



Visual Arts

Pulsating passions

>> *Art-Throb: the Culture of Obsession*
may tickle your fancy

by GENEVIEVE PAIEMENT

Lite-Brite Marilyns, an Elvis made of lentils, jockstrap-sporting caribou, Buffy the Vampire Slayer's bedroom—these are a few of their favourite things. Whose favourite things? Why, the artists featured in *Art-Throb: The Culture of Obsession* on now at Article, that's who. With these peculiar pop-culture-referencing *objets d'art*, the show, curated by Jo-Anne Balcaen and Peter Hobbs, points to larger societal habits of obsessive fandom and compulsive collecting—the type of exhibit theory whores cream themselves over.

The entranceway walls are covered with tacky, tourist-destination souvenir plates belonging to Toronto's Cecilia Berkovic. Further along is Berkovic's collection of Harlequin romance novels stacked in fuchsia milk cartons ("Love Books"), with every word in the titles except "love" blotted out with a black marker. "She references adolescence," says Hobbs. "Like how we list and categorize our friends, boyfriends or favourite things to do—we lose that as we get older."

Also on the teen beat is Keith Orkusz's "Untitled: Buffy's Room," a view from the outside of Buffy's bedroom, through Venetian blinds. (Hello, creepy stalker fanboy.) Equally zealous is Halifax artist Shari Hatt's own mini Elvis Museum she opened in her apartment a few years back. Peruse it in a photo album that includes a shot of the aforementioned "Lentil Elvis." "My Mother Looks Like Elvis," Hatt's thorough photo-comparison between her mother and Elvis spanning several years, is a hilarious and oddly touching tribute to these two very different (though sometimes physically similar) human beings.

Shelley Ouellet of Calgary gives us "9 Marilyns," repeated Lite-Brite Marilyn Monroes à la Warhol. A tribute to a tribute, by a fan of a fan, if you will.

By far, Evergon's "In Fiction, All Men Wear White Jockeys" is the star of the show. It's a mesmerizing labyrinth of Ziplock bags containing soiled tighty-whities and black and white '60s highschool yearbook photos of guys who could have been your dad. Push the glass door open, and a stopper for-



Fruit of the loins: "IN FICTION ALL MEN WEAR JOCKEYS"

bits you from entering. Across the room, a small mirror reflects your face and a larger one reflects a collage involving a most intriguing use of the Gerber baby. Nearby are Evergon's charming spins on paint-by-number Canadian wildlife paintings, i.e. caribou in a jockstrap/with a hard-on.

The video of Winnipegger Daniel Barrow's overhead projector performance "Looking for Love in the Hall of Mirrors" rounds out the exhibit. With references to the artists Barrow worships (from Oscar Wilde to Cindy Sherman), this is a dreamy and melancholic tale of one gay artist's search for acceptance, both sexually and artistically.

"It's about anticipation, about the process of desire," says Balcaen, summing up the exhibit. "Completing the collection is not the goal, like the narrative in a soap opera, you never want it to end." ☉

ART-THROB RUNS THROUGH JUNE 16 AT ARTICLE