

WOMEN IN . . .

VOLUME THREE

THE IRIS GROUP INTERNATIONAL WOMENS' DAY EVENTS

2005 - 2010

MARGARET RODGERS, EDITOR

credits

Photography

Pages 38-9:

Holly McClellan (*Buttons, Elles Disent, Recipe, Freedom is not Free*)

All other photography is by IRIS members, with additional artwork by M. Rodgers.

IRIS thanks

-everyone who has generously taken part in our International Women's' Day events, given objects and writings, and had their pictures taken.

Edited and compiled by Margaret Rodgers

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II. *Iris Group (Group of artists)*

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Lifting the Veil

Donated by author Karen L. Cole.

Oshawa 2010

Bullet

As a little girl my mom wouldn't let me play with guns. Now I shoot sporter rifle competitively.

Saranac Lake 2008



Rhinestone Tiara

In order to achieve empowerment the Princess must give up her tiara

Margaret Rodgers, Oshawa 2006



Drapery hook
Just one of the many jobs (careers) a woman may do for a living: sewing, working with hands

T. Whalley (Mother Mod)
Clarington 2005

Part of life:
taking pills, blood being taken - At 24, 44, 54 Still finding joy in the world

Rowena Dykins, Clarington 2005



"A lady never leaves home without a hankie" -- my mother

Liz Brighton, Clarington 2005

Table of Contents

6.....the writings
 18.....the women
 32.....the objects

2005 Clarington at Byng Studio Gallery Bowmanville
 2006 Oshawa at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery
 2007 Edmonton at U of Alberta
 2008 **Oshawa Campus**
 2008 **Saranac Lake NY at BluSeed Studios**
 2009 **Minden at Agnes Jamieson Gallery**
 2010 **Oshawa at Isabella's Chocolate Café**

The IRIS Group



FLUID exhibition opening Latcham Gallery Stouffville Ontario 2006 with participating members R.Read, H.McClellan, S.Thurlow, J.Prebble, L.Hair, M.Rodgers, W.Wallace

The IRIS Group

was formed in 1996 as a forum whose aim is to raise levels of access for women in the arts, to share ideas and offer mutual support. Based in Durham Region, Ontario, Canada, members meet regularly to further the overall intentions of the group. IRIS is a member of CARFAC.

ON/OFF SWITCH

What every man wishes his woman had—



Clarington 2005



Jazz

Lynn McDonald, Port Perry jazz artist introduced me to jazz at the Oshawa library. I enjoy jazz and admire women jazz vocalists. This mug came from the Oshawa Jazz Festival. My uncle Lawrence and Aunt Olive have played piano in jazz bands in New York City. They would jam with my Dad on violin and they gave me an African drum to join in as a child.

Lynn Jacklin, Oshawa 2010

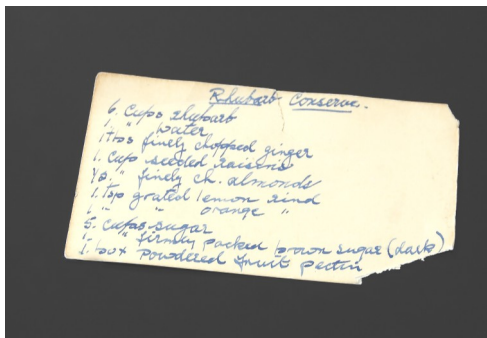
Matreshka

An image of beauty and optimistic attitude, which Russian women always had.

From Russia with love

**Lana Novak
Clarington 2005**





Recipe

This is one of my mom's recipes. I love her handwritings and have kept her box of recipes for that reason.

Judy Metcalf
Oshawa Campus 2008

Freedom Is Not Free

The privileges earned from oppression are gained at the cost of freedom and the neglect of obligations
 Ekosi

D. Bear Glover
Edmonton



Brooch

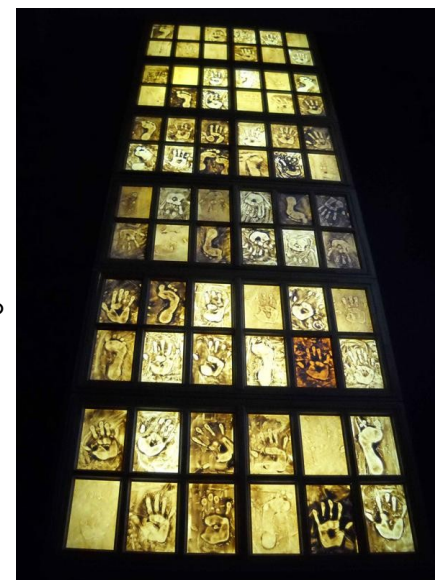
Are diamonds a girl's best friend?

Lisa Weiss
Oshawa 2006

the plan

March 8 is International Women's Day

In March 2005 and 2006 members of the Iris Group celebrated International Women's Day by inviting women to be photographed, reply to a series of questions, and contribute an object invested with personal meaning. At each event IRIS member Janice Prebble collected hand and foot prints to incorporate into a massive series of light boxes.



A Small History of Gathering I, J. Prebble, 2009

The following year the project expanded to include Edmonton, and since then events have taken place in Oshawa, Minden and Saranac Lake New York. The *Women in . . .* projects bring together professional artists and the broader community for the purpose of giving the visual arts a stronger presence in everyday life.

the writings

1. In your lifetime what, if any, positive changes have you seen for yourself or women in general?
2. Can you tell a story about a woman that has made an impact on your life?
3. Does International Women's Day have any special meaning for you?

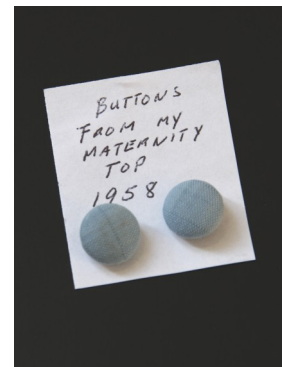
A JOURNAL PROJECT: ME AT 8 YEARS; AT 20 YEARS; AND SO ON.

Due in part to the circumstances within each venue, the written responses have ranged from prolific to minimal. For the 2005-06 events there were private areas for writing, and therefore many more writings. These are recorded in the first two volumes of the *WOMEN IN . . .* series. In contrast Volume 3 focuses on imagery and objects, with several particularly special writings.



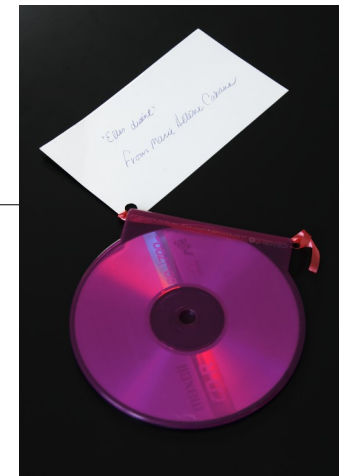
Three dolls
gift From Jane Dixon on behalf of her late daughter Liz

Oshawa 2008



Buttons
from one of those 'lovely' baggy maternity tops and the year was 1958

Irene Lubowitz
Oshawa Campus 2008



Elles Disent

by Marie-Hélène Cabana
and Cédric Jamet
Edmonton 2007



**The constant move
through life — striving to
go UP**

**Lisa Weiss
Oshawa 2006**

Breast Shields

I made myself for my nursing period which was the better part of six years. They remind me of the pure bliss of nurturing my babies—as well as the various crises that most nursing moms have to deal with—mastitis, poor supply, latching problems—as well as finally, weaning. What a life lesson!

**Raina Charnushenk
Oshawa 2006**



Tiny Plate

This object was given to me by a friend. It represents the indomitable spirit of the single traveler.

Clarington 2005



Image Transparency

**Old Cedar barn,
Norman Ridge**



Red raspberries, bright blue sky,
knee high grass barriers over-
head, carefully I step – one slow
foot at a time, parting brambles
reaching in towards a bright ripe fruit low hanging
feeling it in my fingers slowly pulling pulling back
among the prickles slight scratches the low hum of
bees the branches move, a tail wags the german
shepherd raises its head, tongue lolling could be any
one of them – Thumper, Klaus, Elko, Krista bookend-
ing my childhood, those long walks, summer dream-
ing I place the berries on my tongue and taste the
sweetness of my childhood, it stains my tongue, my
fingers, my lips.

BluSeed studios JR(?)2008

Jane Dixon



In your lifetime what, if any positive changes have you seen for yourself or women in general?

After I moved to Oshawa with my husband and children in the sixties Betty Friedan wrote her famous book about women called *The Feminine Mystique* and I, along with many other young women, felt much more empowered.

For example, when I was 17 and newly graduated from high school, I loved art and wished to continue my education at art school. (" That was no place for girls," my parents said, " the boys there are a wild lot—

NATURE NATURE

Component from artwork exhibited in Saranac Lake 2008.



I love gardening –

the work & creative aspect of it all – even the bad weather.

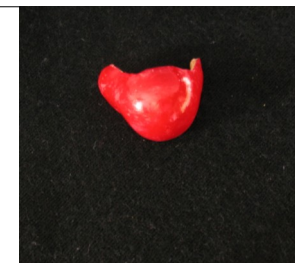
This basil grew like mad in my garden last summer! The fragrance was wonderful.

**Ruth Latimer
Oshawa 2010**

Clown Nose

Laughter Is Good Medicine

**Sparkles the Clown
Oshawa 2006**



Wounded Bound and Gagged

inhumane cultural practices perpetrated by misogynists and endorsed by religion

**Linda Ward Selbie
Oshawa 2006**



Image Transparency
Old cedar barn, Norman Ridge ©
1997

Saranac Lake 2008

Guide Badge

*I promise to do my best
To do my duty
To God, the Queen and my
country
To help other people every
day
And to respect the Guide
Law.*

Saranac Lake 2008



their hair is too long etc. etc.”) and so I was sent to Trinity College at the University of Toronto to study English and languages.

In Oshawa, I started to do art anyway—at first stitchery and fabric art—then printmaking and watercolour painting. I went to summer school to take my teacher’s Art Specialist’s course and also took many courses at Sheridan College summer and winter. I was greatly encouraged in my art by Joan Murray, who at that time was the director of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery. I was in a group show with other women artists of Durham Region, later a two-artist show there with woodcarver Ivan Law, and later still a retrospective show of both my fabric wall works and my monoprints. I have been fortunate to have been asked to participate in shows in Bowmanville, Whitby, Port Perry, Haliburton and Toronto, but without the support of the Women’s Liberation Movement and my many women artist friends I probably wouldn’t have had the courage to pursue a career in art without formal training in art school. I think the above answers question #2, which was “Does International Woman’s Day have any special meaning for you?”

All the women who have made a major impact in my life have been artists, including my beloved art teacher in Hamilton, Miss Elanore Feiness Clinton who used to take me sketching in her Model T Ford in the good weather, when I was a little girl. Others included Constance Howard my green-haired Fabric Art teacher at Sheridan College and my classmate there, Marion Spanjerdt from Holland whose creations blew my mind. I have already mentioned Joan Murray—a remarkably liberated woman, who went on to be Director at the McMichael Gallery and an artist and noted writer of many books about art and artists. Last, but not least, my various artist friends in Oshawa are always a source of delight and inspiration and include Margaret Rodgers and my pottery teacher, Barbara Kimball as well as a man! Bill Fitches whom I first met as a kid barely out of high school when we ended up in Toronto taking the same art course together.

Can you tell a story about a woman who has made an impact on your life?

I have a friend in Oakville, Ontario named Sybil Rampen. We first met at the University of Toronto when we were both seventeen and in our first year. Sybil was studying Art and Archeology. Since then she has become a well known artist in her area and a teacher. In her late seventies she embarked on a massive building project at her farm that included an extension of her house to include her studio, which had been in a separate building, and a spacious art gallery building. This is separate from the main residence and includes a top story which will house an art library. The gallery was completed in time for her eightieth birthday in April of 2009 and opened with a wonderful retrospective show of her work. The construction had taken at least two years and each working day Sybil fed the workmen substantial and delicious lunches which must have made them reluctant to finish the job quickly! Altogether I think it was a remarkable achievement for an eighty-year old.



This old brass bell goes back a long time – over 75 years, to when I was a small child. At that time my favourite thing to do was to go walking in the country with my father. I grew up in Hamilton and on weekends we would visit various parks in the area. One time we went to Webster’s Falls outside of Dundas, which is an especially beautiful park. It was a sunny

day in winter and I remember that there was lots of snow on the ground. We noticed something shining in the snow. It was this bell which must have fallen off the harness of a horse as he was pulling a sled. Of course there were cars at that time but folk still loved to go for sled rides in the snow – especially for parties. It is a true “jingle bell” as the old song puts it. It reminds me of happy times and of my Dad who was very dear to me.

Jane Dixon, Oshawa 2010



A quarter

A quarter was always given to my daughters to call home if they needed help

Saranac Lake 2008

A bear nail

This is a bear nail [that] was on a Medici shield made years ago and deconstructed.

Saranac Lake 2008



Porcelain sculpture

My art is my Theosophy

Rachel

Saranac Lake 2008

Quilt

A small blue and white quilt from leftover scraps of a much larger quilt that I made for my youngest daughter. A piece of myself and a piece of her



**Mom & Quilter: Marion Meyers
Singer & Daughter:
Nicolette Henderson
Oshawa 2010**

A vintage brooch

from Donna Boyko, the first adult, female artist I met at the beginning of my artistic journey



**Laura Hair
Oshawa 2010**

Quartz

This was from my late husband's arrangement of rocks by our stone steps.



**Sandy Valentine
Minden 2009**

Saranac Lake 2008

Julie Larson

I have lived in and travelled through many of the world's big cities. In each one, I have always taken public transportation – partly because it is my way to meet people, partly because it gives you a feel for a place; it instantly makes you belong, even if you don't, and it is sustainable!

Julie Larson, Montreal/NYC



Edith Urban

In your lifetime what, if any positive changes have you seen for yourself or women in general?

Being an artist, I believe women are seeing more recognition and acceptance in the arts field. It is still a struggle and name recognition seems more important than the quality of art done but I have seen progress.

Does International Women's Day have any special meaning for you?

I think International Women's Day is a beautiful concept, but maybe it should be International People's Day recognizing the equality of all peoples of all genders, age and ethnicity.

Can you tell a story about a woman who has made an impact on your life?

Two women have had an impact on my life, my friends Luthera and Maxine, both free spirits but opposites in many ways. Luthera an artist, writer and thinker was born before her time in 1920. She probably could have become a notable person but spent her life caring for others and became ill herself, possibly a result of stifling her creativity. Maxine, born in 1918, was born too late, and lived her life in the past, sort of a Tasha Tudor figure. She followed no one's path, adored animals and nature, and lived recollectively in the late 19th Century. Both were supportive and helped me believe in myself.

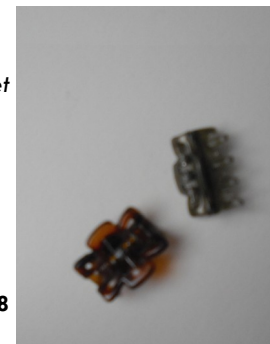


Balance – Physical, Emotional, Mental.
A year of finding myself.
Saranac Lake 2010

Hair clips

When I was in high school I could never get my hair to look like "it should," now as an adult, I love my hair, and yet it is as low maintenance as it gets! My hair is "short & sweet." Yes!

Saranac Lake 2008



Heart Rock

This is a heart rock from Maine, found by the ocean. I collect heart-shaped rocks because to me they represent love and my love for the earth.

Saranac Lake 2008

the objects

IRIS accumulates



THE IWD projects have entailed the archiving of all of the objects and captions that IRIS has collected over five years.

The Journal Project

Me at 8 years, an extremely shy, uncertain little girl, tied to my mother's apron strings, already showing signs of problematic insecurities. At 20, two years out of high school, graduating as salutatorian as a result of long hours of study, now working in billing in a 10x12 office with 3 other women, too uncertain of myself to move on. At 24, a different job in proof reading, feeling better about life, getting married to Gene, and moving to Schenectady where I worked at GE in receivables and made advances in salary and self esteem. At 28, with my job ending at GE due to the sale of my division, Gene and I moved back to the Adirondacks where I hoped to find my creative side. At 32, we moved into our new home, my life's dream, and my energies led in the direction of gardening with extensive perennial beds in our landscape. In my 30's I delved into oil painting, and became much more active in biking, mountain climbing and hiking. At 39, a miscarriage. My 40's flew by, still painting, selling my work at give-away prices. At 57, my world seemed to come crashing down when Gene discovered his years of anxiety and depression were a result of gender identity issues and he realized he was a transgendered person. After 33 years of marriage it didn't seem plausible. Now, 4 years later, I have come to accept his/her true identity, for the most part anyway. I am happy with the progress of my painting, I have a new gallery, my extensive flower gardens bring me extreme joy, and Gena and I are soul-mates. I owe Gena endless gratitude for enduring all these years of exploring my creativity and my passions. I am still a shy, insecure person, but the future seems wide open and I am optimistic.

Edith Urban, Onchiota New York 2008

Eugenia Urban



In your lifetime what, if any positive changes have you seen for yourself or women in general?

In my lifetime I have seen many new opportunities for women such as gains in political and economic freedom and equality. Women working in areas and jobs traditionally held by men is an obvious example.

Women in Saranac Lake

July 17, 2008



Women in Saranac Lake

July 17, 2008



Does International Women's Day have any special meaning?

To me, International Women's Day, celebrated every year on March 8th means women taking responsibility for themselves by demanding changes which have raised an awareness of women and have resulted in more freedom, respect and dignity.

Is there a woman who has made an impact on your life?

Before I answer this question I must first place myself in perspective. I am a male to female transsexual and assumed a female identity only 4 years ago. That being said, the woman who has made the biggest impact on my life is my wife Edith. We have been married for 37 years and during this time we have grown together and have grown separately. Edith expresses herself through her art, her mediums of expression are oil painting and fabric art which includes quilting. We have experienced many of the ordinary encounters which are part of life. However, when I finally discovered my "true-self" and made the necessary changes to transition from the male gender to female, Edith stood by me and has remained by my side to this day. Despite this challenge to our relationship and many sacrifices, Edith has remained strong physically and mentally and has taught me not only how to be a woman but how to be a better person.

The Journal Project

Me at 8 years

In the year 1958 I was indeed 8 years old and living with my parents and two sisters in the city of my birth, Schenectady, New York and was attending a Catholic elementary school. At this time the "cold-war" was well underway and if I never learned anything else, I learned how to "duck and cover". My play activities and style of dress were that of any boy growing up to be a man. During my high-school years I was academically mediocre but was considered a star cross-country and track athlete. I attended and graduated from Paul Smiths' College, located in New York's Adirondack Mountains near Lake Placid, with a 2 year degree in forestry.

Me at 20 years and so on

After graduation from Paul Smiths', Edith and I married and I was employed in the field of land surveying in the Albany, New York area and eventually relocated to the Lake Placid area and did site layout work on Olympic venues in preparation for the 1980 Winter Olympic Games. At the completion of the Olympic construction I seized upon an opportunity to work for the New York State Department of Correctional Services as a Correction Officer and retired in 2004 as a Correction Sergeant after 25 years of service. During my tenure in Correction I learned much about people and eventually myself. From an early age I had had problems with anxiety and as time went on it was taking its toll and therapy and medication were to no avail.

Women in Saranac Lake

July 17,
2008



Women in Saranac Lake

July 17, 2008



I have always looked for answers and one day I found myself in the book "True-Selves" by Mildred L. Brown and Chloe Ann Rounley. I found I had Gender Identity Disorder and then sought the help of a qualified gender therapist and other health care specialists and I gradually transitioned from male to female. My anxiety has since disappeared, I now look in the mirror and see what I had been looking to see for a lot of years, my mind all along was trying to tell me and I did not realize it at the time, hence the anxiety. Although I would not wish GID on anyone I feel privileged to experience life from the vantage of both genders in one lifetime. I now present, live and experience life as a female and daily encounter both men and women, feeling completely comfortable and confident in my female gender role and life has become a fresh new adventure on the journey of meaning, understanding and fulfillment. This brief, but MEandering, biography of ME at 8 years and ME at 20 years and so on prior to my transition was the focus of my daily life, but now my attention has shifted from myself to be more open, to better listen to others and appreciate hearing their story and thereby opening myself for the potential for growth and meaningful relationships. This project has given me an opportunity to pause and look at where I have been and to the direction I am now going.

Eugenia Urban
Onchiota New York
2008

the women



At each event a camera station is set up and women are asked to pose for their picture. It is understood that the images taken will be used respectfully to become part of IRIS members' artwork.

The women who attended the IWD events in Oshawa 2010, Minden 2009, Saranac Lake 2008, and Oshawa UOIT/Trent/Durham Campus Student Centre 2008 are recorded here.

Women in Saranac Lake

July 17, 2008





Women in Oshawa

March 6, 2010



Women in Oshawa

March 6, 2010



Women on Campus Oshawa 2008





Women in Oshawa

March 6, 2010



Women in Oshawa

March 6, 2010



Women in Minden, 2009

