

Hello, from Julie Voyce

By Rebecca Diederichs

February 15, 1999 at Nova Era on College Street, Toronto

Julie and Rebecca: First we have to describe what we have here ... we have the body of Christ in the shape of a sea shell containing sweet eggy stuff ... we have to hold it between two fingers and melt it on our tongues ... I want to get the recipe ... great to bring to parties ... so beautiful ... unadorned sweet egg ... are you having problems with that? ... that is so gross ... (laughter) reminds me of ... not marzipan, Turkish delight, a cross between custard and Turkish delight ... weird colour ... I really like it with Christ's body! Never seen or eaten anything like that ... it definitely needs some adornment, a substantial pastry around it ... very peculiar. I really like it!

Editorial note: Rebecca realizes very early on that interviewing Julie Voyce is going to be like trying to catch a swarm of bees in a jam jar. Like the amazingly peculiar and sympathetic characters in her drawings, paintings, prints, and photocopies, there are just so many thoughts that jabber up against one another. Rebecca tapes the meeting and transcribes the following:

I was in the library. Down in Daytona, in the surf, in six inches of water, lying in the sand, when I was bitten by something ... I thought it was something sharp, something dragged in the surf ... but there, low and behold, two puncture marks, they're not there now ... so I went to the library to find out what it was ... something really exciting! Where is my deep sea angler? What do you think?

That's what bit you?

I don't know what bit me, but neither does anyone else. I was in a souvenir shop and they had these live hermit crabs that were decorated with pig snouts and shit painted with epoxy on their fucking shells, and they were slowly asphyxiating, the poor things, because of the paint. Each crab probably had fifteen percent of its body in epoxy, right? So imagine fifteen percent of your body covered in epoxy and you'd be asphyxiated pretty fast, too.

Is this for new work, the drawings from the library, the crabs and deep sea anglers?

Yeah. I just finished something that has hermit crabs with pig parts on it, except the shell looks like a toque. It looks like a hip-hop crab! It's just something I could never have done on purpose, it just would never work.

I want to ask you what is the inspiration for the haute couture in your work, the shoes, the dresses, the colour?

The first real inspiration was from my first trip to Italy in 1991. I did all these gouache books when I got back. I'd done all these gouache books there, when I first arrived in Rome, then more as a reaction to Toronto when I got back. And for the first time since finishing art school I had a kind of floating time, when you get to just look and make things, and you are suspended from all your errands. You're in a new country and you don't have to think about anything. The actual looking at and making of things became the main structure

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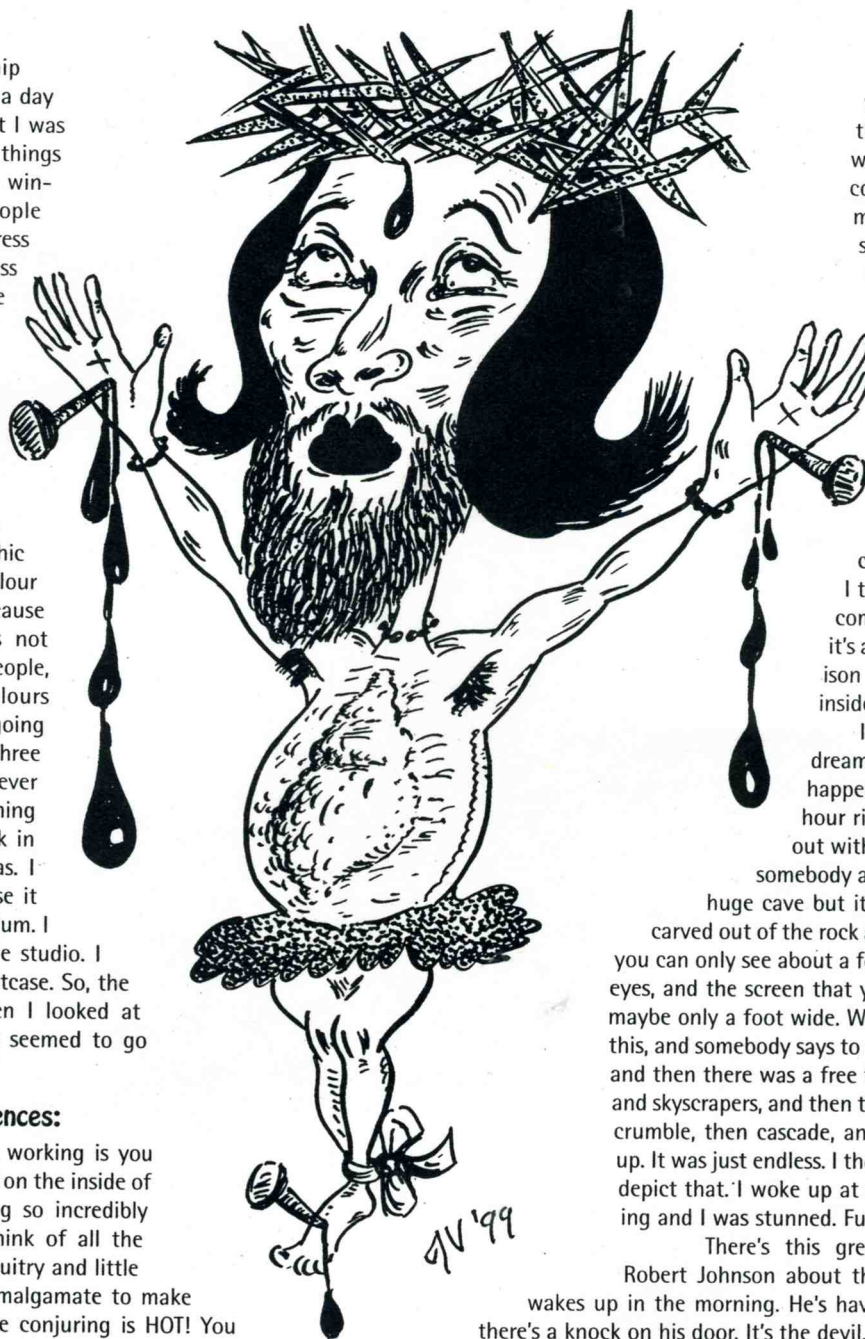
of the day. It wasn't something I had to whip together after work or after a day job. And I found in Italy that I was totally indulging myself in things like bras and shoes in shop windows, and the way people dressed, 'cause when they dress good there they *really* dress good. So that's where the haute couture aspect came from.

Do you think gouache contributes to it too, because it has such a buttery quality?

Well, I think of diagrams because gouache is a graphic medium. I took up watercolour when I was travelling because watercolour dries quick, it's not toxic, and it doesn't bug people, and people find watercolours rather charming. If you're going to work in a *pensione* with three other people that you've never met, you've got to use charming mediums. You can't just walk in there with a big huge canvas. I used gouache in Italy because it seemed a sensible travel medium. I could set up in my own little studio. I could pack it all up in my suitcase. So, the medium came first, and then I looked at stuff, and, you know, it just seemed to go together.

... On cross medium influences:

What you have when you're working is you have this impulse and it starts on the inside of your body and it's something so incredibly sophisticated, I mean you think of all the impulses and little bits of circuitry and little light shifts in dreams that amalgamate to make this conjuring BANG, and the conjuring is HOT! You just have to make it, and I think that all of that is so



sophisticated, and what are we working with on the outside? We're working with these comparatively crude materials, you know starting with this thing, with these five sausage bits sticking out of it (Julie points to her hand) and I think, you're always bartering. You know you barter your ideas with these crude materials and I think it's all crude ... computers are crude ... it's all crude in comparison to what's going on inside.

I had this amazing dream last night. It was happening at 90 miles an hour right?, and it started out with me in a train with somebody and we're inside this huge cave but it has little potholes carved out of the rock and it's infinite. But you can only see about a foot in front of your eyes, and the screen that you can see it on is maybe only a foot wide. We're racing through this, and somebody says to me 'you made that,' and then there was a free fall of Roman ruins and skyscrapers, and then they crack, and then crumble, then cascade, and the scenery rises up. It was just endless. I thought I could never depict that. I woke up at three in the morning and I was stunned. Fuck!

There's this great blues song by Robert Johnson about this guy, right, who wakes up in the morning. He's having his coffee and there's a knock on his door. It's the devil, and the devil says, 'Well, you want to go for a walk?' And the guy he says 'Okay'

Original artwork by Julie Joyce, made especially for this publication, 1999

