

Edgework: Sites of Critical Exchange

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Edgework consists of *Precipice*, 1991, *Epitaph*, 1992, and *lesbian leaves*, 1999-2001. These works are collaborative in the sense that I was working out their visual and literary components while I studied with Barbara Godard as a doctoral candidate in English. (Signs of her influence are everywhere.) For example, I participated in her Feminist Literary Theory seminar, French Feminisms, and with her, later prepared for my first field examination, Women Studies in Literature. My paper for French Feminisms, "Reading Julia Kristeva Reading Hans Holbein's *Dead Christ*," included visual and literary sources and critique just as a paper I prepared earlier for her Semiotics seminar, "Semiotics, Subjectivity and Paterson Ewen's *Phenomena Paintings*." Barbara encouraged these cross-disciplinary investigations of mine.

Precipice is an installation of mixed media. Three gallery walls frame the space; a fourth is implied but left open. On one gallery wall are large graphite letters of a text from Andre Breton's *Second Manifesto of Surrealism*. A landscape of acrylic paint on paper, fastened to cedar board supported by a wooden ledge occupies another. A pedestal in the center holds an excerpt from Matt's journal. (Caregivers helping Matt through the final stages of AIDS kept the journal. When he was well enough, Matt regularly caught up on the entries. He died at the age of 25 years in 1987.) The installation also includes a projected image, *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*, painted in 1522 by Hans Holbein the Younger, and analyzed by Julia Kristeva in her essay "Holbein's *Dead Christ*" in *Black Sun, Depression and Melancholia*, 1989.

In 1991, *Precipice* was exhibited in *Political Landscapes Two: Sacred and Secular Sites* at the Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery, Owen Sound and at the Ojibway Cultural Foundation, West Bay, Manitoulin Island. A later version of the work, *Epitaph*, which included a projected image and Matt's journal was exhibited in *Gathering: The Memorial Project* at A Space, Toronto in 1992 and in *Memory/Elegy* at Woodstock Art Gallery, Woodstock, Ontario in 1993. I added a longer text and "Epitaph" evolved into a bookwork for the issue "Feminist(s) Project(s)/Projets (des) féministes" of *Tessera*, 15, 1993 (pp. 83-89), later included in *Countering the Myths: Lesbians write about the men in their lives*, edited by Rosamund Elwin (Toronto: Women's Press, 1996, pp. 153-59).

lesbian leaves was first worked out as an image. I played with two unrelated images: one, a photographic detail from the architectural language of a financial building on Bay Street, Toronto; the other, appropriated from an 1887 portfolio of photographic sequence studies of the human figure in motion by the Victorian British photographer Eadweard Muybridge. To see what might be introduced, I juxtaposed the two. The words were added later (while I studied for my Women Studies in Literature field examination with Barbara as my Advisor). A version of the image was exhibited in 1999 at The Red Head Gallery, Toronto; another, a year later, in New York City at *Queer 2000: A Member's Millennium, College Art Association Gay and Lesbian Caucus* at the College Art Association Conference, 2000. After written text was added, "lesbian leaves" was included in the "Lesbian Creations/Creations lesbiennes" issue of *Tessera*, 30, 2001 (pp. 32-33).