

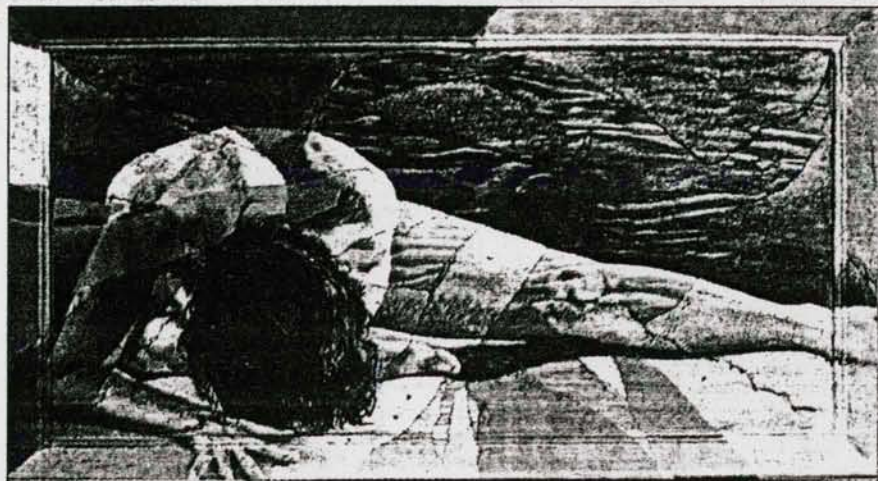
Two-woman mixed media show is returning

Join me in the joy of discovering a two-woman show called **Her Venus Signature**, the result of an extended collaboration between a mixed media artist and a jazz singer/composer that will be performed one last time early in January.



KEN MCGOOGAN

Herald columnist



VENUS ENVY: A mixed media drawing on wood by Barbara Bickel



File photo

CHERYL FISHER: Hailed as new Canadian 'Diva of Jazz'

The painter is **Barbara Bickel**, who did a collaborative project last year, with a poet, called *Sisters*.

The singer/composer is **Cheryl Fisher**, who has been hailed as "the new Canadian Diva of Jazz."

These two Calgary artists met three years ago, Bickel tells me. Artistically, they connected and early this year, they decided to try collaborating: "It amazes me, how much you gain by playing off each other."

Bickel was coming off her highly successful *Sisters* exhibition; Fisher had just released an acclaimed CD called *Slow Hand Jazz*. Together, they decided to celebrate the philosophy of American artist Hannah Wilke, who coined the term "Venus Envy" to describe one prevalent response to the beauty and sexuality of women.

The collaborative show *Her Venus Signature* explores "Venus envy" — but that's in the abstract. In reality, we

find ourselves in a darkened gallery with 70 or 80 other people, some on chairs, others on pillows. At the front of the room stands a dimly lit microphone, a guitar and some digital equipment. Twenty paintings line the walls — but they're veiled.

Bickel appears, carrying a candle. She speaks briefly, then unveils the first painting. Fisher materializes out of nowhere, steps up to the microphone. A guitarist picks up his instrument. Somebody flicks a switch. Music is everywhere.

On a screen at the front of the room, a camera projects a slide image of the painting Bickel has just introduced. Fisher begins to sing. You see why

she's celebrated as a jazz singer — only now she's singing her own compositions.

OK, it sounds theatrical, almost hokey — but I loved it.

Bickel has created all these images. Fisher has composed all this music and the occasion is so intimate — the artists, the audience, the funky Centre Gallery. It's so grassroots.

This is the antithesis of mainstream culture, with its blow-dried superstars, its predictable sitcoms. No laugh tracks here. No cavernous auditoriums. No jostling crowds, no plastic puppets lip-syncing lyrics on a distant stage — here, try the binoculars.

None of that. Just two artists work-

er's performance, don headphones.

Alternatively, or maybe additionally you can catch the hold-over performance on Saturday, Jan. 4, at the Centre Gallery on 6th Avenue S.W.

Tickets are \$13 in advance and I'd get them early (237-0383).

The counter-culture lives! Pass it on

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