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Ann Hamilton 4/20/99

“The totality of this work is extraordinary. It is my good fortune to have seen, touched and sensed this piece of art.”

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GENERAL

Jayne Hileman, Professor of Art St. Xavier University, Chicago, from the lecture  
Women Artists At Work in Chicago 2000-2005  
AT Evora University, Evora, Portugal, Fall 2005

*Jane Gilmor's early work consisted of designing and sewing costumes for actual feline Glamour Kittens, posing herself in handmade classical robes at sacred Greek sites, while wearing a cat mask (sacred to their southern neighbors the Egyptians), and embroidering plush paintings like wild Victorian pillows. In these art works and performances, she displays resonant seventies feminist art ideas: examining female identity, both stereotypical and mythical, transforming history by embracing/becoming the goddess, and re-valuing women's traditional craft work in textiles and costumes. Her personal take, in tableau performance and softly sculptured surfaces, always included a healthy dose of humor, a refreshing tendency to deal with big issues, but not take herself too seriously.*

*As her work has matured, Gilmor has continued to reflect on contemporary and developing feminist art discourse. As she and many other privileged American women artists consider their advantages, they have examined issues of the disadvantaged, as Gilmor has with her projects about and with homeless people. As issues of women's identity have expanded to include the immigrant and the eroticized other, she has enlarged her practice to include collaborations, new combinations of sculpture, video/performance, and a new, rather phallic disguise: the moveable hunting blind. Her most recent use of this tubular tent, with camouflage pattern on the surface, provides a good connecting thread to the contemporary practice of Midwestern American women artists and their present work on identity, process and labor, bearing witness to and questioning history.*

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Elizabeth Condon:  
11/28/98

I loved your show and those books, the fountain, the little cages, very personal, very interesting encounter to kneel down in a gallery space and read, or staring into the cages. So that the reverie and privacy of being in the garden or in nature is somehow re-introduced in this very urban, artificial situation.

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Sherry Buckberrough  
4/91 to Bellagio Center

"In my opinion, Jane's art is consistent in its preposterous counter play of the fashionable and the enduring concerns from Baudelaire in that her sense of the enduring is not connected with the beautiful. Instead, it is curiously intermeshed with what she also sees as slightly bizarre -- ancient myths, rituals, and folk customs. She forces our recognition of the intervention of these enduring forms into contemporary culture, mass media, social fads and social ills. The success of her work comes from the precise mixture of archeological and/or anthropological research, a slightly shocking juxtaposition of this information with remnants of our multi-media world and usually a reasonable dose of humor. To do this she needs to keep a sharp eye on both the past and the present in the world around her, and both the engagement and the distance of the concerned commentator. Over the years I have been frequently impressed with Jane's ability to keep in touch-- with New York, with the most recently intellectual movements, with numerous foreign cultures -- at the same time remaining deeply connected to her home state of Iowa, its folk art customs and artifacts. her research of shelters (roadside shrines of Italy, Mexico, Ireland --) is now directed toward homeless families. Given the extraordinary confusion today about the needs of homeless people, Jane's explorations, offbeat as they may be, are perhaps as likely as any other to direct necessary thinking along new paths.

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Jan 20, 1992  
To: Vila Montavo

Exposure to Jane's work has grown consistently in the past few years. Given that she is a fulltime teacher and academic administrator. her record of exhibitions and completed projects is no less that remarkable.

Sherry Buckberrough Associate Professor Dept of Art History University of Hartford,  
West Hartford, CT. 06117

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Paul Brenner, **Real Art Ways**, Hartford Ct March 198

"While taking a tongue in cheek look at the way contemporary society associates animal images with gender characteristics, Gilmor challenges the viewer into recognition of these stereotypes, and a subsequent questioning of their validity, ...."

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Elise La Rose, "Outside New York, A.I.R. Gallery New York" Woman **Artists News**,  
Winter, 1988-89 Vol13, No4

"Gilmor tells us we cannot glibly glorify goddess traditions without critical understanding, and clarifying our link to the past and our place in the future won't be simple."

The book of Life contains a video of ritualistic dance. A woman in a cat costume taps her heels, the repetitive movement seemingly without purpose. Mocking what might be a present-day temple hetaera. Gilmor questions the cultural construction of gender. She seems to say that human impulses toward religion are simultaneously absurd and meaningful, important, and egocentric. We may laugh at the spoof on religious pomp and circumstance, but remain frustrated by the uncertain message.

Jane Gilmor, from Iowa, satirizes the search for meaning in metal repousse sculptures using an imager of exaggerated body parts, animals and architectural components. Sorry to leave so many Weeds, constructed in the shape of a cross, crucifies no one. There a head might have hung is florescent light. Figures falling and swimming in the metal surface derive from myths of Mediterranean as well as contemporary everyday myth."

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**Women Artist' News Vol 13 No 4., page 25-26 photo**

Chicago Tribune Friday Oct 20, 1989 Section 7 page 50

"Group Show proves Artemisia's Insight" by David McCracken with photo

"Gilmor aims are more far-reaching, and found objects - including notes, shovels, rocks -- represent just one element of a project that includes photographs, video and performance. Mixing the mythic and the prosaic, Gilmor is out to limn the resonances or archetypal figures and situations in the contemporary worlds.

Wall altars seem familiar but just out of reach. Her monumental floor pieces, resembling tombs or gravestones, tend towards more complexity: One has dozens of nude figures with animal heads hammered in relief on its metal surface; another incorporates a small television monitor with a videotaped performance.

Both formats evince Gilmor's fascination with both Christian and pagan - especially early Egyptian - imagery. The recurring figure in many of these works is a woman with the head of a cat derived from an Egyptian Goddess."

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**Des Moines Register, October 29, 1995 5C The Arts Visual Arts: Three Artists offer art dreamscapes by Eliot Nusbaum register art critic**

"Gilmor weaves together the dreams and nightmares of others. her work entitled "BedTimeStories or alternately, BedShoeHome" is an installation in the back of the gallery. It consists of a narrow door from Gillmor's now demolished home, covered with sheets of metal and inset with a small television screen. Playing on the television is a loop of video images taken from some old home movies Gilmor purchased at a yard sale.

The floor in front of the door is covered with squares of the same sheet metal as the door, etched with pictures and stories by children who were or are patients at the University of Iowa Hospitals in Iowa City. The etched squares display a wide range of emotions and ideas. They are at the very best disquieting. Some are downright disturbing, but most are quite poignant.

For example, one square has these words, written in a child's hands

"My name is Holy. I had brain surgery. I was very scared, I have been brave, I want to go home. I am a farm girl, I love animals."

At the bottom of the square is her etched drawing of a rabbit.

On the gallery walls encircling the etched floor are five framed etched pieces of metal. These images were found in the trash at a school in London where Gilmor was visiting artist last summer. They are physically tied with chains to small metal notebooks titled "home management" "A letter to the Editor" A Letter to the Judge, "letter from Phoenix" "letter from Dublin" These notebooks are resting on pillows that have been covered with etched metal pillow cases.

The over all affect is that of a sort of hospital ward or shelter.

The irony of those two possibilities, notes Gilmor, is that patients are in bed all the time and homeless people are always looking for a bed ---and both tend to be unhappy about their situation. Further, there are connotations that attach themselves to beds that aren't always comfortable, that beds in a domestic situation are loaded with meanings. These loaded meanings reflect on the theme of the work, which is dysfunction.'

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NEW ART EXAMINER, JANUARY 1994 page 43

Reviews: "Iowa artists '93 Des Moines Art center" by Julie Levin

*In contrast, the work "Welcome" written on one of three austere floor sculptures by Jane Gilmor seemed to whisper from below. **In Homeless Drawing Home Floor -, Gilmor collaborated with several homeless individuals to create a composition of irregularly shaped flat, metal pieces arranged in a uniform square. While her choice of form may be reminiscent of Carl Andre's cool Minimalist style, Gilmor engravings of handwritten statements and drawings by homeless people add a powerful contextual dimension to the work. Furthermore, because we must look down to view her sculptures, Gilmor reminds us of how we often interact with homeless people -- literally and metaphorically looking down at them as we pass by.***

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"Home is Where ...?" Work by Jane Gilmor. Bemis Center for Contemporary Art, Omaha, Nebraska, June 19 – July 31, 1993

by Hope Palmer

**Tractor**, Fall 1995 page 43 Reviews

"Sometimes words are not enough to express the poignancy of human experience. Artist Jane Gilmor recreates in artistic form the panoply of experience that forms each of our lives. In these mixed media constructions, Gilmor never lets you forget the insurmountable capacity for hope contained within the human spirit.

Upon entering the gallery, one had the sense of being privileged to set foot in a world personally and secretly transcribed, a world at once contemporary, yet resounding with archetypal figures and situations. Here, in a series of 11 eloquent installations and sculptures incorporating found objects, metal notes, audiotape, videos potatoes, cabbages, messages from homeless individuals, is presented a haze of disestablished lives. Great care has been taken not to patronize those who have trustingly collaborated with the artist by allowing her into their lives.

**Rarely is a viewer in a gallery situation made to be such an accomplice. It takes consummate skill on the part of the artist to project such immediacy of raw emotion. So much of this art deals with stolen moments of forgotten peoples forged from the real and from the imagination.**

*In Home is Where is ...*, a huge installation of found notes and messages from homeless individuals transcribed on 36-gauge aluminum joined together with nails forming a patchwork metal wall. immediately confronted the visitor. Fascinated, one was drawn into the life-like environment where words and phrases slip in and out of meaning as our senses were overwhelmed by its huge scope.

In another installation entitled *Wall of Notes and Objects*, many of these same images reoccur but this time not in tandem. On opposite walls, a 5 x7 inch metal sheet of incised text and a seemingly unrelated found object on a shelf form an immutable dialogue, marching in syncopated rhythm, isolated from one another by a good 15 feet, yet part of a mysterious whole. It is this sense of the mysterious that is a leitmotif throughout the rest of the pieces. They are approachable but just out of reach: and at first glance it seems as though we only view them through a dark and bitter light. But if we give the pieces some time, we find a cultivated richness, a sense of everyman's family.

A savage intensity coupled with a mordant sense of humor is evident in two other pieces, three *Beds* (1995) and *Ireland* (1995). The first incorporates metal writing, moss, cabbage and small figures. In the second, religious and political affiliations are coupled with deadpan wit through the use of potatoes and Kleenex.

Gilmor is an artist who is used to communication. She is currently a professor of art at Mount Mercy College in Cedar Rapids, The insight and skills used in teaching are a constant in her artwork as well. It is her observation of life, the ephemera of a world often given short shrift by those around her. that becomes noteworthy. Small transgressions become reformed in her eyes. reused in subversive ways. Her travels to such countries as Mexico, Greece, and Italy are incorporated into work that, in the final analysis, speaks of the spiritual permeating the fabric of all our entwined lives. The search for meaning in a life that takes many artists over the edge is here controlled with a refined sensibility and a fierceness that leaves unforgettable images in its aftermath.

\_Hope Palmer

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#### Cat mask Quotes

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