



## REDRESS

### TERRY EWASIUK

*Parole aux femmes*

1987

B&W silver print, display paper, wood  
30 x 66 1/2 in.

Photo courtesy Western Front

### Terry Ewasiuk

"Receiver"

Front Gallery

Vancouver

Thick, black-painted frames border each of Terry Ewasiuk's seven photographic assemblages shown here. These assemblages link together black-and-white images with sections of patterned, colored wallpaper. It is a working mode that echoes both mass consumer production and fine art photography.

The peculiar ambiguity that ensues steadies the work through an eclectic survey of subject matter.

Sometimes the relationship between the wallpaper and the photographs is nearly literal. In *Monitor*, for example, the photograph on the left appears to be a Dutch "nightwatch" logo (the turn-of-the-century security-system notice): a graphic rendering of a staring eye surrounded by a few words of Dutch text. Tacked to a wooden window-frame, the logo is reflected on a piece of glass, creating a mirrored image which is captured in the photograph. The wallpaper occupying the other half of the work is a pattern of red, equidistantly spaced dots on a white ground. The title draws attention to the idea of surveillance and the wallpaper begs to be read as something like a graphic representation of a television screen.



*Parole aux Femmes*, on the other hand, involves a more discursive and enigmatic use of the juxtaposition between photos and pattern. It involves ornate wallpaper, subtly suggestive of vulva-shapes, as a central panel between two photographs of young women. On the left is a brunette; on the right, a blonde. Each is seated in a strong flood of light, and casts a gaze toward the centre panel. The artist translates the title as "Women Speaking," and since neither is shown speaking it can be assumed that any speech is silent and telepathic. The wallpaper acts as a field of stasis. It is an interlude which invites the viewer to speculate on a semiotic level about the nature of the women's communication and its connection to representation and feminism.

*Fétichisme* read in connection with *Parole aux Femmes* seems almost minimal, a trans-

parent statement of intent. It is one of two works in the show composed vertically, the others are all horizontal. It shows a photograph of a bicycle seat placed above red and white, vertically striped wallpaper. The phallic symbolism is obvious. A companion vertical piece in the show titled *Receiver* shows a bowl atop horizontal stripes. The strategic, confrontational placement of the two pieces is polemical. For all the male symbolism that permeates history, a female counterpart is virtually non-existent and unnamable. With *Receiver* Ewasiuk creates a balance for this void, a feminine redress.

In 1914, a Duchampian image of empty bottles on a spiny rack is coupled with wallpaper printed with aggressive, macho images of Superman. Ewasiuk again draws the viewer into the politics of representation.

Duchamp's re-contextualization of the art object in twentieth-century art established the precedent for an ongoing dialectic between the artwork and the artist, and how the art object relates to its exterior world. As a result, Duchamp was recognized and revered as a "Superman" of contemporary art. Ewasiuk's point — not only with the Superman image but also the image of empty bottles hung on prongs — is to question male dominance in art history and attack its insular disregard for women as influential and innovative artists. It is a piece which seethes with irony. The eclectic mélange of subject matter — here as elsewhere — maintains an admirable cohesion, aided by the mature conceptual infrastructure that is evident in Ewasiuk's work.

LINDA CARTER