

CWS/cf salutes Helen Lucas



Helen Lucas

A good deal of critical discussion continues to take place among feminists concerning Judge Abella's recommendation that the term 'employment equity' replace 'affirmative action.' A number of articles in this issue reflect the ongoing debate – which is not merely "a question of semantics." In spite of the fact that no consensus has been reached, most of us would happily agree upon our sense of what the word 'affirmation' conveys: a state of mind, a way of greeting life with open hands and a generous spirit.

Our cover artist Helen Lucas is a woman whose work moves in a steadily affirming curve, from the early black-and-white drawings with their closed, aloof, iconesque faces to the later figures, just daring to lift their arms in a dance they barely know exists. And alongside the increasingly engaged figures move her satiric, witty characterizations of men and women forever locked into their sex roles – the women angels who refuse to be angelic; the

men power machines with the oomph draining out of them.

After the years of black and white drawings Helen's work now explodes in a riot of colour. Huge canvasses brimming over with life. Flowers so complex that we get lost in their centres; their petals so sensuous that we reach out to touch. If we compare her cover illustration for the last issue of CWS/cf, with Angélique barely keeping on top of the books she must 'master,' to the current 'Sunrise' cover, we know immediately the celebration at the heart of this latest work. The curve that can be traced in Helen's art as a whole is the curve that can be traced in many women's lives: moving from frustration and anger to laughter – emerging into a celebration in which we all share.

Helen Lucas' new studio/residence "Bibury" is located at RR2, King City, Ontario L0G 1K0; telephone (416) 859-4425.