

Domestic goddesses still have stereotypes to sweep away

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Freelance

Friday, June 08, 2007

HOME BODY,

Profiles Gallery, 15 Perron St., St. Albert, 460-4310

Until June 30

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Kim Bruce, along with Bev Tosh and Elizabeth Clarke, are three artists who are taking on the idea of the domestic sphere in the group show, Home Body. Home, for most of us, is where the heart is -- there are ideas of safety, comfort, and motherhood that go along with it. But as Bruce explains, if you dig deeper beyond ideals and fantasy, it's a great deal more complicated than that.

"It's about women's work. My work is autobiographical; most artists are. I look at it from a feminist approach -- I grew up in the '60s and '70s, the height of the women's movement."

Like her colleagues, Bruce works with icons of domestic femininity: wedding dresses, aprons, hair brushes, all re-imagined into other forms. For example, Bruce's wedding dresses (one of them her own) are transformed into aprons, which takes some of the fantasy out of the idea of a fairy-tale wedding.

"I think we have become more self-sufficient and self-aware, but when you've experienced the women's movement, it's amazing to see how weddings still get so much attention -- the Cinderella syndrome. The next generation hasn't outgrown the idea of being a princess and getting rescued."

As an artist and entrepreneur, Bruce has had to push the boundaries of what traditional women's roles were.

"When I was in school, I wasn't allowed to take shop. I have tools upstairs that I was never taught how to use. I had to learn how to do it myself. It was kind of unfair."

These are the kinds of changes that we now take for granted. Unfortunately, Bruce sees young women becoming complacent with the acceptance of hypersexualized stereotypes, for example.

"I don't think we've achieved equality! You need to talk to women in business to see how we played with the boys. It wasn't always easy. We've come a long way, baby -- but we have a ways to go."