

Highlights

Variety, unity demonstrated in women's art

By Shelley Sperry
and Eric Peterson

The statements made by the existence of a women's art show at UNL are important.

The extraordinary range of techniques and theories spread across the walls of the Nebraska Union demonstrate, for all those in need of empirical proof, the fact that "women's art" has no distinctive feminine characteristics and no peculiar subjects which set it apart from "men's art" or "real art." Even the works with feminist tones such as *Daddy's Little Girl* by Jean Bean, Becky Ross' *I Am the Catalyst* and Jan Havranek's *Loah's Ark*, are more personal or meditative than polemical.

Another statement made by the display concerns us, the audience. A women's art show, even a Women's Week, would be quite unnecessary if we were all taught from the cradle that men and women are equal in talents and accomplishments. There is no need for a Men's Week or a men's art show because we all know the political, social and artistic issues which concern men: war, peace, families, businesses, realism, abstraction. . . All issues concern men.

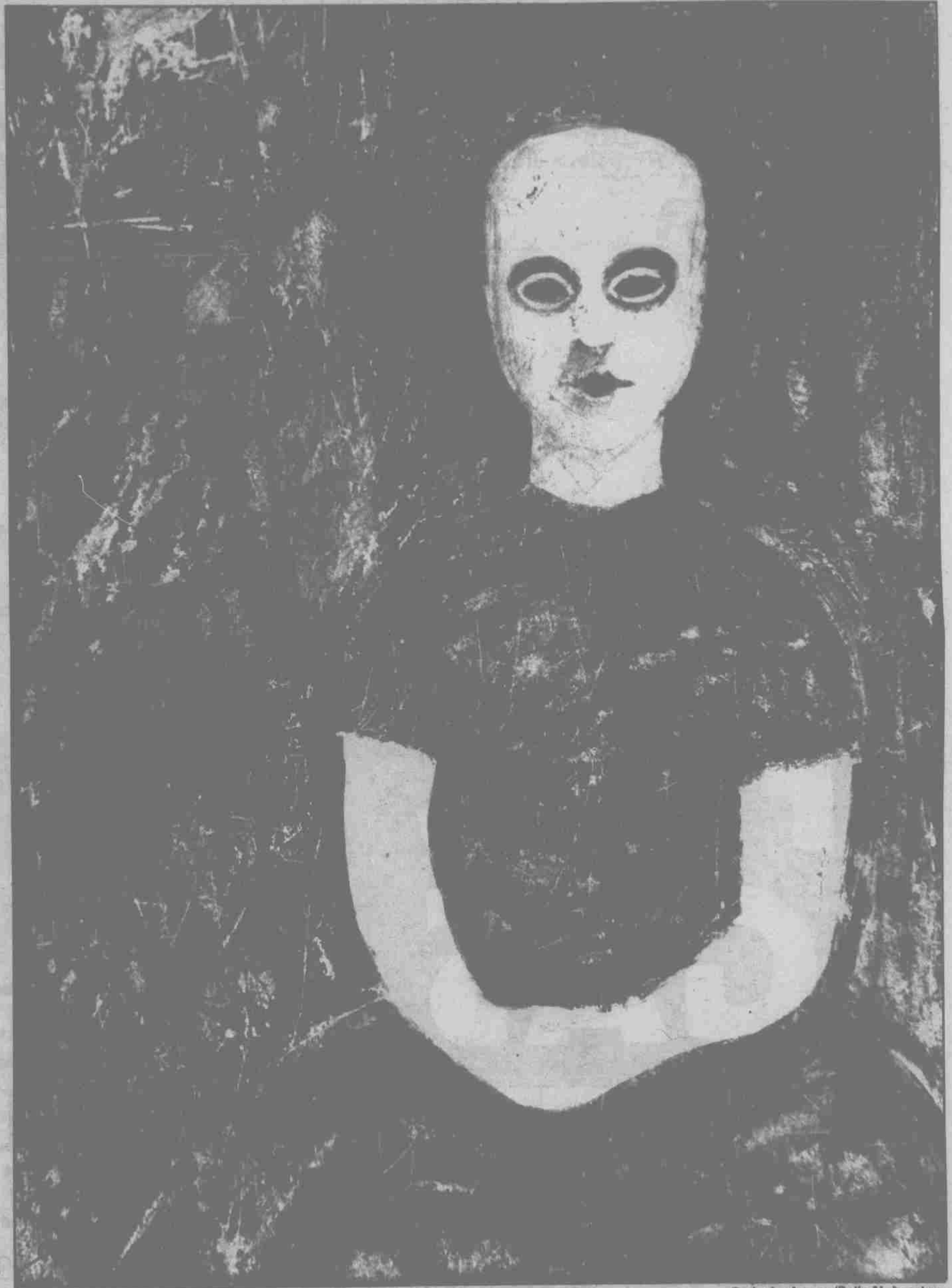
So the women's art show is an education experience for us, as well as for the women involved. For many of the artists, the show offers a very rare opportunity to display their work and thus to identify publicly with other artists.

The collecting and hanging of the works was a cooperative effort which promoted communication among the women involved but more importantly, it emphasized the autonomous aspect of the show. Lincoln artists in this case were not dependent upon a gallery's space allotment, the saleability of their works, or the whims of a museum director — the artists themselves obtained the space, advertised the project, collected and sorted the works and finally hung them.

If, through such cooperation, some independence can be gained by the notoriously patronized artistic community, and by women no less, then there must be hope for us all.

Jean Bean's *Daddy's Little Girl* is among the most emotional pieces in subject, texture and color. A variety of media are combined to give the surface a warm and waxy-crayon look. The muddy brown, black, red and corpse-white colors are layered, scratched and rubbed. This unusual textural emphasis could have overwhelmed a weaker subject. But the viewer's attention cannot wander long from the face of the figure, whose eyes are so hollowed and whose pose is so paralyzed and paralyzing that the name "little girl" becomes absurd. A traditionally cheerful bluebird in fluorescent plumage sits in the corner opposite her and both are motionless, yet there is a tension and energy breaking through this parlor scene: the veil of childish scrawlings which covers it whispering, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy . . ."

Bean's untitled abstract work has the same fascination of the carefully worked mixed media texture. Two barely recognizable figures of Marilyn Monroe (from the photograph of her standing with Joe DiMaggio over a subway vent) become fluid and graceful forms which focus the interest in the lower left corner, with a light figure centered in deep purple-red and a dark one placed in grayish white in the upper half.



Jean Bean's *Daddy's Little Girl*

Craig Andreesen/Daily Nebraskan

In Lucent Memory, a woodcut by Karen Kunc, has a singular beauty of shape and color. Several triangular forms are rounded and framed by white or gray. All shapes have the delicately ribbed look of crepe paper, and the juxtapositions of pastel colors — yellow and purple, green and purple — are effective.

Becky Ross's oil painting *I Am the Catalyst* is a strong statement of female power. A male figure sits in stale gray and cold blue, its head with a skull-like aspect and hollow eye cavities. The contrasting female figure is done in vibrant reds and oranges and pinks — one strong broad stroke in pink effectively represents the crossed leg. Particularly effective is the burning life suggested by the intense red forehead

and the apparent burning gaze.

Ms. E's Tool Protector, a clay sculpture by Mary Ruth Albert, is striking and whimsical, yet the four foot piece is oddly powerful as well, evoking the fertility figures made at the very beginnings of art. Holding a screwdriver and a hammer, which unfortunately broke off near the start of the show, the female figure has an amorphous totem-like head, and several whimsical details in the very flat yellow and brown glaze — exuberant breasts, a protruding navel, and starfish-like swirls under its arms.

A watercolor and a drawing by Constance Boje are extremely lovely in their conception and finish. Both are of abstracted nude female figures. *Electric Blues* has a delicate shading of colors from beige to rose

and strong reds; two accents in neon blue bring things together beautifully. *Woman, Dressing* shows great interest in curving lines, like waves of motion, coming out and away from the drawn figure.

Julie Vosoba's collage *Window Box #10: Marie's* has a nice feeling for shape and the contrast of flat black with delicate greens and oranges; a white space outlined in black becomes a flower balancing a black one outlined in orange on the other side.

Animal Spots, a woodcut by Cecile Broz, is a picture of great childlike delight; an amorphous, dutifully spotted figure seems to hide its head in a forest of blue and purple squiggles which recall the wildest abandon of crayons.