

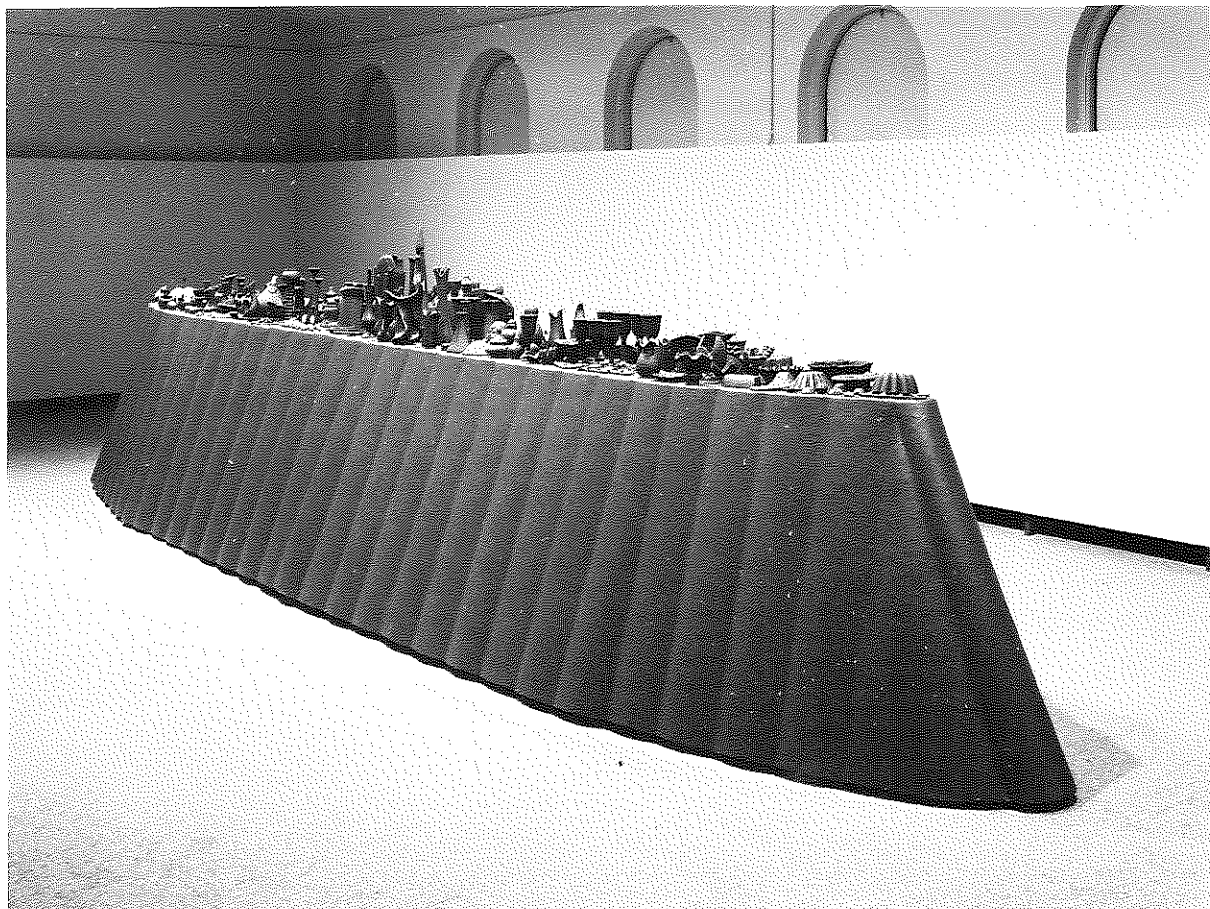
SUSAN SHANTZ

THE ARTISTS
NOJASALON
SERIES



MACKENZIE
ART GALLERY





B I O G R A P H Y

Susan Shantz completed a Bachelor of Arts in English at Goshen College, Indiana in 1980 and a Master of Arts in Religion and Culture at Wilfred Laurier University, Waterloo in 1985. She received a Master of Fine Arts from York University, Toronto in 1989.

Her recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Satiare*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Lethbridge, 1998); *in her nature*, Glendon Gallery, York University (Toronto, 1997); *rapt*, AKA Gallery (Saskatoon, 1996, collaboration with K. Sellars); *engorge*, Article (Montréal, 1995); *hibernaculum*, Mendel Art Gallery (Saskatoon, 1994); *generated spontaneously generated*, UNB Art Centre (Fredericton, 1993), Muttart Gallery (Calgary, 1993), AKA Gallery (Saskatoon, 1992); *re(dis)-covering*, Eastern Edge Gallery (St. John's, NF, 1992, with K. Pittman);

Lake Superior: Winter Journal, Definitely Superior (Thunder Bay, 1991), Ace Art (Winnipeg, 1991); *Mrs. John E. Brubacher*, Cycle Gallery, University of Waterloo (Waterloo, 1989, with J. Buyers); *this darkness, this light*, Cathedral of St. John the Divine (New York City, 1989), I.D.A. Gallery, York University (Toronto, 1989); and, *Inanna's Descent*, Nancy Poole Studio (Toronto, 1988).

Shantz's participation in group exhibitions includes *International Sculpture Exhibition*, Manoa Art Gallery, University of Hawaii (Honolulu, 1997); *Faculty Exhibition*, Gordon Snelgrove Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon, 1997, 1993); *nature redux*, Southern Alberta Art Gallery (Lethbridge, 1997); *Imagining Eden*, Kenderdine Gallery (Saskatoon, 1996); *natured*, Mercer Union (Toronto, 1995); *Anima/Materia*, Kenderdine Gallery (Saskatoon, 1993);

Gathering, Cambridge Art Gallery (Cambridge, ON, 1991); *Artists of Mennonite Heritage*, Main/Access Gallery (Winnipeg, 1990); *Newcomb, Moon, Shantz*, Burlington Cultural Centre (Burlington, ON, 1990); and *Quilts: Tradition/Transition*, Art Gallery of Windsor (Windsor, 1988).

Her work is in the permanent collections of The Canada Council Art Bank, Saskatchewan Arts Board, MacKenzie Art Gallery, Mendel Art Gallery, London Free Press, Burlington Cultural Centre, University of New Brunswick, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Saskatchewan and several private collections.

Susan Shantz lives in Saskatoon where she has taught at the University of Saskatchewan since 1990.

SATIATE

The idea for *Satiate* grew out of a daydream Susan Shantz had of coating an object with tomato paste. After trying it out, the artist was intrigued. As she recalls:

There was something compelling about it, the sense of moisture and dryness, of a colour and texture akin to flesh, the inside of the body. I tried it—icing it on with a knife and letting it air dry to shrink like a leathery skin around the object—and liked the effect it gave.¹

From this experiment grew the present installation for which she has applied a thin layer of ordinary tomato paste to hundreds of household objects, from flower vases to jelly moulds. Encased in dried paste and assembled on a large table, the objects have an unsettling presence which challenges viewers on an immediate, visceral level.

The disturbance created by the piece can be traced to the way it subverts the boundaries between what is interior and what is exterior. This subversion takes place on three important levels: form, substance, and semblance.

Initially, the objects are clearly identifiable by their forms as ordinary vessels of different types. However, the tomato paste coating removes them from their ordinary contexts and neutralizes their individual textures and colours. The viewer is left to contemplate their shapes alone, and those shapes, marked by darkened niches and pregnant bulges, are surprisingly organ-like. The effect, which is akin to looking at the interior recesses of the body through a gastroscopic probe, is disconcerting and surreal.

Expectations are further upset when the viewer realizes that the coating, which at first appears to be a red resin, is actually tomato paste. To see a substance which is ordinarily a food-stuff used in this manner breaks a taboo. This food is not in a vessel, as

it should be, but instead coats the container. What should be inside has been left out.

Finally, as the artist notes, the paste resembles flesh in its colour and texture. That alone is not disturbing. However, the deep red colour evokes associations with blood-filled linings, a skin turned inside out.

These three subversions provoke a powerful, visceral response. On all three levels, the work confronts the viewer with an interior where there ought to be an exterior. The implication, at least on a conceptual level, is that the viewer is not "outside" the piece, since no exterior perspectives are available. Rather, the viewer is "inside" a body.

The ramifications of these inversions are enormous. As the title implies, the work is about consumption; some comment on the obsessive accumulation of banal consumer goods is clearly a part of Shantz's intent. But because of the material transformations, this social disorder cannot be dismissed as an external phenomenon. In the presence of this piece, the consumer-viewer is metaphorically ingested—swallowed by the obsession with consumption.

When first collecting material for the installation, Shantz noticed "how all the second-hand objects . . . began to look, cumulatively, like an archaeological dig of our culture, the past 40 years." These objects are in fact the indigestible remains of our culture. They reveal the truth that despite our endless frenzy of consumption, nothing is digested, absorbed, or assimilated, but simply accumulated. There is no development, no meaningful sense of time.

Satiate, as the name implies, is metaphorically full to the brim. It demands that the viewer take time to absorb, assimilate, and digest.

Timothy Long
Curator

Notes

1. All quotations are from the artist's correspondence to Joan Stebbins, 2 April 1997.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The MacKenzie Art Gallery would like to thank Susan Shantz for participating in this exhibition program. This exhibition has been organized by the MacKenzie Art Gallery with the support of the Canada Council for the Arts and the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

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Exhibition Dates: April 3 - June 14, 1998

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Catalogue Photography
(cover and inside)
Installation views and detail of *Satiate*,
Southern Alberta Art Gallery,
Lethbridge, Alberta, 1998

LIST OF WORKS

Satiate, 1998
found objects, tomato paste, fibre-glass
167.6 x 854.0 x 152.4 cm
Collection of the artist