



Katja MacLeod Kessin

February 7, 1959– April 1, 2006

Hitler, after failing at artistic success, decides to become a politician. I, at age five, decide to become an artist.

— My mother commissions a copy of Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" from me for 25 cents, to present to my grandmother on her 75th birthday.

— My mother tells me how, as a child, she hid a copy of Franz Marc's "Blue Horses" in her school book. She felt ashamed to like it because it was 'Entartete Kunst' (Degenerate Art).

— For a school project we have to draw "the earth from within". I draw monsters, goblins and skeletons in caves. I get a bad mark because we had been expected to illustrate the earth's strata.

— At 17 I drop out of high school after my teachers nominate me for a language scholarship. I want to be an artist but I am still too young for the academy. My father is outraged and I hide in Canada for a while. I have a brief encounter with "serious" art as a guest student at John Abbott College. Back in Germany I try to become a carpenter's apprentice but they don't accept women. My tutor's final words to me are: "Now you'll just get married and have kids."

— Katja MacLeod Kessin, 1991
excerpts from "My Parents: an intellectual tracing of my artistic parentage"

For Immediate Release

Retrospective exhibition: Katja MacLeod Kessin

October 17 - November 16, 2007

Vernissage October 25

www.katjamacleodkessin.com

Montréal, October 16, 2007 – The Faculty of Fine Arts (FOFA) Gallery is pleased to present the retrospective memorial exhibition featuring the work of Katja MacLeod Kessin. The exhibition will be on view at the FOFA Gallery from October 17 to November 16, 2007. The vernissage will take place on October 25 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the FOFA Gallery.

Born in Hamburg, Germany, Kessin emigrated to Montréal in 1981 where she became an active member of the Concordia University community, receiving a BFA, MFA and in 2003, a Ph.D in Humanities. Kessin's work examines the connections between the home environment and large-scale acts of violence, as exemplified by Hitler's Third Reich and the resulting Holocaust. Kessin's research project, **To Lend the Dead a Voice**, focuses on second generation German artists, the descendants of Jewish and gentile Germans of the Third Reich. Throughout her practice, Kessin developed a detailed iconography which drew on her childhood experiences in Germany and explored the socially accepted forms of violence, the hidden dangers and often-false comforts of traditional family life. Kessin was a teacher, curator, mother and artist, who saw her practice as a means to explore, communicate with and impact the society she lived in. After a long illness, Kessin died in 2006.

Truly a labour of love, the exhibition is co-curated by Kessin's friends and peers from Concordia University: David Elliott, Lynn Hughes, Loren Lerner and Sara Morley. The exhibition will feature a wide range of Kessin's works and will premiere her final painting series, **366 days** in which she created a painting a day for one year.

A selection of Kessin's interviews and performance pieces will be screened and discussed by the co-curators during **Performing Katja** at 7:30 p.m. in lecture hall 1-605. Alexandra Daszkowski, Katja's sister, will also present, **We hadn't seen each other for two years**, a collaborative work she made with Kessin. An exhibition catalogue will be sold at the FOFA Gallery. This exhibition is presented in collaboration with the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre 10th Annual Holocaust Education Series.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

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