

Issues of identity are even more pressing for Rhoda's daughter Sandra, who was not born into the traditional culture and obviously thirsts for it. She is attached to her grandparents and values their approval, and it is truly the village — her extended family — that has raised her. She gives us insight into the struggle of Inuit youth with drugs, despair and suicide. Although fearful herself, Sandra empathizes with the anguish of others. The eczema she suffers from adds to her shyness and emotional pain, until in grade 12 she is immobi-

lized by depression. Eventually she finds a traditional solution: to work through her problems by helping others. She considers becoming a doctor, but leaving the North and her family are too much to contemplate. This leaves the reader wondering by what constructive and creative means the Inuit can acquire health care workers and teachers who are of the North rather than transient nonintegrated professionals from the South.

*Saqiyuq* gives an intimate view of these women's lives and of their essential

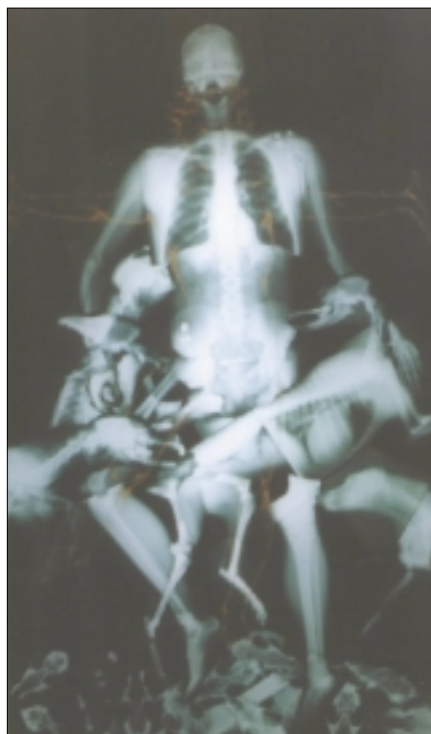
ability to adapt and survive. It is important to gather such life stories before all memory of traditional lifestyles is lost. This book offers a different perspective for readers of women's biographies and of "Canadiana," one that reveals the reality of the northern life and landscape and of a people who have the courage to find a future for themselves in a challenging and ever-changing landscape.

**Mary Johnston**  
Family physician  
Revelstoke, BC

## Lifeworks

### X-rays and other visions

*X-ray Specs* is the title of an exhibition of work that originated from my examination of images used in diagnosis. The first thing that struck me about these images was how beautiful



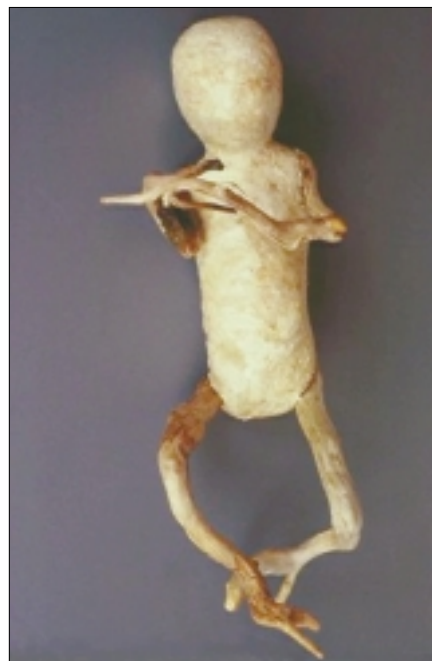
**Gerald Beaulieu, *Tinkers Damned*** (detail, illuminated), 1997–1998. Drawing and x-ray collage on light box, 213 × 366 cm.

they were. Many, using some of the most modern techniques, produced abstract blobs of pulsating colour that captured the human form in a compelling way. What struck me next was what clinicians were trying to do with these images: to peer inside living people and see what makes them tick. Is this not also what so many artists try to do? Finally, I noticed that these images are objects unto themselves: they try to measure intangible things by measuring temperature, blood flow or tissue density. This is not what you would see if you cut someone open and took a look inside.

As I studied these images it became apparent to me that they were subject to a fair amount of interpretation and speculation. I thought I would use them for some speculation of my own.

The work entitled *Head Space* does this directly by presenting 56 portraits of heads or brains on 6 square panels, 9 heads on each, arranged as you would see CT scans in an operating room. They combine actual medical images with my own constructions in a playful attempt to represent what's inside our heads.

*Skin, Trunk, Limb* and *Sapling* are a suite of four works, each displayed on a metal-capped pedestal table. These pieces originated from discoveries I made around my property of the bits



**Gerald Beaulieu, *Sapling***, 1999. Driftwood and seaweed, 86 × 30 × 25 cm.

and pieces of life's presence. I have found bones, carcasses, snake skins, empty cocoons — all signs of life's passing from one stage to another. In these pieces I have tried to address the organic fragility and elegance of the body. Displaying them in a clinical style, as specimens on tables, was an attempt to contrast them with the high-tech na-

ture of the other images and to deal with the fact that, despite the best of technologies, we are mortal beings made of flesh and blood.

*Tinkers Damned* is a large x-ray collage that can be operated by the viewer using floor switches that activate the fluorescent lights behind the panels. Switched on, the lights illuminate a sequence of birth, life and death. When it is switched off, drawings reproduced from the work of William Blake and painted on the surface of the x-rays are visible. Blake dealt with the world as an artist, mystic and poet, and his chosen images depict the same birth–life–death sequence. However, to see the x-rays, to access the scientific realm and what it reveals, you have to turn on the lights that hide Blake's drawings. The on–off nature of the piece illustrates the division between the mystic and the scientific, while illustrating the beauty and complexity of both.

*X-ray Specs* is on view at the Confederation Centre Art Gallery & Museum, Charlottetown, PEI, until April 16.

**Gerald Beaulieu**  
Mount Stewart, PEI



**Gerald Beaulieu**, *Head Space (detail)*, 1999. Mixed media, 1.2 × 1.2 m.

## Room for a view

### Dear Mr. 9645

You don't know me, and never will, but for nine weeks I will know you intimately. For you are my cadaver and I am a first-year medical student continuing a long-standing tradition: learning anatomy by dissecting a human body.

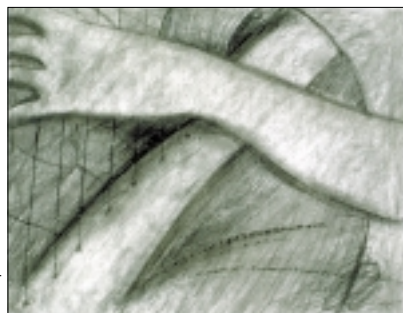
The law ensures that I know only your number, age and cause of death. I imagine this reflects both the desire of donors for privacy and the delicacy of our society in

matters of death. I respect any wishes you might have had in this regard, but at first I wondered if your anonymity is wise. Before formal classes began the chief anatomist showed us the gross anatomy lab. I saw the event on the schedule, sandwiched between a library tour and tuberculosis testing, and didn't think anything of it. We

ascended to the 14th floor and milled about, waiting for the group before us

to leave. Then I noticed the sun glinting off a metal gurney, and it suddenly occurred to me that I might now encounter a dead body.

Twelve of us entered and gathered quietly around you. Our professor began to speak confidently, as if we were in conversation. His smooth tones and fatherly face were comforting. "How many have seen a dead body before?" he asked, smiling. About half of us raised our hands. He nodded, put on latex gloves and leaned over to unzip the white bag that held you. Then, methodically, he began unwrapping the cloths that keep you moist, while he listed lab rules, hours and other details



Art Explosion