

Cheryl Fisher

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Her Venus Signature

By Diana Murray

When the muse and her mirror meet, a unique energy is created. So artist Barbara Bickel and jazz diva Cheryl Fisher discovered when they began collaborating in May; the results can be seen and heard at the Centre Gallery, November 18 to December 20.

"Her Venus Signature" is a powerful combination of female artistic expression. Bickel's mixed media figures act as the canvas that shapes the stories to be told and Fisher's musical compositions give voice to the storytelling.

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The two women met three years ago at one of Bickel's exhibition openings, got to know one another and decided to join forces. Both had wanted to work with another female artist because of a strong conviction that "collaboration with other women in art is so much more inspiring."

It was the philosophy of American artist Hannah Wilke that moved them. A fearless advocate of the female-based art form, Wilke coined the term "Venus Envy," which she defines as the envy of the beauty and sexuality of women. According to Wilke, because of Venus envy, women's power and beauty are seen as threatening forces and act to separate women from other women and also from men. "Her Venus Signature" is an exploration of how Venus envy has affected and shaped the lives of these two women.

In the months leading up to the exhibition, Bickel would work on a painting, then give it to Fisher who would write a piece of music to go with it. Sometimes this process worked the other way with the song coming first. Fisher, known primarily as a jazz singer (she's performed in Paris jazz clubs, at Montreal's Jazz Festival and released *Slow Hand Jazz*, a highly acclaimed CD on the market), has delved into a style that is "not necessarily what I'm known for." Instead of jazz, the music she's written lends itself more to a "classical, New Age" sound.

The result is a 20-piece art exhibit, with 16 accompanying songs that will be performed live on the two opening nights, November 22-23, and recorded for the remainder of the exhibit.

Call the Centre Gallery at 243-4615 or 237-0383 for more information.

Cheryl