting to connect my contemporary art as craft within women’s craft history. This is how my relationship to the feminist concepts of biography and history inspire my work. The objects and images I create participate in the collectives of women, mothers, and artists. Through the framework of memory and facts, I have fashioned a personal profile. These connections are part of the greater narrative of my experience. Memory bridges past and present. I have allowed myself to navigate through a variety of spaces (geographical, emotional, physical, social, domestic, professional, etc.). This singular landscape of my life is my authentic understanding of the world I live in. In my recent work I own my lived experience and propose it as subject-matter. By placing myself in relation to a larger cultural and historical network, my objective is to contribute my narrative to the greater voice of feminism, mothers, Canadian artists, craftsperson and individual woman. Here I deliberately claim many identities in the hopes of crossing as many boundaries as possible in my quest for communication.

As Robin Morey so eloquently describes in her essay entitled “Comments on Contemporary Quilts” however rudimentary the beginnings and dire needs, quilts were a creative statement of the maker(s)³⁰. She further notes that once the choice was made to imbue meaning into the design – if made with integrity – that quilt became a work of art, whatever its necessity and that universal themes of nature, life and death concerned the makers of old quilts.

In locating historical women’s textile work Kathy M’Closkey goes on to describe how the creation of “art” and its conceptual separation from other activities occurred late in

Western history, during the Renaissance and that since this period the constituent category of art has become part of the master narrative of humankind. She writes about our recognition and appreciation of art and how it is shaped by language and cultural conditioning. She argues that meanings are not imprinted into things by nature; they are developed and imposed by human beings. She draws attention to the power of language, especially when combined with literacy, stamps this knowledge with an authenticity that enlarges as it is perpetuated – reprinted, repeated, and thus rendered as, perceived truth³¹.

Woven bed covers, quilts and rugs (catalognes) in the French Canadian tradition, in this same way, attest to a female representation in both the Canadian and more specifically Quebec material culture. They are in fact a major archive of the female voice of our history whose contribution continues to be rendered invisible due to the value we neglect to accord it. In recent times, post-modernists and feminist art historians are deconstructing many of the most cherished assumptions of art history and aesthetics in order to achieve a more balanced view of the history of art.

Given craft's history and origins as a social movement concerned with human values and the magnitude of handwork as a source of economic income, what value do contemporary craft objects like my dolls represent? With contemporary Western society's heavy emphasis on labels and accreditations, what does my idea as social product translate as, with regard to value?

Kathy M'Closkey reminds us that central to the development of the visual arts in the twentieth century has been the desire to extend the boundaries of the traditional definitions of art, and at the same time expand the ways and means of creating works of

art.³² My large doll, exempt of any facial or sexual features alludes to a presence. This female presence (symbolic pale pink skin color) speaks of women's /mother's positions in relation to its participants and to the spaces it occupies (Fig. 35, 36, 37).

From my female perspective, hand-made textiles signify notions of survival, caring, love and sisterhood. They speak to me of a feminine symbolism and its position against an inflexible normalizing standard. The concepts of the self and the forms of self-representation in women's cultural and historical textiles have been downplayed for centuries. It is my hope that with this current body of work, through my agency, I am contributing to the production of knowledge by adding my parallel history as an artist-mother, in an effort to accord value to contemporary motherhood. I hope I have planted the seeds for a discourse that will examine my work as craft work and explore how its presence occupies space within both the private and the public realms. By transporting the large doll figure both within and outside of my home, I am happy with the dialogue it has already generated within my own community. By owning my own life experience as a proposed subject matter I am assigning worth and importance to my lived trajectory. By offering an alternative to the standard "lives worth talking about" I am reclaiming my power to make a difference.

Chapter Three

The Mother Image Exhibition

My exhibition, entitled *The Mother Image* (September 24, 2009- January 10, 2010) at the Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec features three artworks I produced between 2006 and 2009. These are visual explorations of my motherhood over a period of ten years. The exhibition takes place in a 19th century Neo-Gothic church that has been transformed into this museum. The mission of the Museum is to promote Quebec's cultural heritage, including the traditional arts and crafts of yesterday and to-day. The Museum has active partnerships with local, regional and national organizations dedicated to the promotion of contemporary crafts.

The Church is a structure that houses many “ghosts.” It is a sacred place imbued with symbolic references. Aside from the obvious symbols of God and saints, it is a place where significant events of the individual and family are sanctified: newborns are baptized; children are confirmed; marriage unions are blessed; and the dead are commemorated. In Christian doctrine, numerous ceremonies serve to validate and bless specific rites of passage throughout the life cycle. Within this context my art works also act as ghosts. They are physical and symbolic markers of motherhood, material objects with a ghostly presence tracing my journey as a mother. As a form of material culture these works acknowledge my particular experiences as a mother within the socio-cultural and religious connotations of a Catholic Church.

As a native Montrealer whose French and English-Irish family roots date back several generations, the space of a former church was a place for me to locate my images of

motherhood within a larger history. The Catholic faith of my mother and father has defined my family's identity and traditions. In situating my art in this place my works not only convey their own meanings from a contemporary standpoint. As well, the works dialogue with the architectural space and its collection of religious objects linking the present with the past (Fig. 38).

A museum is a privileged space. It is a site that validates and empowers works of art; and an environment that encourages critical analysis and discussion. By creating a bridge between past histories and my present work, my intention was to position my work as lived experience. In doing so I consciously decided to place myself as the subject and object of my work. This serves several purposes. First, from a subjective perspective, it lends significance to the years I have invested in my family subjectively as a mother. Second, it situates me objectively as a field researcher, immersed in exploring my own motherhood in my mother images. This dual process gives my "ordinary" life an authorial voice. It is a means of according value to my voice as a mother in contrast to the lives deemed "worthy" of talking about in the tradition of biography and autobiography³³. In that the objects I created are textile works this also gives voice to my identity as a fibre artist. This was particularly important to me since too little research has been devoted to the traditional textile crafts of Canadian and Quebec women.

Upon entering the museum, the first work one encounters are two 65 cm high dolls on a podium covered with a protective Plexiglas cover (Fig. 39). The dolls, hand-knitted and dyed a light pink skin tone and stuffed with batting, are faceless and sexless. Beneath them lies a light brown vinyl holster, in the tradition of the cowboy belt. One of the dolls is nestled inside the sleeve of the belt, while the other rests on top of it. I used these dolls

in a series of performances. By attaching the belt to my waist as a body accessory with the dolls placed in its sleeves, I proceeded to draw my dolls (rather than my guns) in various institutional settings. By confronting these places I was considering how they impacted both on my identity as a mother and the identity of my two boys. I documented these performances in photographs (Fig.40, 41, 42).

In doing these performances and recording them as visual documents I sought to question the commercial, social, religious and educational spaces connected to motherhood.

Through my explorations, I wanted to debate the imbedded meanings of these spaces and the idealized symbolic associations of material objects in these places. One of these ideals is the iconic representation of the Virgin Mary. This symbol continues to provide a model for motherhood that is rooted in the notion of self-sacrifice. It is, in my view, a fixed notion that dictates the female experience of motherhood.

In the museum, standing over the podium overlooking the dolls, the viewer sees the permanent collection (Fig. 43). In this collection of religious objects are sculptures of the Virgin Mary holding Jesus, scenes of The Virgin Mary's Lamentation of Christ and other maternal images associated with self-sacrifice. On both the right and the left sides of this former Church (which is itself the symbol of Mary as a Mother Church) I hung overlooking the collection, a series of fourteen large-scale banners, seven banners on each side. The banners on the right side depict me interacting with the two dolls (Fig. 44). These images are the digitized photographic documentation of my performances. To the left, is a different set of images that show my two boys interacting with a large-scale doll (Fig. 45).

I purposefully produced fourteen banners to connect my personal journey as a mother to the fourteen Stations of the Cross, an important journey in Christian religious practice. The original Stations of the Cross appear in paintings along the upper walls clustered in groups of two on each side. These Stations are not as apparent as they were when this space was a church because of the art objects that line the walls. By placing my banners above these objects, in the vicinity of the Stations, I reaffirmed the original design of this neo-Gothic church and then re-appropriated its structure and meaning to convey my own path. On one side of the central aisle of this church/museum I am physically “mother” and my children are represented as dolls, as iconic images of childhood. On the other side the large doll playing with my children is an objective reference to myself as an image of motherhood.

In contrast to the spiritual images of the Stations of the Cross, the pictures of my performance suggest a body language and a combative stance. This differs from the Christian ideal of the mother as a person who self-sacrifices. I believe that this notion of sacrifice leads to victimization. My images symbolically attack and replace the Christian vision of motherhood with alternate ones. The story of Jesus’ journey toward crucifixion was a result of his conviction by the Prefect of the Roman province of Judea, (AD 26-36), Pontius Pilate³⁴. Jesus gave up his life for his people. This burden of sacrifice while it began with the Crucifixion of Christ has become a female maternal trait linked to the Virgin Mary. She is the Mother who sacrifices, endures, resigns and gives up. In the Catholic religion, sacrifice has come to define the female condition. In that Jesus sacrificed himself for the life of his children, it is the feminine aspect of Jesus as life giver that has become the mother’s burden. My works resist and defy this notion of the

maternal both in how I act as a mother and in how this idea limits me as woman artist with family responsibilities.

My banners find a common ground with the traditional use of banners in the Church in that they proclaim an idea. However rather than using them to worship God my banners subvert this tradition. I am imaging my own power to draw attention to my humanness and its relevance to contemporary life. Moreover, my banners differ from the traditional hand-made banners that were often embroidered by the nuns. Instead, I adopt a photographic quality that is closely aligned to commercial practices. This disparity between traditional banners, the handmade objects of the collection, and my banners is an example of the in-between space that Maria Noel Secco discusses in the catalogue that accompanies this exhibition³⁵.

The images I have produced not only bring the performances into the museum but into the various spaces of my community. Our neighborhood soccer field, the façade of my house and my children's school are some examples of these spaces. The exterior spaces of my community resonate within the interior space of this once sacred building. The artifacts of the permanent collection, themselves memories of a distant past, are another contrast with these contemporary images of myself and my children. The playful and more humorous aspects of my boys' interactions with the larger doll are strangely juxtaposed to these objects. The bodily presence of my children, the personal connotations of these images, and the intimacy of their interactions with the large doll, remind the viewer that at one time the objects in this museum were enlivened by people in domestic settings.

Using a Mimaki-T1600 printer designed for large textile digital output, the banners were printed on semi-transparent fabric. I purposefully chose this fabric as a metaphor for the ephemeral quality of my performances. In doing so, I considered these performances to be an art form more concerned with an immediate social impact than physical permanence. The banners are placed above the objects of the collection in front of the original Neo-Gothic-styled window. These hand-made windows are another reminder of traditional craft in contrast with contemporary processes I used to create these fabrics. They hang under Gothic-style archways with the exception of two that frame a third artwork at the nave of the church/museum. Although the windows are covered for conservation purposes with curtains the natural light from behind (5% of what would otherwise stream through) as well as the artificial spotlights directing light from the front, allow for a play of light that creates textures, shadows and patterns (Fig. 46). As well the light makes certain areas of the images hard to see at specific times. The strength of the sunlight and quality of light be it sunny or cloudy, cause parts of the image to appear or disappear depending on light. This aspect of visible/invisible is quite suitable as it acts like a veil for my actions in this historic and sacred space. It also serves to reveal in these different variations of light the various commentaries I am making that are specific to the historic roots of these symbols. By questioning their relevance in relation to my current experience I am also creating a compare and contrast exercise that enables an analysis and a re-reading of history.

The large doll that appears with my boys in the banner photographs is the human sized doll seated on a chair amid the sacred objects of the museum's collection (Fig. 47). Its faceless, sexless body was machine-knitted, dyed a light pink, and then stuffed with

batting. The doll seems to sink into the chair because of its heavy weight. It's limp form gives it a "soft" posture.

This large craft object was produced to echo the smaller dolls. They all share a similar skin tone made to approximate my own fair Caucasian skin color. Just as the smaller dolls represent not only my own two children but the universal child, the larger doll represents me as the mother figure for my children, as well as the universal mother. My intention was to give this doll to my two sons and allow them to interact with it in the manner they chose. I had chosen to interact with my two smaller dolls in what I saw as my relationship with my sons. But I also wanted my sons to interact with this larger doll as an investigation of our mutual relationship.

First, I documented my children's interactions with this doll in the privacy of our home (Fig. 48). We then took the doll to public places that corresponded with the sphere of our family activities. These staged interactions also permitted us to investigate our connection to a large craft object as we moved within these different spaces.

My sons and I enjoyed the ability to interact with an art object as opposed to the traditional role of the spectator who looks and does not touch a work such as a painting or sculpture. This tactile aspect was particularly powerful. My children were able to play, cuddle, lean and flop around on the doll (Fig. 49). The immediacy and spontaneity that is so prevalent in children of this age could easily contribute to their interactions. Our connection to textiles with which we have both a history and an everyday relationship was emphasized by the physical quality of the doll.

In relation to craft history the large doll was a response to its functional role in the same way a toy allows for play. As my children moved the doll through a variety of spaces, it began to take on a character of its own, different and separate from my intentions. The children acted with enthusiasm toward this unusual gift. It challenged their belief system. My older son was quick to remind me that I had given him, a boy, a very large pink doll. It challenged their standards as no other children in their environment were given the opportunity to investigate such an object, much less in the public sphere of their activities. It challenged me as the coordinator of these staged interactions to fully own my identity as an artist-mother as we made ourselves obvious in our interactions within our community.

These performances were documented and printed on the banners lining the left side of the church/museum as you move toward the front. They were meant to compare and contrast with the seven banners depicting my interactions with my smaller dolls that hang on the opposite side. My big doll is located to the right side toward the front of the museum. Sitting beneath a painting of “La Vierge des Sept Douleurs” (The Seven Sorrows of The Most Holy Virgin Mary) and besides the sculpture of “La Piéta” (Italian for pity), this figure holds no erect stance (Fig. 50). The slouching body emits a fatigue that is not ever associated with the Virgin Mary, who is portrayed in a more composed manner, as always.

My doll emanates a human aspect rather than a saintly quality. This specific strategy of contrasting this iconic symbol with a shadow of myself allowed me to consider the expectations that are associated with mothers in connection to religious teachings, and hence collective identities. The comparison between this saintly woman and a

contemporary counterpart seems irrelevant. When does the Virgin Mother wash clothes? How long does she take to prepare dinner? When she is not involved in the sacred responsibilities of guiding, protecting and peacekeeping an entire people, is she worried her income may not be sufficient for food and clothing?

This contrast of religious symbol and everyday reality is also addressed through the images of my performances such as drawing my dolls at a headstone in the cemetery (Fig. 51). In this performance I face past histories that no longer correspond to the conditions of my life. Another image, of my drawing my dolls at my home is a commentary on domestic life and my decision to break with the past with personal choices I have made in raising my children (Fig. 52).

As you walk toward the nave of the church, there is a space with two benches as well as information about the banners and the accompanying catalogue that can be consulted. From this location viewers are able to turn and see the banners from a more central perspective. In continuing towards the front of the church/museum, parts of my sculpture, titled *RibRaft* can be seen resting on the space of the altar. This work can be seen through the glass cases and between the various artworks that make-up the collection. Hints of limbs reaching upwards catch the attention of the viewer.

At the foot of the nave I have placed my large-scale sculpture in what was once the most powerful and sacred part of the church. The earliest stone altars were the tombs of the martyrs interred in the Roman catacombs. The practice of celebrating mass on the tombs of martyrs can be traced with a large degree of probability to the first quarter of the second century³⁶. This notion of sacrifice is also referred to in other writings. Typically

objects belonging to martyrs were housed on the altar space before God.³⁷ In addition, the altar, recognized as the threshold for the priest to celebrate mass, has historically been reserved for men.

This passage taken from the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition, is a description by Maria Noel Secco of the work based on my interview with her:

With the *RibRaft*, Endacott continues to use the body as a stage of representation, this time conceived as a vessel that envelops a mother's unconditional love and tenderness. The choice of materials and process of construction and assemblage contribute to the meaning of piece. Working for the first time with high density styrofoam on a large scale was a challenge for Endacott. The use of this material was determined by the demands of the shape and size of the piece and the transportation requirements (which discouraged her original idea of using a more organic material, such as wood). Cutting, shaping and sanding the styrofoam required much time and the use of both hand and power tools.

The rest of the procedure, which involved covering the piece with white plaster and staining it with tea to achieve the look of bone or wood, was laboriously made by hand in an experimental process of trial and error. Choosing to stain the sculpture with diluted tea was a work of memory and connection with Endacott's English-Irish heritage. The next stage of producing *Rib Raft* required the dyeing of seventy meters of high-end velvet, a blend of silk and viscose. Endacott selected a rich brown/red color that would evoke the earthiness of a rooted history which she envisioned as an enveloping blanket of comfort.

By placing *RibRaft* on the former altar space I chose to emphasize the mother's role as Church, a definition of redemption quite different from the idea of female sacrifice

defined earlier in this paper. A woman's purpose and her vocation in the Church is revealed in the structure of family, the Trinity and in the Blessed Mother. In the same way that a family functions in different roles, father and mother, man and wife, so the Church also functions. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he compares the submission and absolute love between man and wife to the dying of Christ to achieve the holiness of the Church. Everyone in the Church then mirrors the image of woman. Yes, the Church possesses a hierarchical structure, but this structure is ordered entirely for the holiness of all its members. Similarly, the Trinity reveals to us how the different and distinct roles of Father, Son and Holy Spirit perpetuate selfless love. Finally, Mary, the mother of God and the first disciple, gives us a further understanding of what it is to be woman; through her submissive and humble "yes" came the incarnation of Christ, the Church and thus spiritual salvation.³⁸

RibRaft appropriates both the skeleton of a boat and the rib cage of the human body. Its combined symbol was chosen to speak about my journey through motherhood as a way to capture the in-between spaces that compromised the myriad of transformations I experienced as I navigated toward my present identity. It further speaks of the journey as a process that is constantly changing.

The scale of *RibRaft* reflects its function as a floatation device as well as its importance as a life-saving raft. The mother-child relationship is linked to the work by the soft luxurious and tactile qualities of the special velvet that drapes the sculpture. An abundance of 70 meters of velvet dyed a tone of red-brown color is entwined within the limbs and around the body of *RibRaft*. This fabric flows down the steps toward the museum's floor (Fig. 53). The luminous quality of the fabric emphasizes its rich color

and texture. As the viewer walks around the sculpture, the light changes; half the fabric shimmers with reflective light while the other half (the opposite side of the fabric) vibrates with a deep brown color.

Although the fabric is all the same piece and dyed evenly, this play of light is specific to this type of velvet. The direction of the pile combined with how the light hits it is the reason for this effect. It was my hope that viewers would feel engaged to walk around the sculpture as a way to take it in from various angles as the light changes with each step. The quietness of this space with the sacred symbols that are inherent to the architecture, lend themselves to this reflective component. The sculpted wooden pews that surround the sculpture, made for the choir in its traditional function in 1867, add supplementary encouragement for meditation. At the vernissage, one man sat in one of the pews taking-in the work, over a prolonged period of time.

This artwork is a feminist interpretation of the creation of humankind. In Genesis (2: 21-3), Eve or 'woman' was formed from the rib (or 'side') of Adam (that is, 'man') while he was in a deep sleep, from which woman was born from man's rib³⁹. Located on what would be considered the most powerful space in the patriarchal history of Catholicism, the large rib vessel has an undeniable presence. The reference to a rib cage, a symbol of the dead, was also a way for me to speak of the lives of the women before me. Indeed I come from a long line of strong women within my own extended family. In addition, it was a way of placing myself within the greater history of mothers. The sixteen large ribs that protrude upwards from the base of the sculpture echo the whalebone structure of the ceiling. Might these two structures allude to an encased symbol that extends itself toward a womb-like reference?

My art and research come from the social structures of my experience. These structures are a complex network of systems that have pushed me to examine both the polarized areas and the gray zones of my own motherhood more carefully. It is my hope that my artwork will act as traces of my past and more recent experiences as a mother and contribute to a larger understanding and validation of the mothering experience in relation to feminism and women's textile arts.

As Aganetha Dyck, Jin-me Yoon and Kati Campbell before me, it is important to contribute to this on-going discourse so that younger generations will, like me, be able to locate themselves and their experience in relation to other mother artists. In my own teaching it surprises me to find how many young women consider the term feminism to be a pejorative label. In recent years I have witnessed their naïve perspective as they describe to me that the ground that has been formally won by previous generations of feminists is solid and unmovable. As a child of the '70's it seems blatant to me how conservative a period we now live in, compared to the more liberal years of my youth. It also rings true that the institution that I initially began my studies in has also changed from a more humanities-driven teaching to a corporate model. From this standpoint I think it is a valued contribution to consider my artwork as a contribution to exploring this model of performance and its emphasis on continual activity in relation to other aspects of our lives.

Like my sister artists my work speaks of my experience and my history. Like them, my work is a testament to a reality that lives outside of traditional/historic images and negates the dominant ideology of what has come to define motherhood. My story is

added to a larger maternal voice that endeavors to speak for itself rather than act in a prescribed way.

Indeed I have become quite curious as to why people have the need to locate themselves through the past and why that is considered to outweigh so much of the present. I understand that it is a way of identifying past experiences and to move forward rather than reinventing the wheel. I also understand that it is a celebration and a way to render homage to those who have come before us and to be thankful for how they have helped us to become who we are today. But is it not a passive way of forgoing asserting ourselves and evaluating what is relative to our current situation. Is it not a learned behavior of accepting and yielding to a (patriarchal) power that has been sitting comfortably in our lives for far too long? By accepting this contract of acquiescence women have been making a trade-off that benefits who? Most people understand accountability but many don't invite it; and power works precisely in this way. Unless you speak up for yourself, unless you make others conscious of your concerns, it may fall on deaf ears.

Just as the history of art is being re-written to include women artists who have been left out, so too is this same history opening to include works by contemporary mother-artists and works that speak about motherhood. It is with a sense of accomplishment that I continue to offer my experience and my knowledge through my artistic endeavors toward this goal precisely.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Vera Lemecha. *The Embodied Viewer*. Exhibition Catalogue, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, 1991. p.16
- ² Marsha Meskimmon. *The Art of Reflection: Women Artists' Self-Portraiture in the Twentieth Century*, Scarlet Press, London, 1996. p.149
- ³ Vera Lemecha. *The Embodied Viewer*. Exhibition Catalogue, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, 1991. p.16
- ⁴ Vera Lemecha. *The Embodied Viewer*. Exhibition Catalogue, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, 1991. p.16
- ⁵ Ibid. p.16
- ⁶ Ibid. p.16
- ⁷ Shirley Madill. *Aganetha Dyck*, Exhibition Catalogue. Winnipeg Art Gallery, Winnipeg, 1995. p.11
- ⁸ Jan Allen. *Fertile Ground*, Exhibition Catalogue, Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 1996. p. 6, 7
- ⁹ Ibid. p.7
- ¹⁰ Janet Wolff. "Prospects and Problems for a Postmodern Feminism", in *Feminine Sentences*, 1990, p.1
- ¹¹ Martha Langford. *Suspended Conversations, The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, 2008. p.3
- ¹² Ibid. p.4
- ¹³ Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics (1998), Participation*, Edited by Claire Bishop, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006. p.160-164
- ¹⁴ Rosi Braidotti. *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002. p.11
- ¹⁵ Luce Irigaray. *Speculum of the Other Woman* translated by Gillian C. Gill, Les Éditions de minuits, Paris, 1974. p.282
- ¹⁶ Roland Barthes. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers, Hill & Wang, NY, 1957, 1972. p.111

¹⁷ Michel Serre. "Theory of the Quasi-Object." *The Parasite* (1980), trans. By Lawrence R. Schehr, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1982. p.230

¹⁸ Liz Stanley. *The Auto/biographical I. The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto-Biography*, Manchester University Press, NY, 1992. p.128

¹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu. *The Field of Cultural Production*, Chapter 2, "The Production of belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods". Columbia University Press, NY, 1993. p. 75.

²⁰ Liz Stanley. *The Auto/Biographical I. The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/Biography*, Manchester University Press, NY, 1992. p.10

²¹ *La Vie Quotidienne au Québec*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1983. p.351-360

²² Liz Stanley. *The Auto/biographical I. The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto-Biography*, Manchester University Press, NY, 1992. p.3

²³ Ibid. p.9

²⁴ Ibid. p.8

²⁵ Craft in America Review by staff writers, *Shuttle, Spindle & Dyepot*, Spring, 2007, Volume XXXVIII, No.2, Issue 150. p. 40

²⁶ Marius Barbeau, *The Kingdom of Saguenay*, Bright Yarns on the Loom, 1931. p.108

²⁷ Ibid. p.108

²⁸ Ibid. p. 108

²⁹ Roosa Rönka. *À la poursuite de l'étoile de Charlevoix*, Le musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, May 2006.

³⁰ Kathy M'Closkey and Robin Morey. *Fibre, Tradition / Transition: Historic Textiles from Essex and Kent Counties and Contemporary Canadian Quilts*. Exhibition Catalogue, Art Gallery of Windsor, 1988. n.p.

³¹ Ibid. n.p.

³² Ibid. n.p.

³³ Liz Stanley. *The Auto/biographical I. The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto-Biography*, Manchester University Press, NY, 1992. p. 3

³⁴ www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/460341/Pontius-Pilate

³⁵ Noel Secco, Maria. Laura Endacott. *The Mother Image*. Exhibition catalogue of *The Mother Image Exhibition*, Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, 2009. p.7

³⁶ *The Catholic Encyclopedia*: Christendom
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03699b.htm>

³⁷ Philip H. Pfatteicher & Carlos R. Messerl . *Manual on the Liturgy: Lutheran Book of Worship*. 1979. p.152.

³⁸ The Gonzaga Witness. The Catholic Voice on Campus. Walden University. The Role of Women in the Catholic Church by Beth Hanson. Issue date: 1/1/07. Current Issue: October 1, 2009. www.gonzagawitness.com

³⁹ www.rural-point-baptist.com/Eve.pdf

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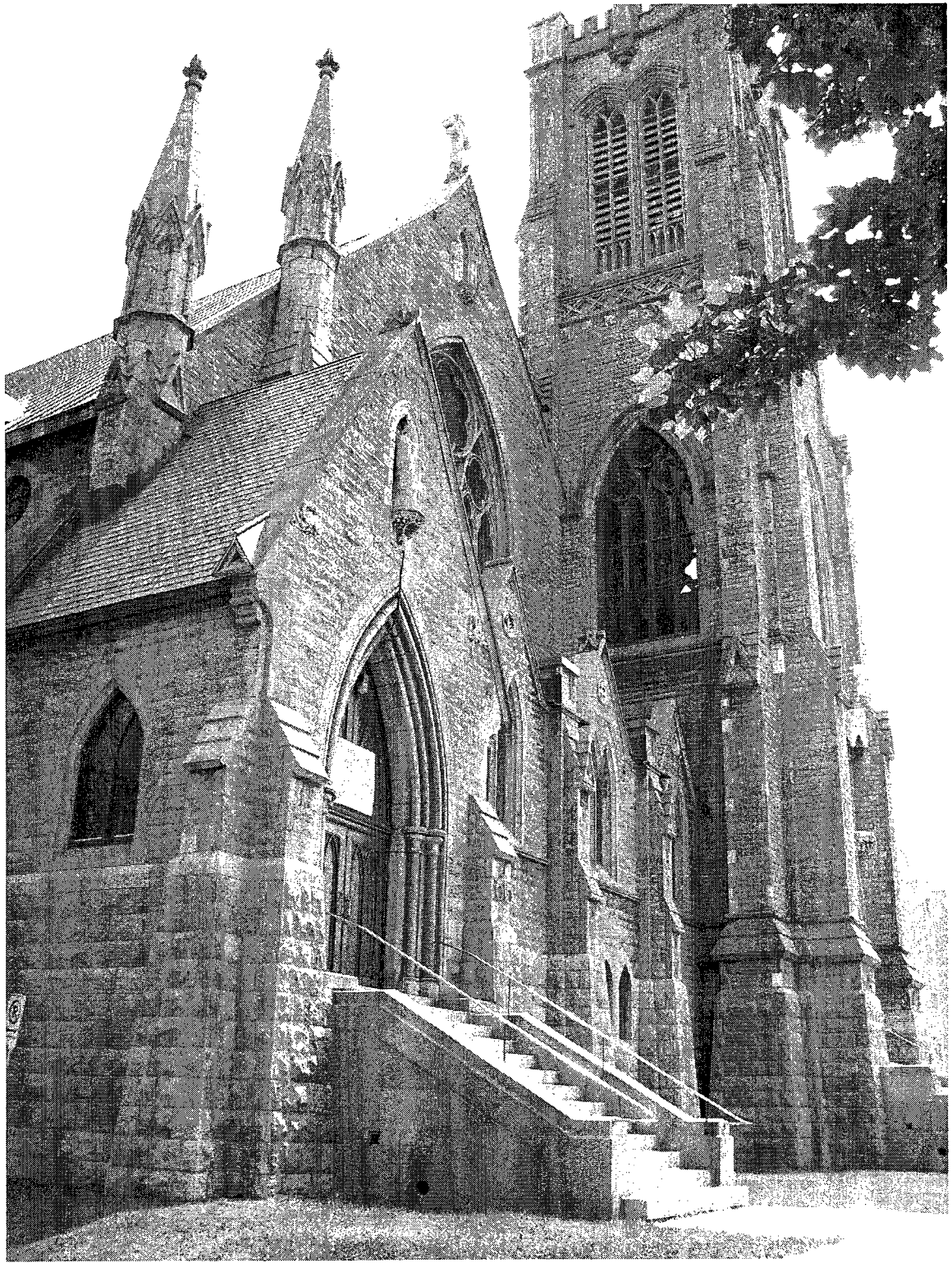


Fig. 1 Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, Montreal. Built in 1867 by Frederic Lawford. It was moved to its present location in 1931.

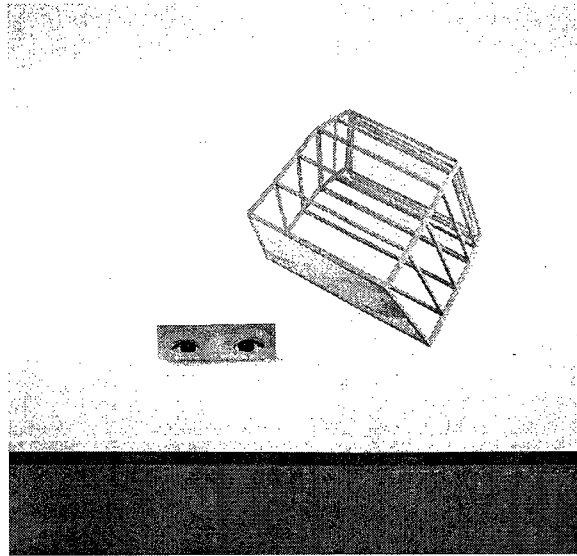


Fig. 2 Kati Campbell, *Dyad*, 1988. Photo serigraph on aluminum mirror, serigraph on transparent plastic film, and painted wood, 120.7 x 233.7 x 140.3 cm. Illus. in *The Embodied Viewer*, Glenbow Art Gallery, (Calgary: 1991) p.38

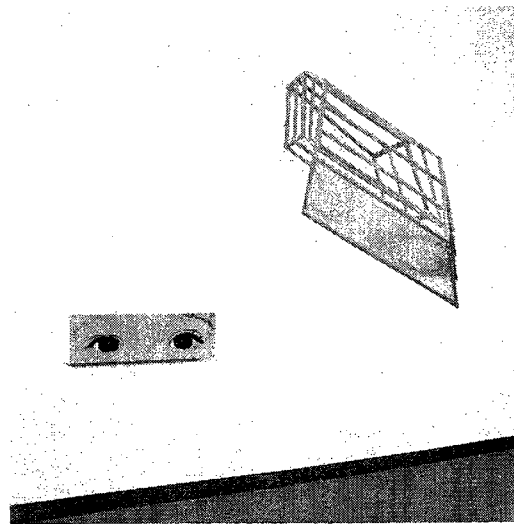


Fig. 3 Kati Campbell, *Dyad*, 1988. Photo serigraph on aluminum mirror, serigraph on transparent plastic film, and painted wood, 120.7 x 233.7 x 140.3 cm. Illus. in *The Embodied Viewer*, Glenbow Art Gallery, (Calgary: 1991) p.39

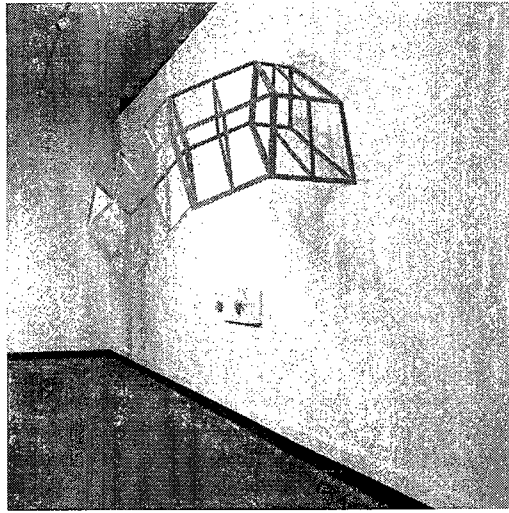


Fig. 4 Kati Campbell, *Dyad*, 1988. Photo serigraph on aluminum mirror, serigraph on transparent plastic film, and painted wood, 120.7 x 233.7 x 140.3 cm. Illus. in *The Embodied Viewer*, Glenbow Art Gallery, (Calgary: 1991) p.39

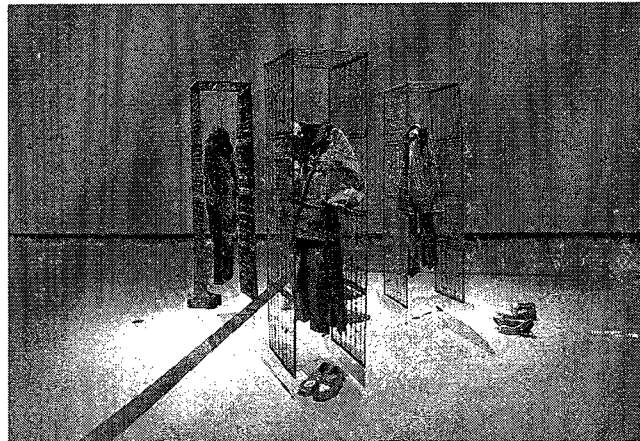


Fig. 5 Aganetha Dyck, *The Extended Wedding Party (Detail)*, 1995. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. Metal Queen Excluder Garment Bags, Denim Bee blanket garments, shoes, bees wax, honeycomb. Overall dimensions vary with installation. Illus. in *Aganetha Dyck*,_Winnipeg Art Gallery (Winnipeg: 1995) p.44



Fig. 6 Aganetha Dyck, *The Extended Wedding Party* (Detail), 1995. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. Metal Queen Excluder Garment Bags, Denim Bee blanket garments, shoes, bees wax, honeycomb. Overall dimensions vary with installation. Illus. in *Aganetha Dyck*, Winnipeg Art Gallery (Winnipeg: 1995) p.45



Fig. 7 Aganetha Dyck, *The Extended Wedding Party; Lady in Waiting, Size 7* (detail), 1995. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada. Glass dress, 300 lbs. of honeycomb, string of pearls, clear Plexiglas evening bag, and clear Plexiglas women's size 7 shoes. Overall dimensions vary with installation. Illus. in *Aganetha Dyck*, Winnipeg Art Gallery (Winnipeg, 1995) p. 46

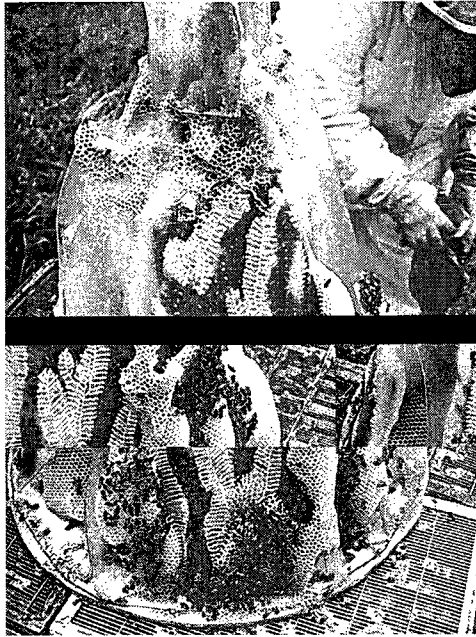


Fig. 8 Aganetha Dyck, *The Extended Wedding Party; Lady in Waiting, Size 7* (detail), 1995. Artist working at St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre. Illus. in *Aganetha Dyck*, (Winnipeg: 1995) p.15



Fig. 9 Aganetha Dyck, *The Extended Wedding Party; Lady in Waiting, Size 7* (detail), 1995. Glass dress, 300 lbs. of honeycomb, string of pearls, clear Plexiglas evening bag, and clear Plexiglas women's size 7 shoes. Overall dimensions vary with installation. Illus. in *Aganetha Dyck*, Winnipeg Art Gallery (Winnipeg, 1995) p.47



Fig. 10 Jin-me Yoon, *Intersection (1)*, 1996. Transmounted C-Print., Diptych, left panel, 56" x 40. Illus. in *Fertile Ground*, The Agnes Etherington Art Centre (Kingston: 1996) n.p.

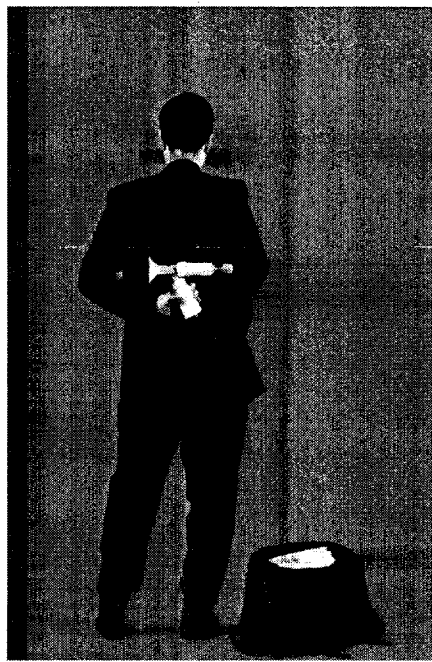


Fig. 11 Jin-me Yoon, *Intersection (2)* 1996. Transmounted C-Print, Diptych, right panel, 56" x 40. Illus. in *Fertile Ground*, The Agnes Etherington Art Centre, (Kingston: 1996) n.p.

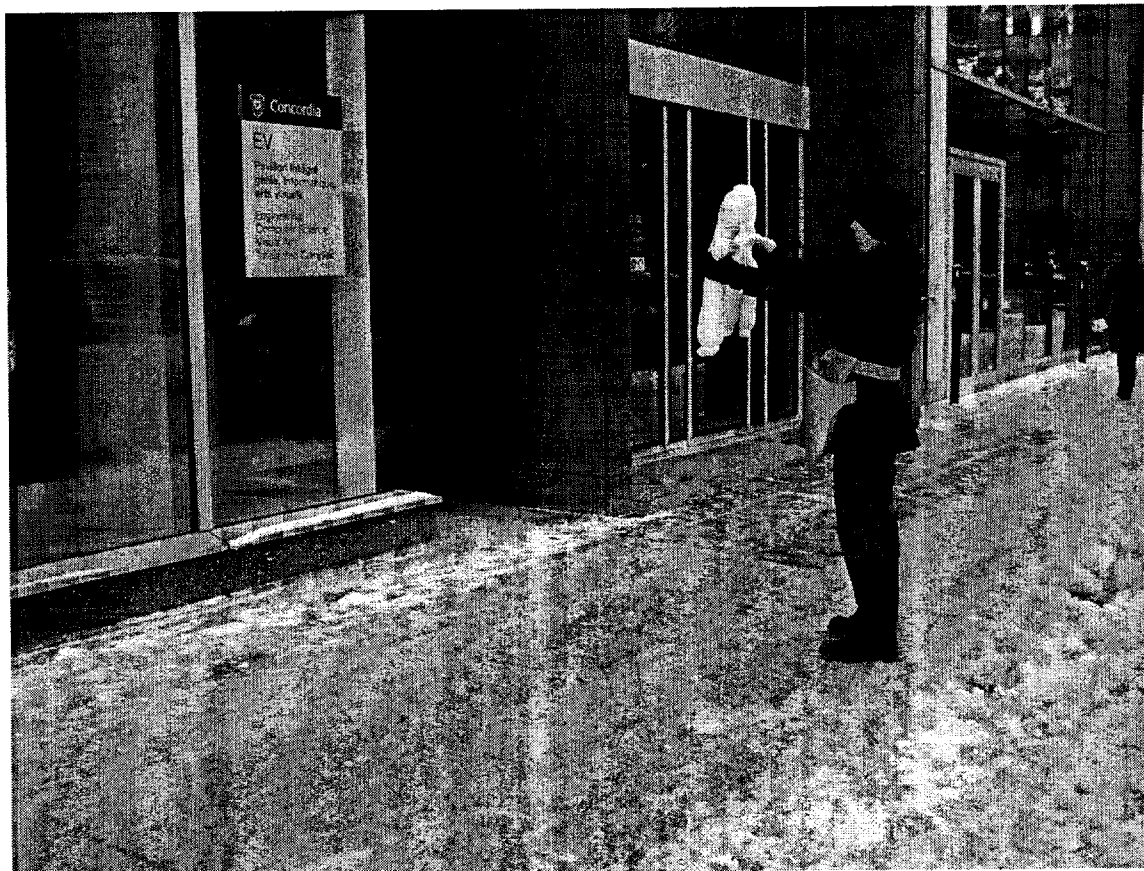


Fig. 12 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, (detail) 2006-2009. Digital photograph of artist's performance with textile dolls. Concordia University's E.V. building, Montreal. Photograph Tim Jackson.



Fig. 13 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of performance by Spencer and Montgomery Jackson with textile doll. Benny Park, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

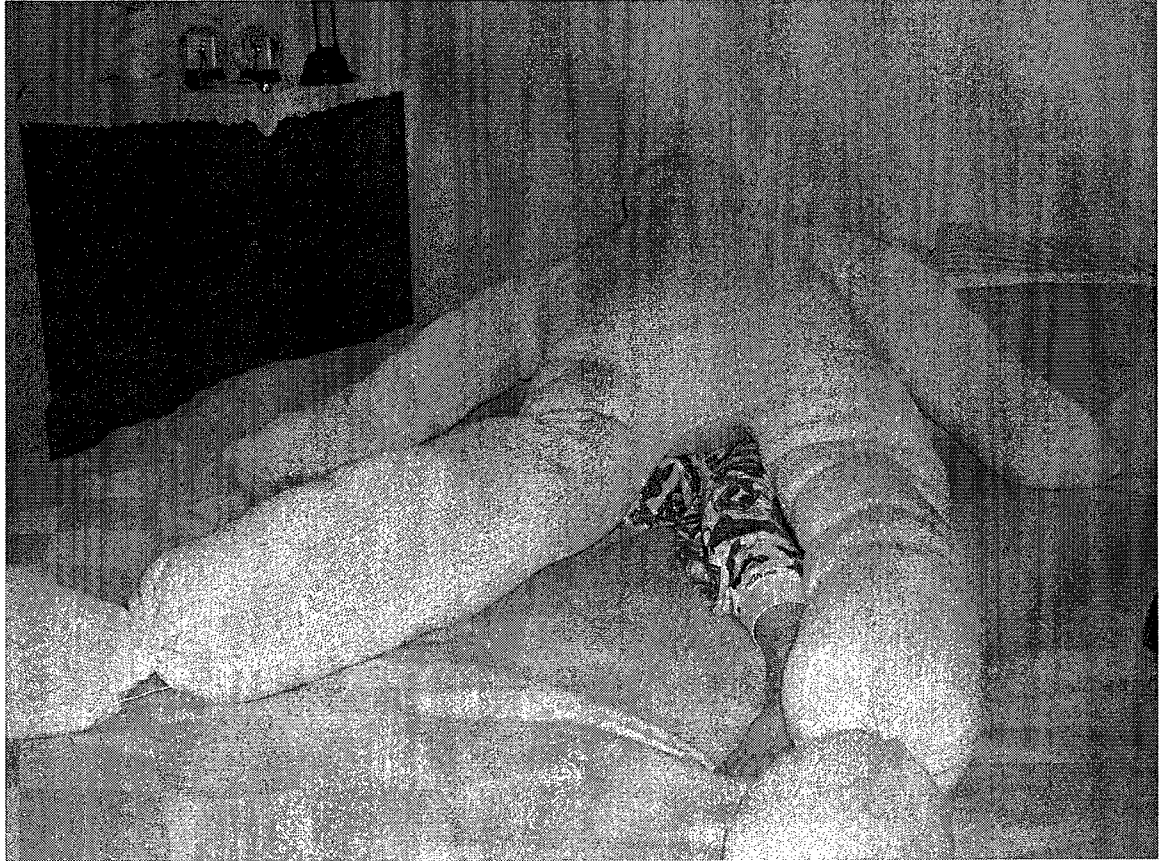


Fig. 14 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of Montgomery Jackson's performance with textile doll. Artist's home, N.D.G. Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 15 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, (detail) 2006-2009. Digital photograph of artist's performance with textile dolls, Cineplex Theatre, Montreal. Photograph Beilan Gao.



Fig. 16 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of Spencer and Montgomery Jackson's performance in family car, N.D.G. Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

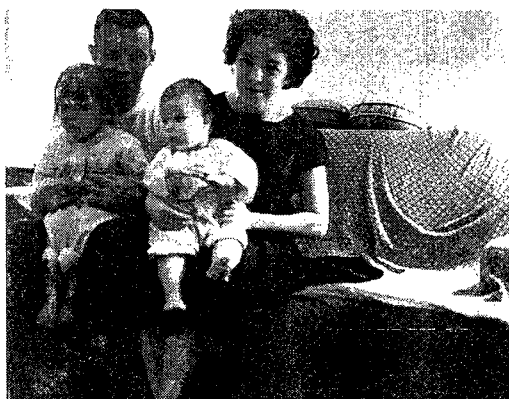


Fig. 17 Family Photograph of Laura Endacott's family. Father Desmond Endacott with sister Lise on his lap (left) and mother Aline with baby Laura on her lap (right). Inscription on the back reads "La Sainte Famille", 1964.

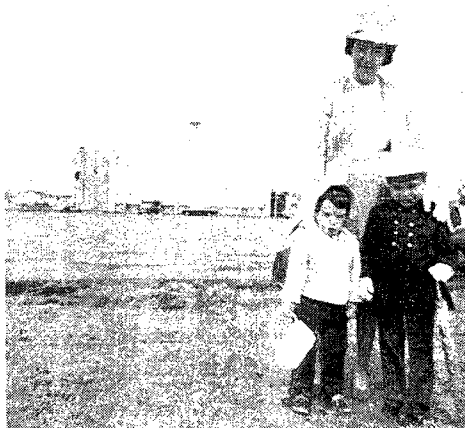


Fig. 18 Family Photograph of Aline Endacott (mother), sister Lise (right) and Laura (left). Background is St-Richard's Parish, Montreal, 1966. Photograph Desmond Endacott.



Fig. 19 Family Photograph of First Communion of Lise and Laura Endacott. Ste-Catherine-de-Sienne Parish, Montreal, c. 1972. Photograph by D. Endacott.

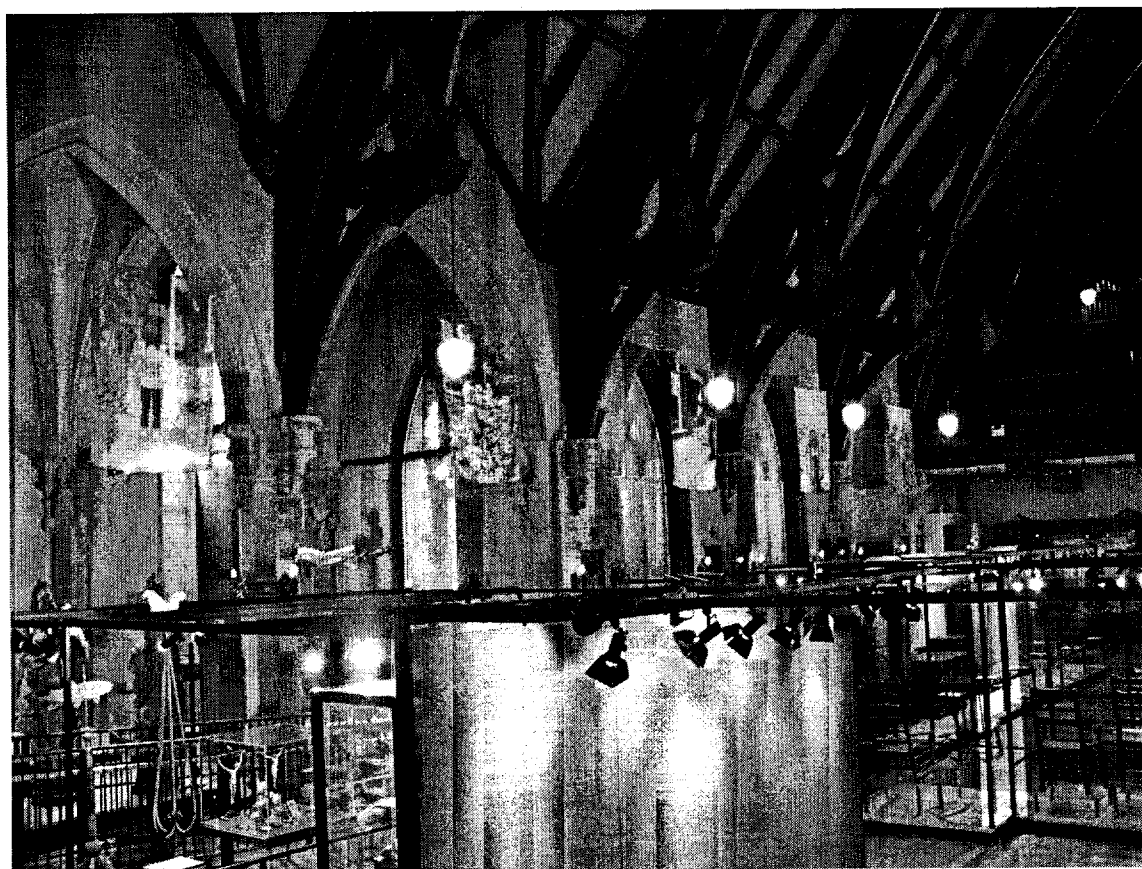


Fig. 20 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, 2006-2009 (detail). Each panel 132 x 183 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 21 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Each panel 132 x 183 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Appropriated Stations of the Cross installation with textile banners (opposite view). Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 22 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of performance. Artist's children with textile doll at their home, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 23 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of performance with large textile doll. Artist's children in Westmount Park, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

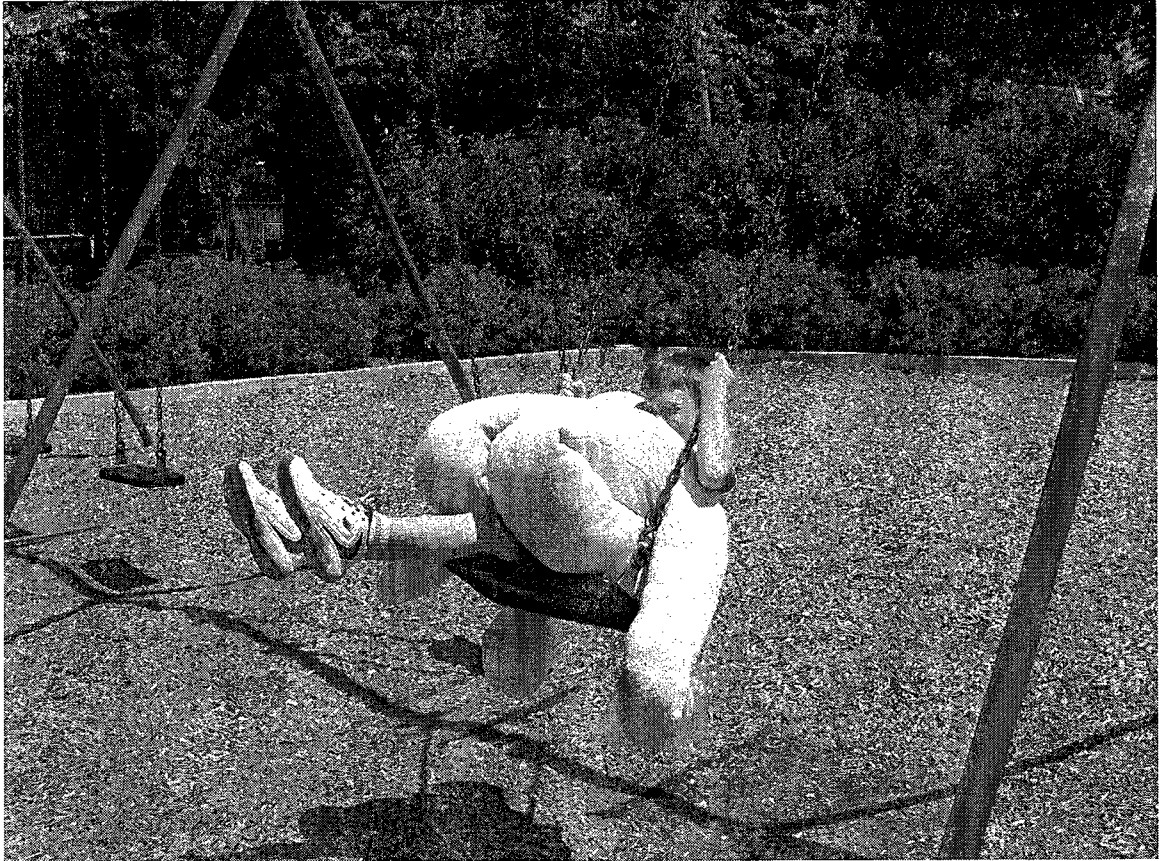


Fig. 24 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of Spencer Jackson's performance with large textile doll. Benny Park, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

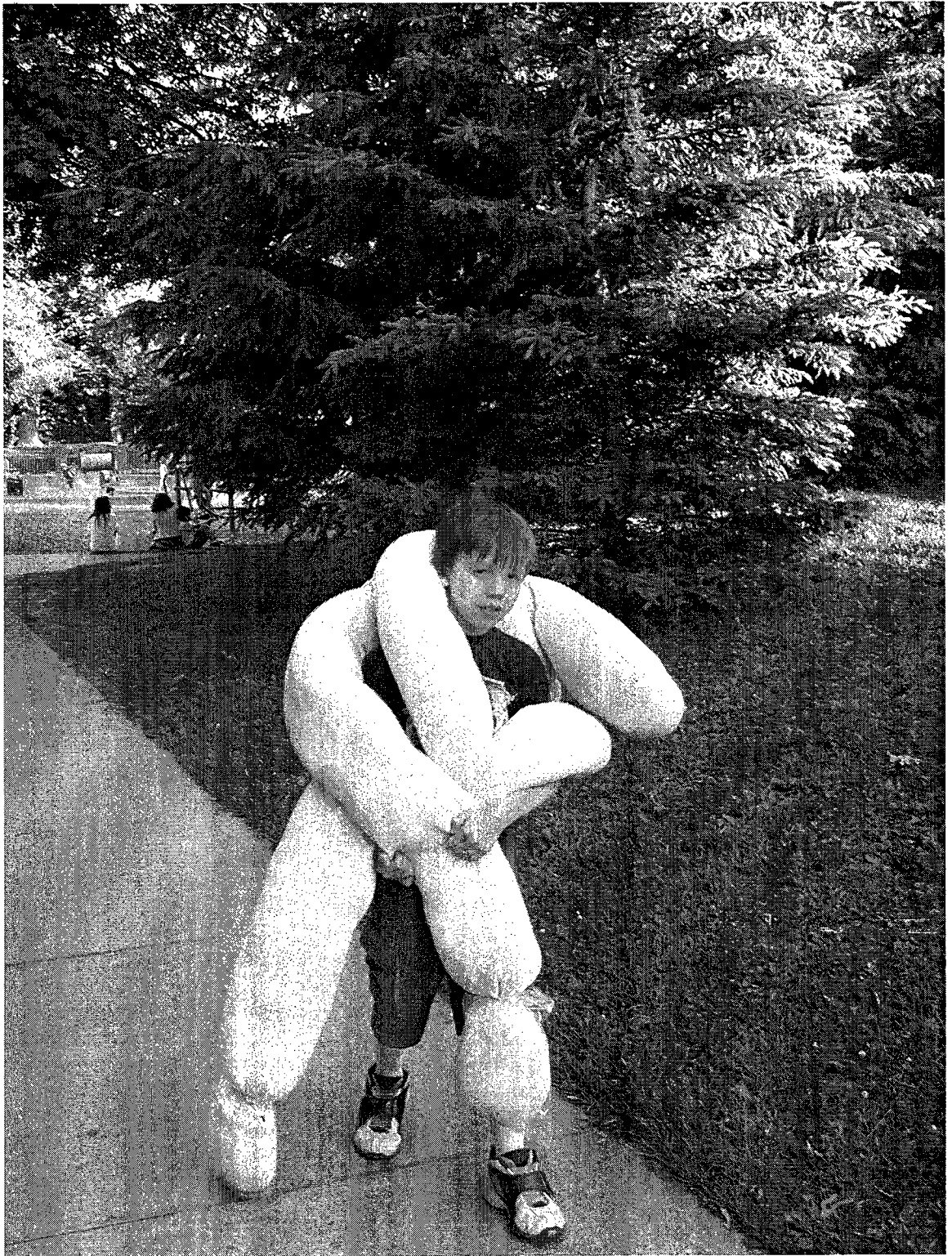


Fig. 25 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of Montgomery Jackson 's performance with large textile doll. Westmount Park, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

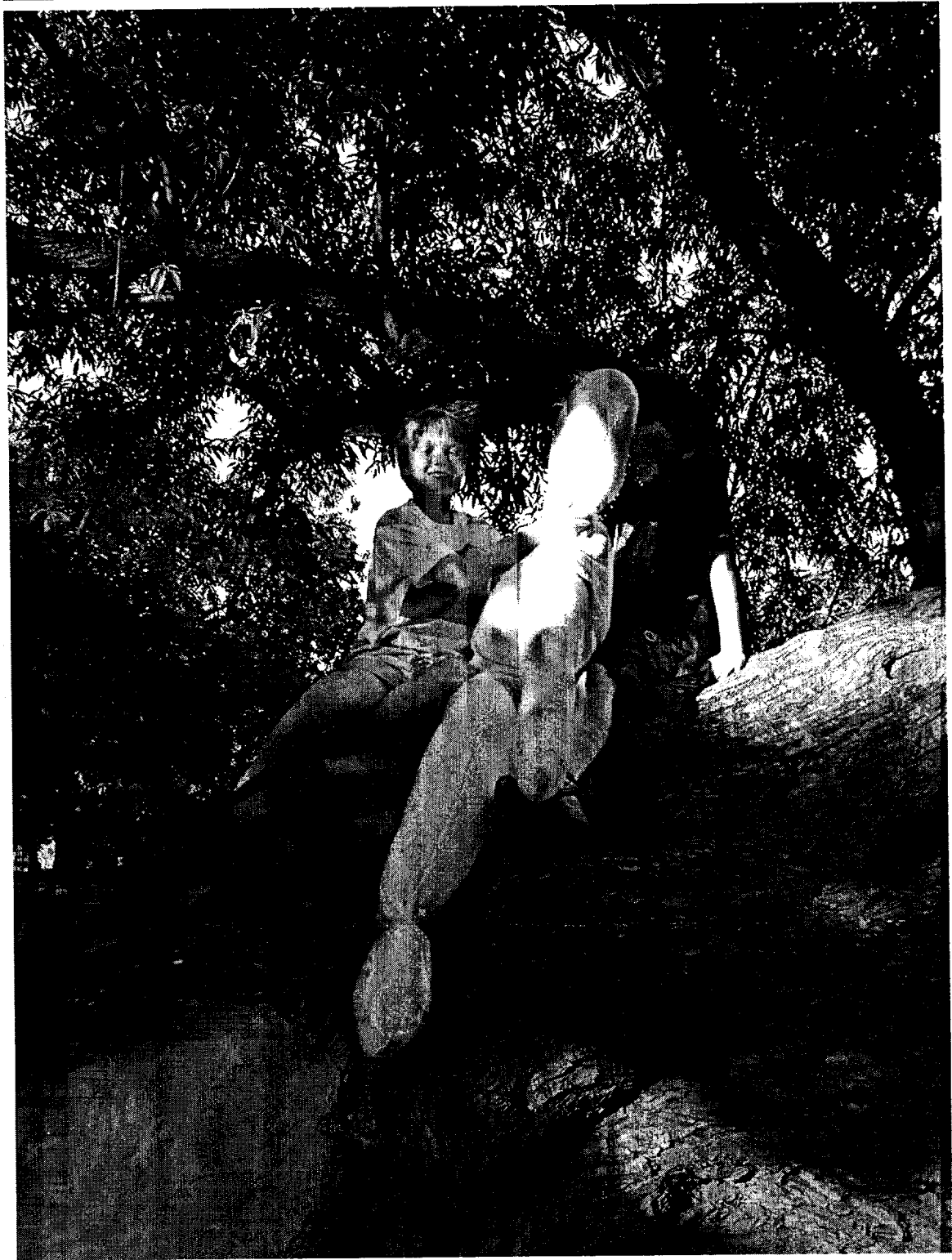


Fig. 26 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of performance with large textile doll. Spencer and Montgomery Jackson, Westmount Park, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

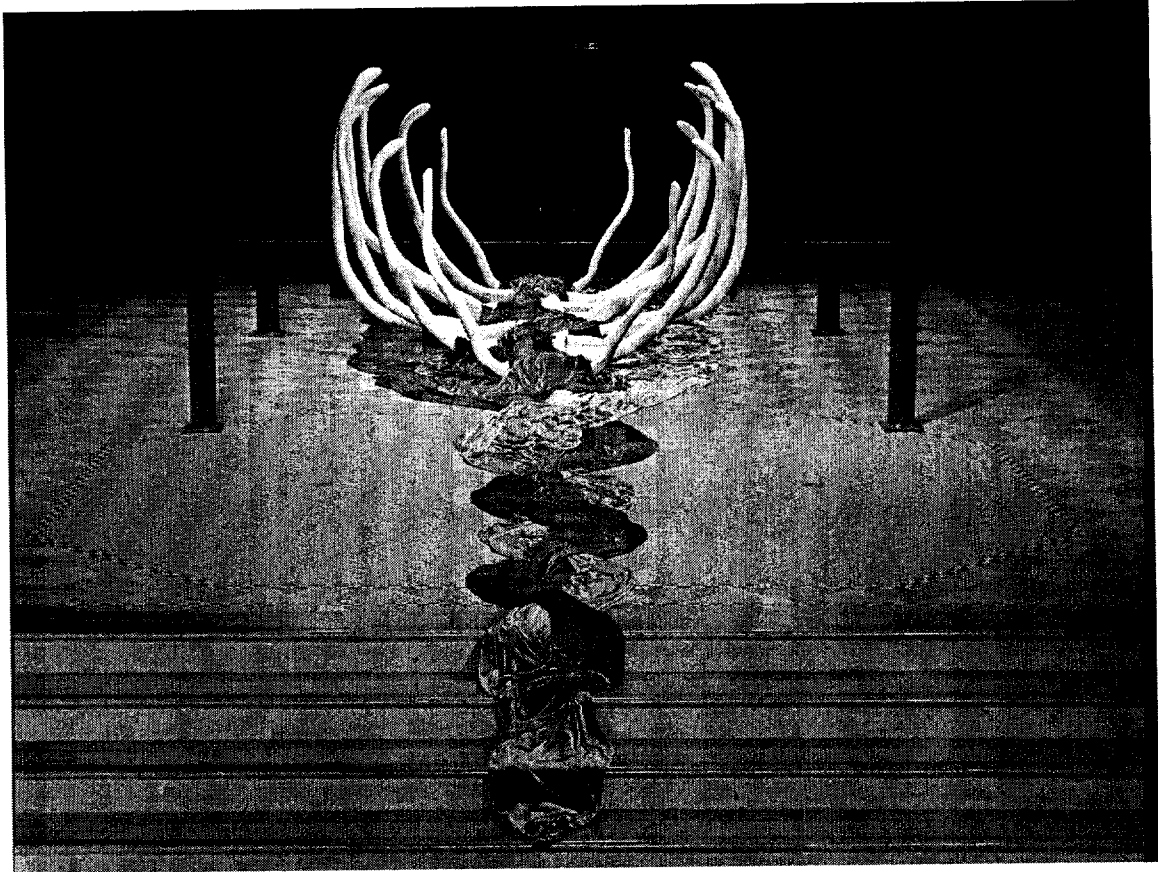


Fig. 27 Laura Endacott, *RibRaft*, sculpture, 2009. Velvet dyed with Procion dyes, high-density sculpture sculpted by hand and by machine, coated with plaster and stained with tea, 366 x 152.5 x 122 cm. approximately. *The Mother Image Exhibition*, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 28

Laura Endacott, *RibRaft*, sculpture (detail), 2009. Velvet dyed with Procion dyes, high-density sculpture, sculpted by hand and by machine, coated with plaster and stained with tea. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.

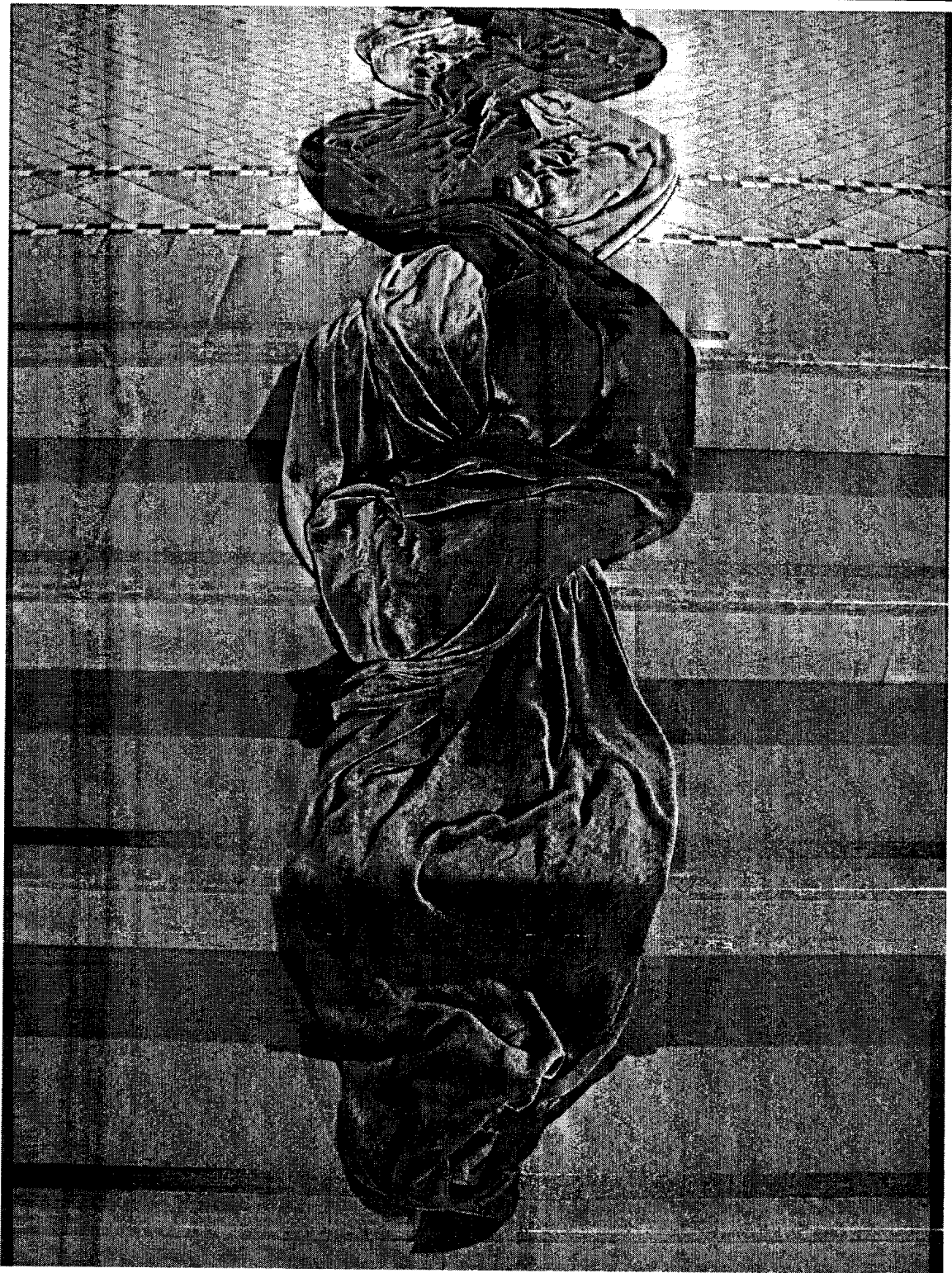


Fig. 29 Laura Endacott, *RibRaft*, sculpture (detail), 2009. Seventy metres of velvet dyed with Procion dyes. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.

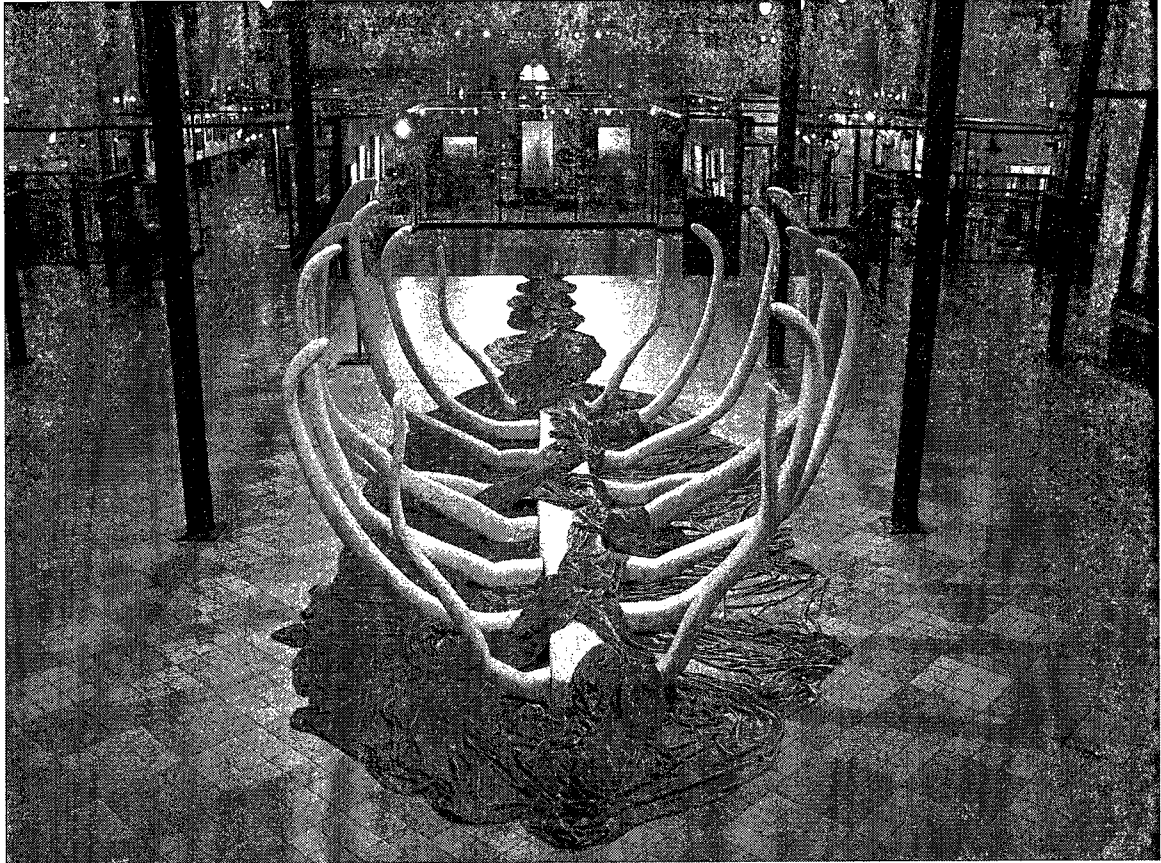


Fig. 30 Laura Endacott, *RibRaft*, sculpture, 2009. Velvet dyed with Procion dyes, high-density sculpture sculpted by hand and by machine, coated with plaster and stained with tea, 366 x 152.5 x 122 cm. approximately. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.

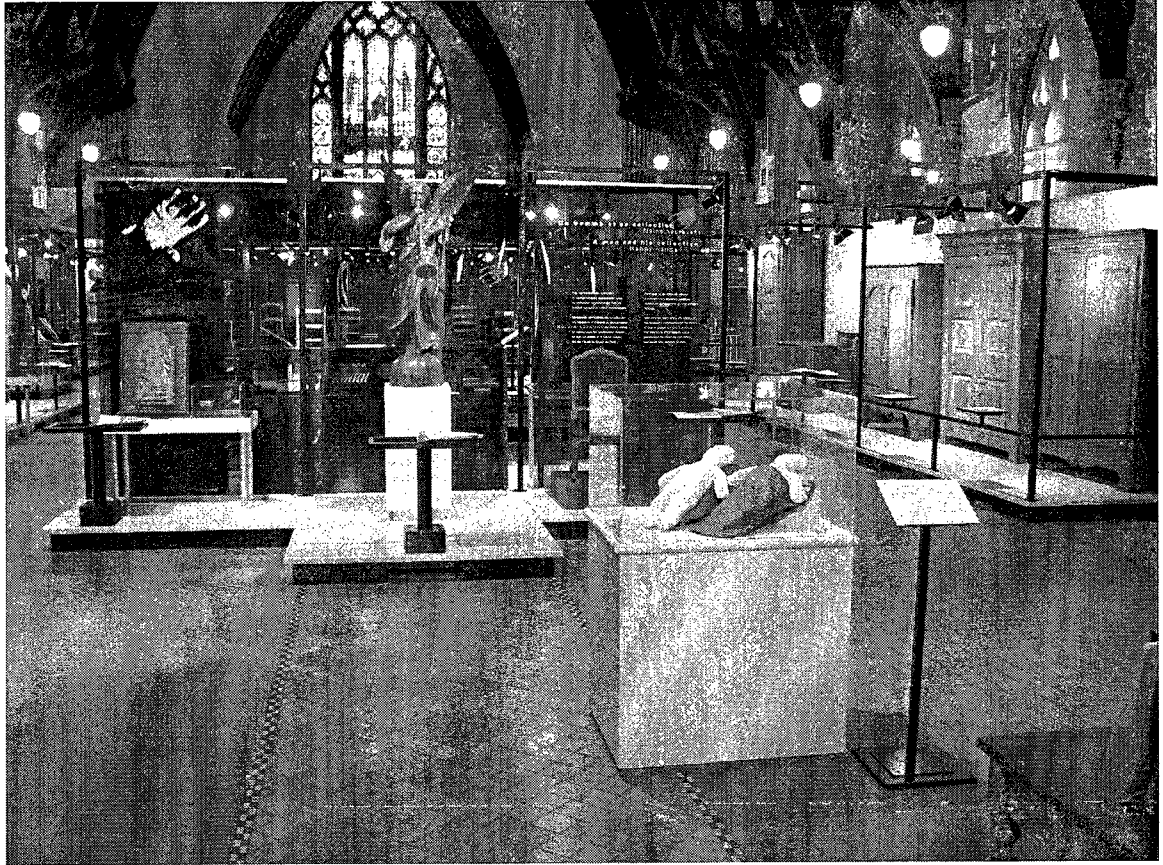


Fig. 31 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, (detail) 2006-2009. Two textile dolls hand-knitted on traditional knitting needles with cotton yarn, dyed with Procion dyes and stuffed with quilt batting. Vinyl belt hand stitched. Dolls: 32 x 52 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, 2009-2010. Photograph Laura Endacott.

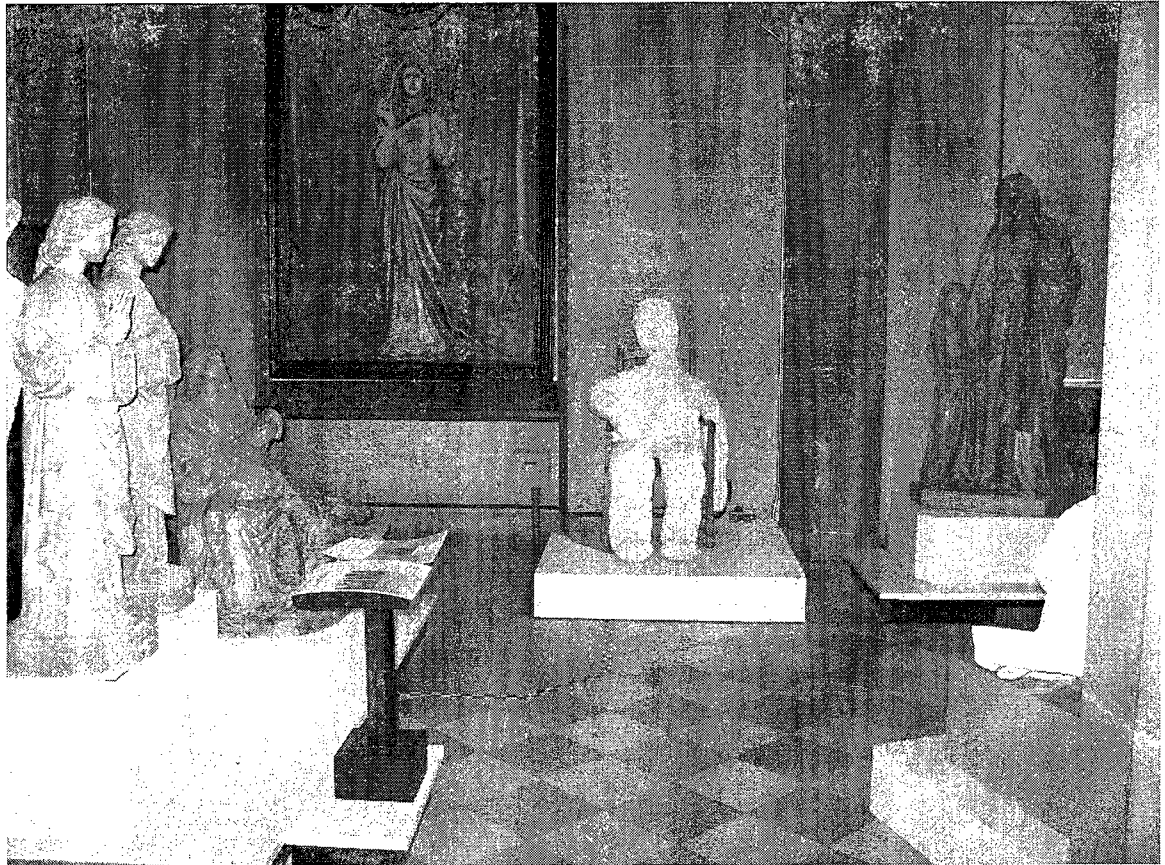


Fig. 32 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Textile doll made on a knitting machine based on a pattern developed on a computer with textile-specific software. Cotton yarn dyed with Procion dyes, stuffed with quilt batting and hand-stitched. Doll: 96.5 x 178 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, 2009-2010. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 33 *La Paresseuse Boutonnée*. Collection of Le Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Wool Cover from the Charlevoix region of Quebec. circa 1875, 204 x 141 cm..

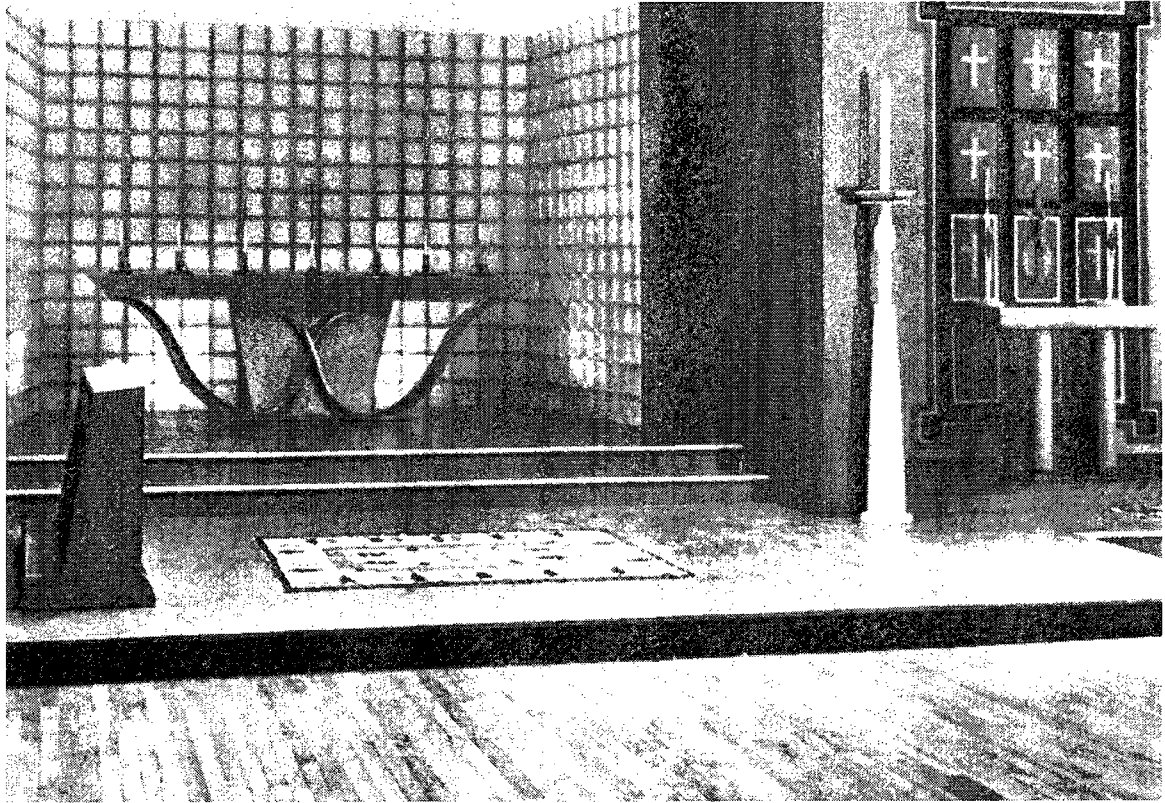


Fig. 34 Gloria Lesser. *Ecole du Meuble 1930-1950, Interior Design and Decorative Art in Montreal*. (Montreal: Château Dufresne, Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts, 1970) p.32.



Fig. 35 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital image of textile doll playground and in relation to mothers sitting nearby. Doll is made on a knitting machine based on a pattern developed on a computer with textile-specific software. Doll: 96.5 x 178 cm. Benny Park, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 36 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital image of son Montgomery Jackson's performance with textile doll. Montreal West public pool. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 37 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of Spencer Jackson's performance with textile doll during Montgomery's soccer game. Hodgson's field, Montreal West. Photograph Laura Endacott.

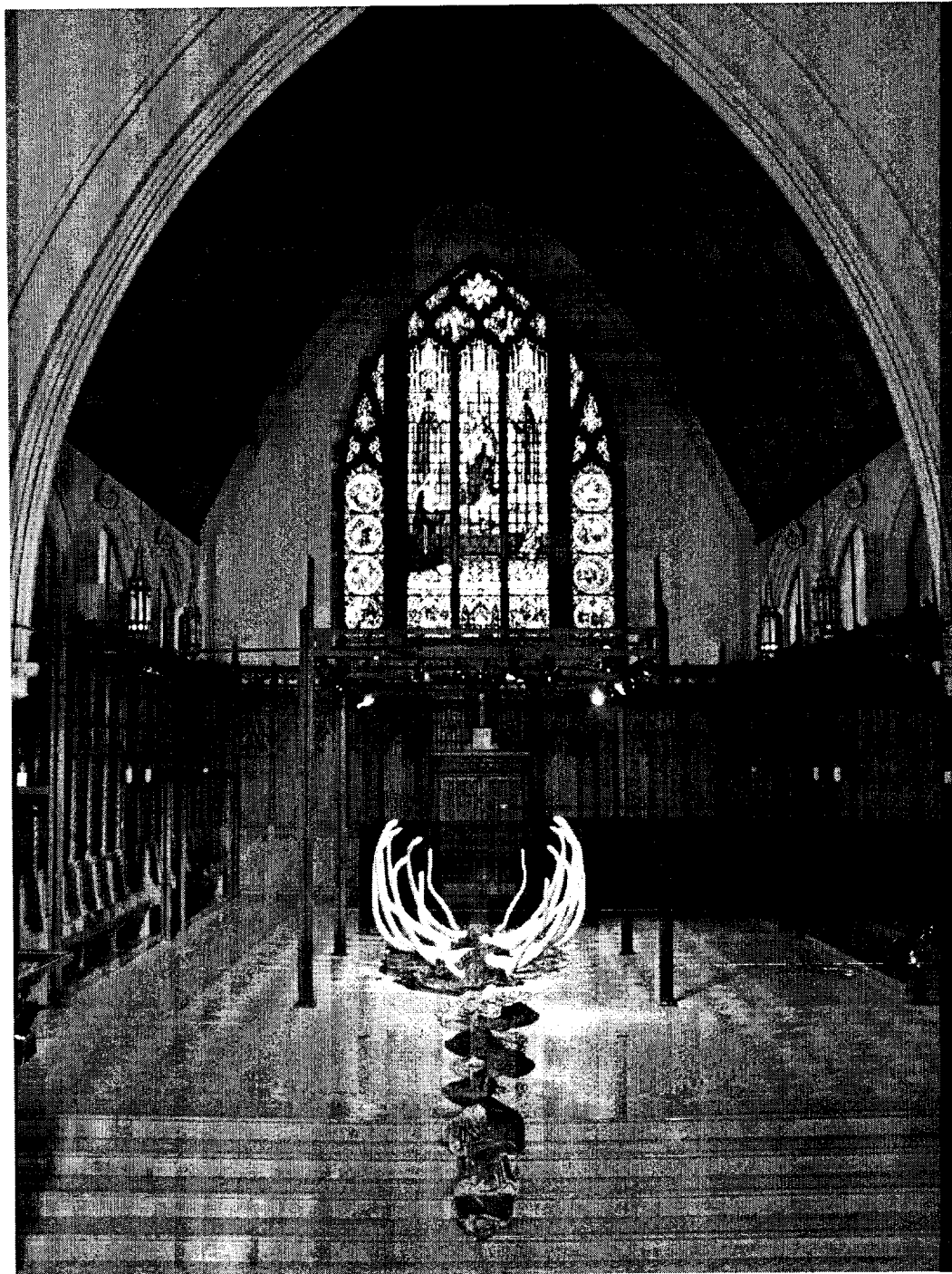


Fig. 38 Laura Endacott, *RibRaft*, sculpture, 2009. Velvet dyed with Procion dyes, high-density sculpture sculpted by hand and by machine, coated with plaster and stained with tea, 366 x 152.5 x 122 cm approximately. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

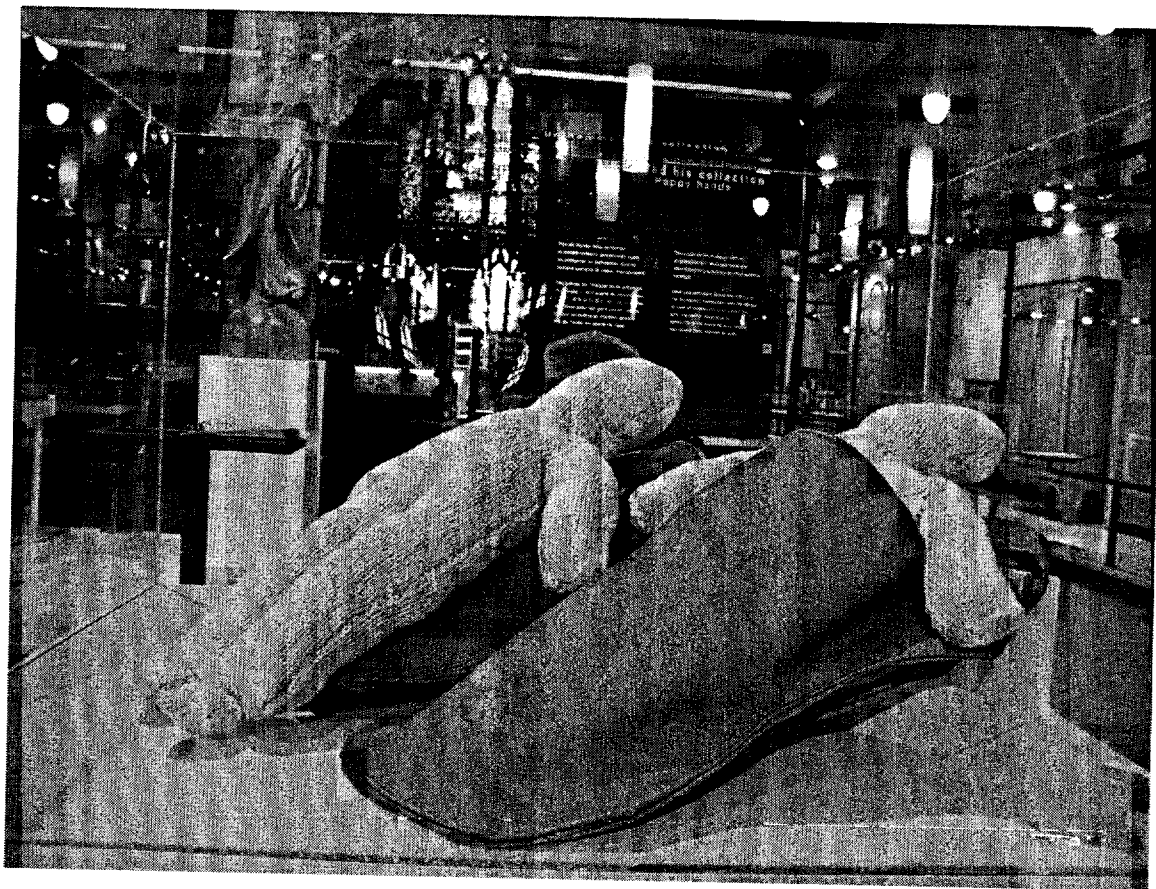


Fig. 39 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, 2006-2009. Two textile dolls hand-knitted on traditional knitting needles with cotton yarn, dyed with Procion dyes and stuffed with quilt batting. Vinyl belt hand stitched. Dolls: 32 x 52 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition. Le Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, 2009-2010. Photograph Laura Endacott.

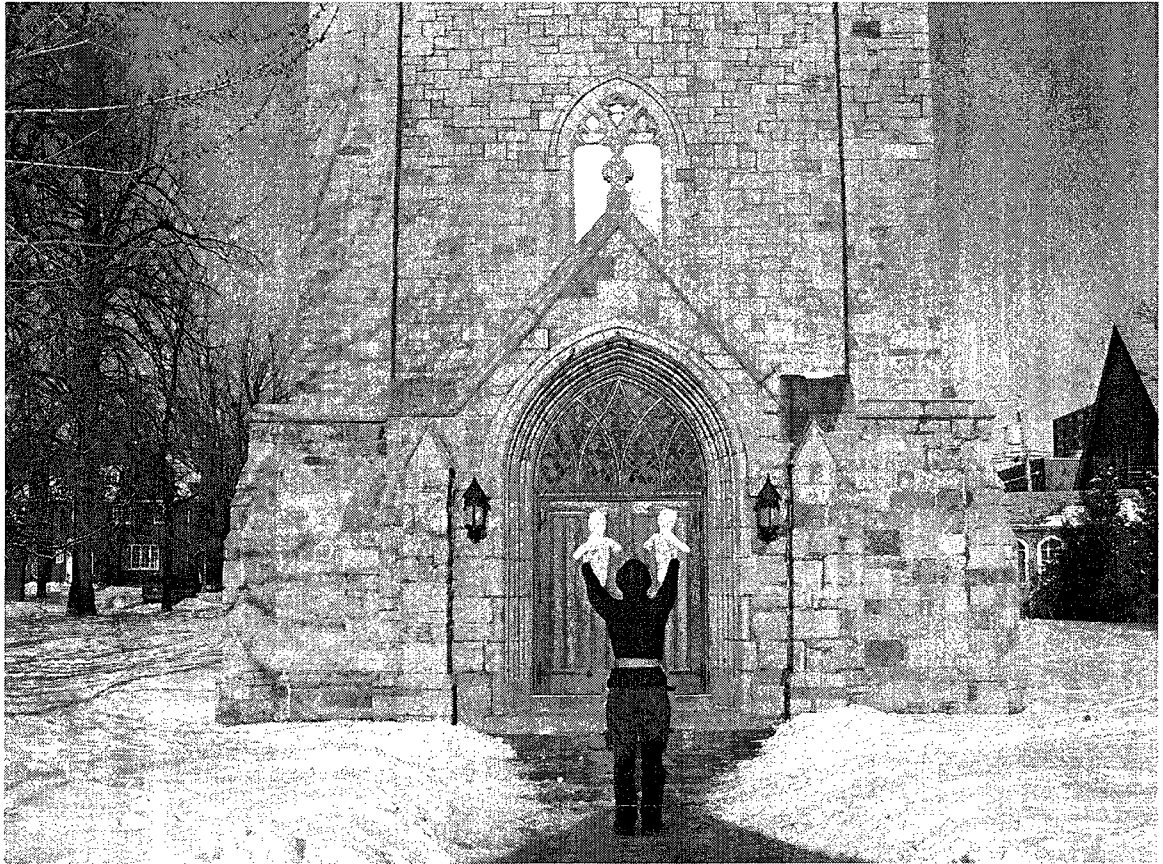


Fig. 40 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I* (detail), 2006-2009. Digital photograph of artist's performance with textile dolls. St-Phillip's Church, Montreal West. Photograph Tim Jackson.

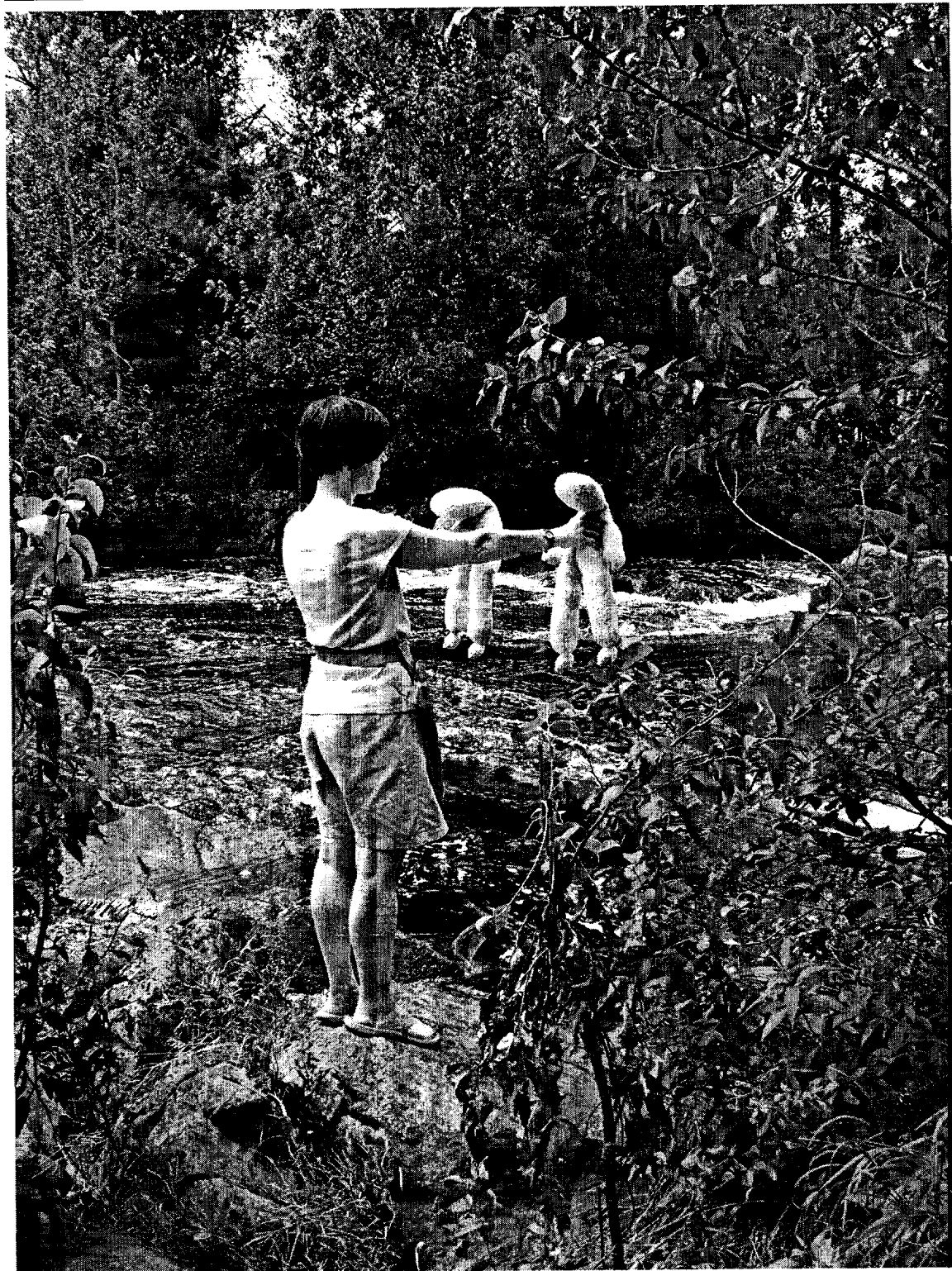


Fig. 41 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, (detail) 2006-2009. Digital photograph of artist's performance with textile dolls, Val-David, Quebec. Photograph Beilan Gao.

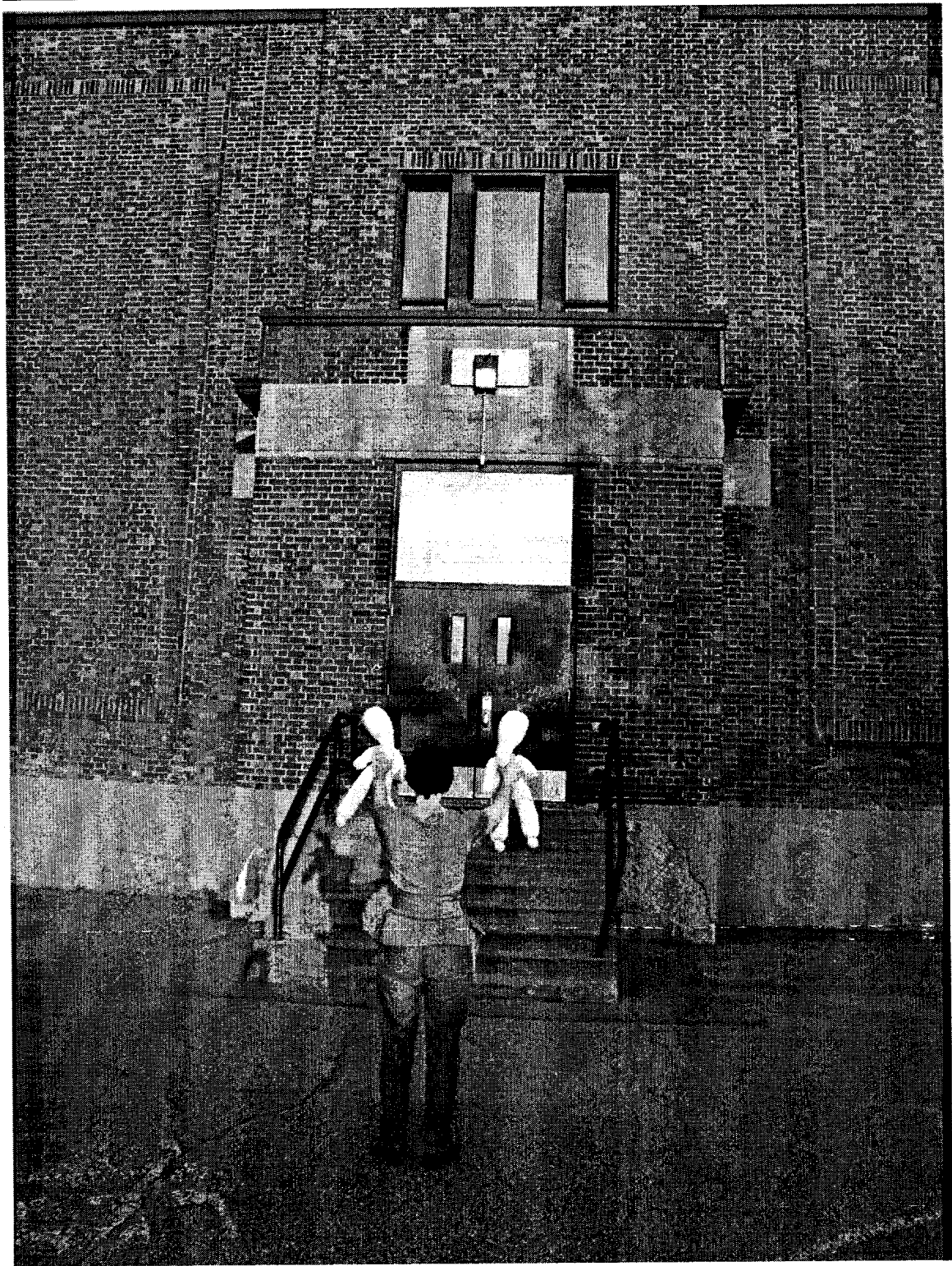


Fig. 42 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, (detail) 2006-2009. Digital photograph of artist's performance with textile dolls. Judith Jasmin Primary School, Montreal. Photograph Beilan Gao.

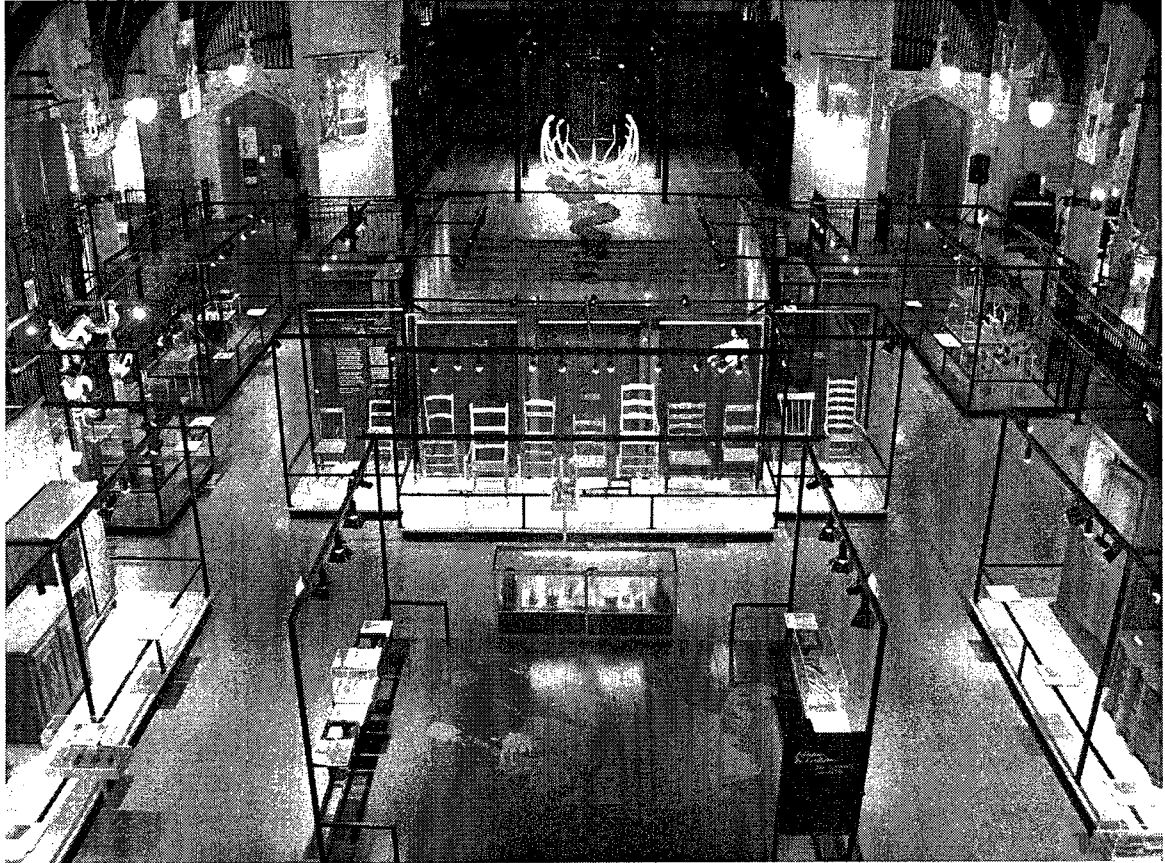


Fig. 43 Laura Endacott, *RibRaft*, 2009 (sculpture in the nave) and permanent collection display. *The Mother Image Exhibition*, Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, 2010. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 44 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I (detail)*, 2006-2009. Each panel 132 x 183 cm.. Appropriated Stations of the Cross installation with textile banners. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, 2010. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 45 Laura Endacott. *Facing the World as a Mother II*, (detail), 2007-2008. Each panel 132 x 183 cm.. Appropriated Stations of the Cross installation with textile banners. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.

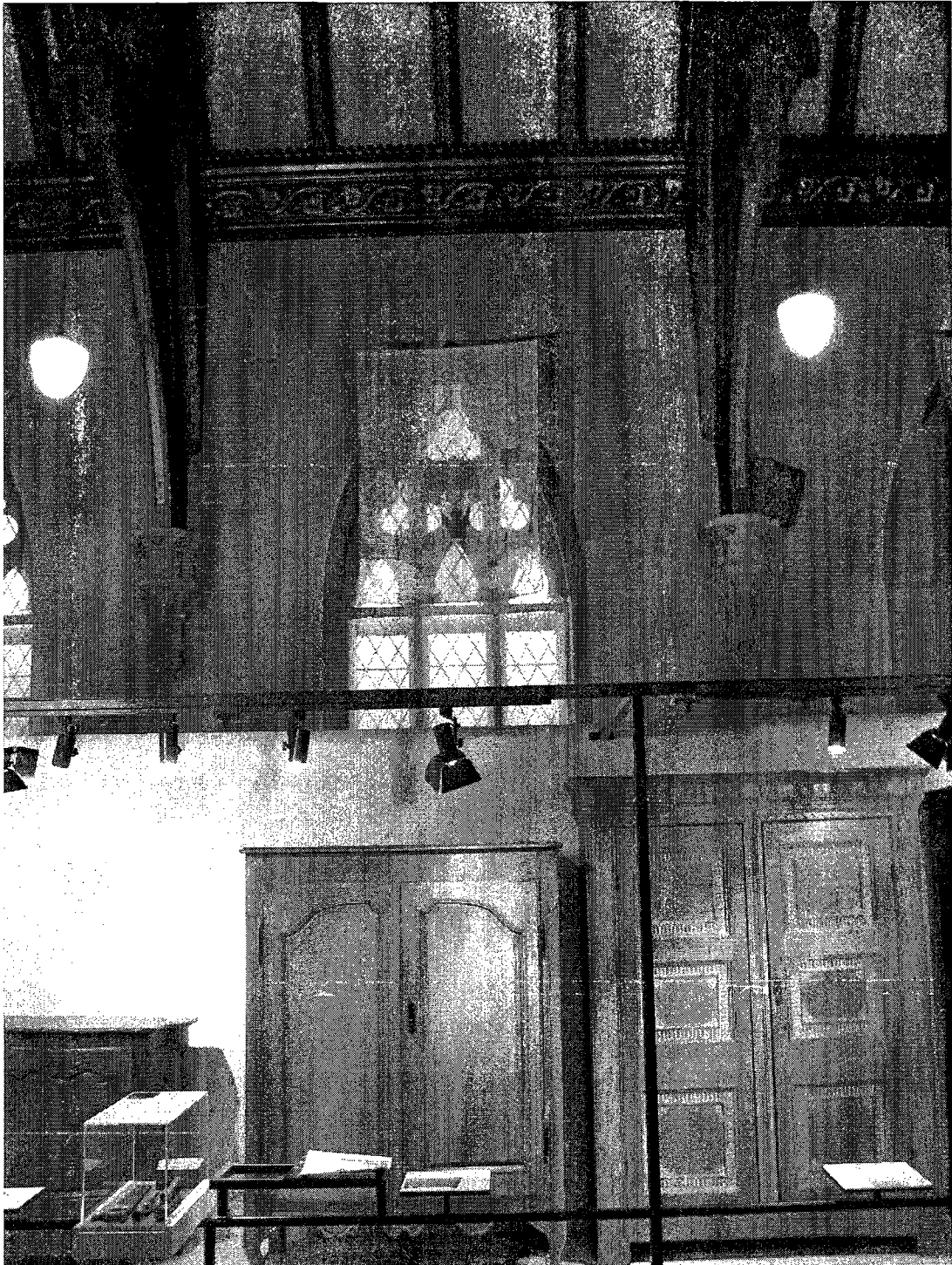


Fig. 46 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I* (detail), 2006-2009. Installation view of digital print on semi-transparent fabric. Each panel 132 x 183 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.

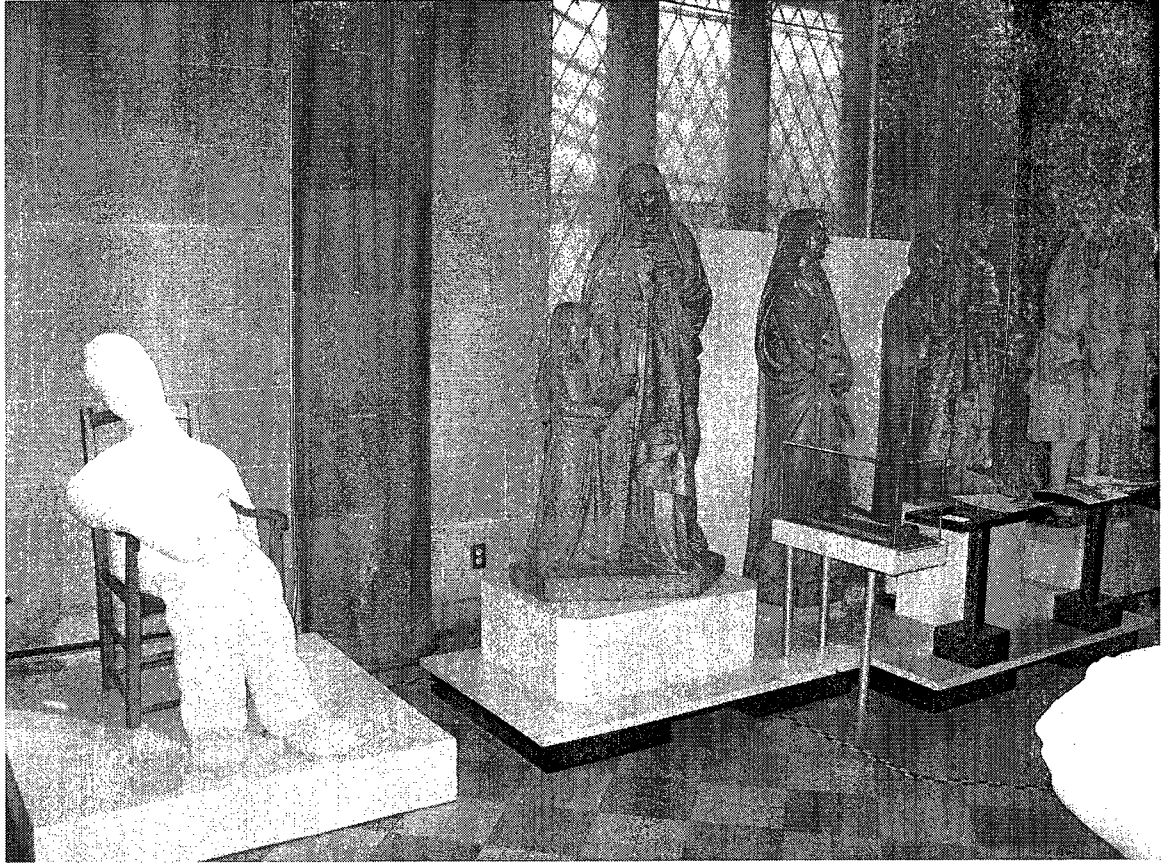


Fig. 47 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II* (detail), 2007-2008 . Textile doll made on a knitting machine based on a pattern developed on a computer with textile-specific software. Cotton yarn dyed with Procion dyes, stuffed with quilt batting and hand-stitched. Doll: 96.5 x 178 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 48 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II* (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of performance with textile doll. Artist's sons with doll watching TV, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

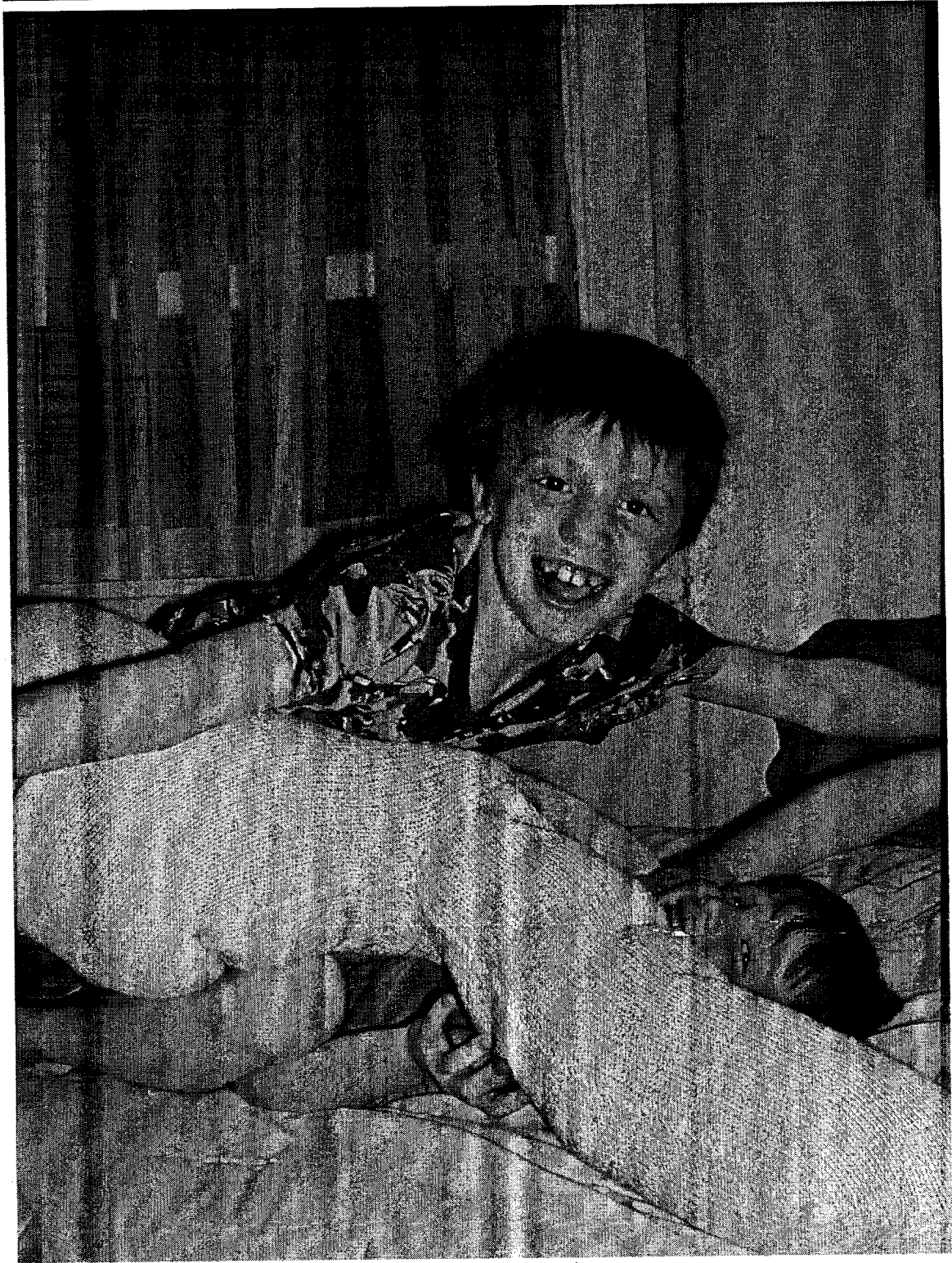


Fig. 49 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II* (detail) 2007-2008. Digital photograph of Spencer and Montgomery's performance with textile doll. Artist's home, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.

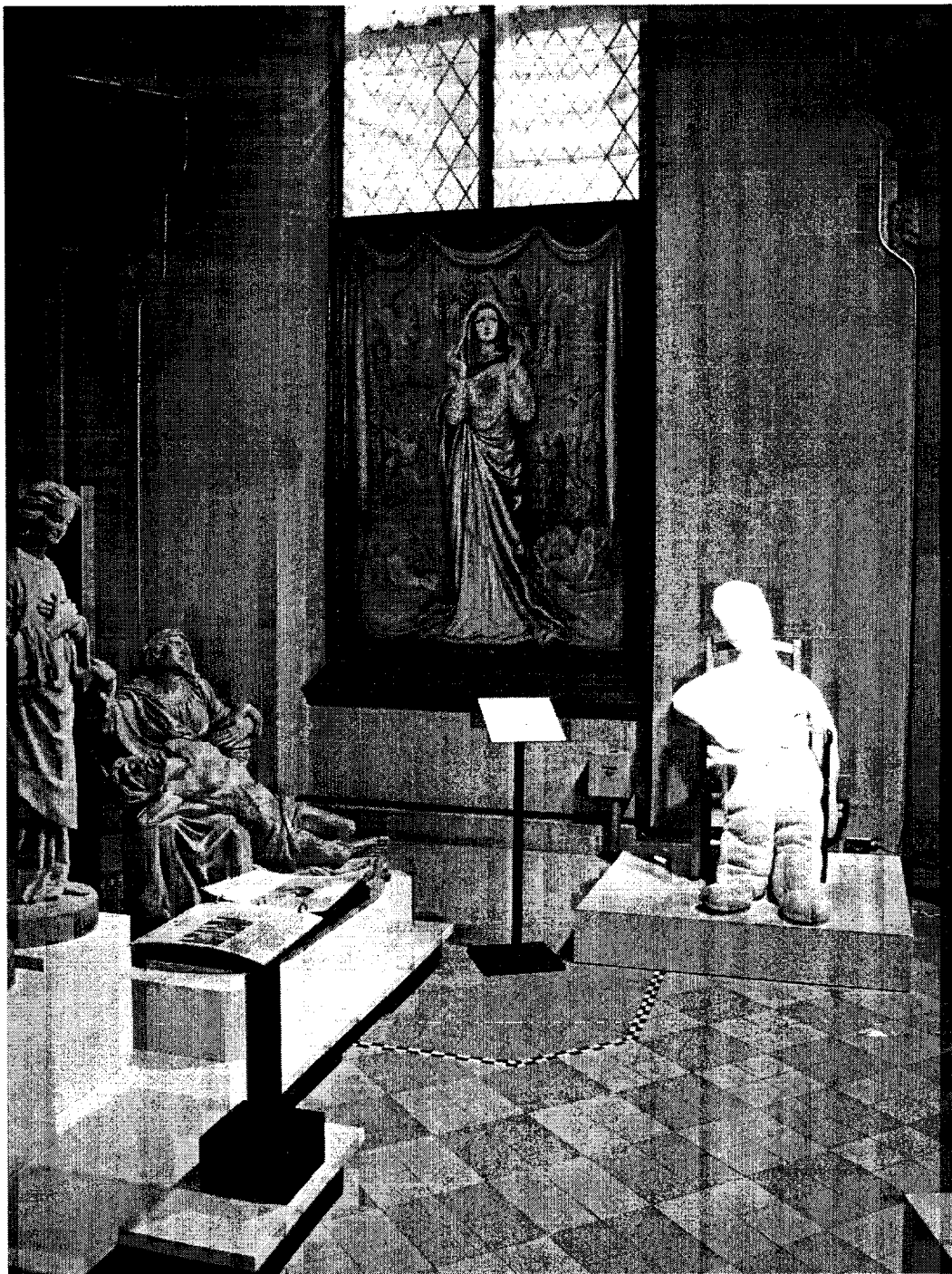


Fig. 50 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother II* (detail) 2007-2008.. Textile doll made on a knitting machine based on a pattern developed on a computer with textile-specific software. Cotton yarn dyed with Procion dyes, stuffed with quilt batting and hand-stitched. Doll: 96.5 x 178 cm. *The Mother Image* Exhibition, 2009-2010. Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec. Photograph Laura Endacott.



Fig. 51 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, (detail) 2006-2009. Digital photograph of performance with textile doll. Artist at the Côte-des-Neiges Cemetery, Montreal. Photograph Tim Jackson.



Fig. 52 Laura Endacott, *Facing the World as a Mother I*, (detail) 2006-2009. Digital photograph of performance with textile dolls. Artist in front of her home. Montreal. Photograph Tim Jackson.

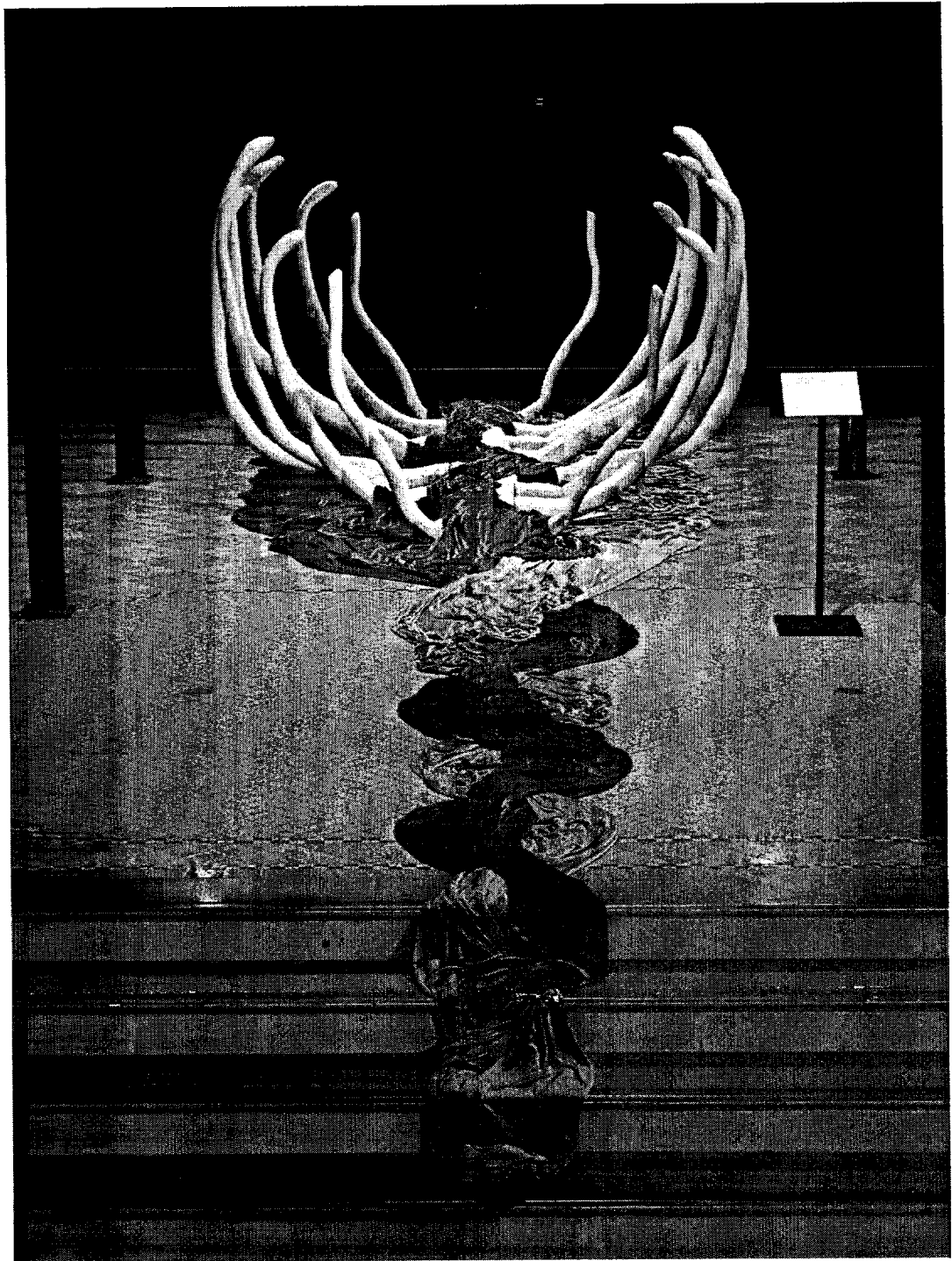


Fig. 53 Laura Endacott, *RibRaft*, sculpture, 2009. Velvet dyed with Procion dyes, high-density sculpture sculpted by hand and by machine, coated with plaster and stained with tea, 366 x 152.5 x 122 cm approximately. *The Mother Image Exhibition*, 2009-2010, Musée des maîtres et artisans du Québec, Montreal. Photograph Laura Endacott.