



Colleen Wolstenholme, photo sketch for *Daisies*, 1999

one might expect, fabric female genitals. From here, Wolstenholme created a seven-foot, five-sided padded cell reminiscent of a confessional. Locking women away within the confines of religion or in a mental institution was the old way of treating women, she explains. The new way is drugs.

From wardrobes and padded cells, Wolstenholme moved to oversize reproductions of pills weighing as much as 150 pounds, reflecting the weight they carry in our society. The giant plaster sculptures — blindingly white, evoking sterility and pallor — made

their first public appearance at “grunt,” a gallery of contemporary art in Vancouver, as part of a show called *Desire*, a travelling exhibition that recently had its last show in Halifax.

Wolstenholme is now expanding her pharmacologic theme in a new show slated to open at the SAW Gallery in Ottawa in April 2002. The centerpiece of this work is, again, giant pills, this time arranged to look like daisies. The centre of each daisy is a yellow amitriptyline; the petals are white Buspar.

“I like people to be able to look at my work and ‘get’ it,” Wolstenholme says. “I’m not into the ivory tower approach to art.”



Colleen Wolstenholme, *Valium*, 1997. Carved plaster, 28” diameter × 10”



Colleen Wolstenholme, *Paxil*, 1997. Carved plaster, 27” × 16” × 9”

There doesn't seem to be any doubt that Wolstenholme is getting her message across. She has toured with Lilith Fair, the premiere rock festival for women musicians, selling her jewelry, and her exhibitions have been well received.

Empathy is at the core of her work, Wolstenholme says. Having received medical treatment for depression several years ago, she empathizes with women who need to discuss their mental health openly and without embarrassment. She understands their desire to feel valued in a world that, historically, has been dismissive of their needs.

Donalee Moulton
Halifax, NS

Illness and metaphor

Office visit

Dr. Helmcken's office was a tiny two-room cottage on the lower end of Fort Street near Wharf Street. It sat in a hummocky field; you walked along two planks and came to three steps and the door. The outer room had a big table in the centre filled with bottles of all sizes and shapes. All were empty and all dusty. Round the walls of the room were shelves with more bottles, all full, and lots of musty old books. The inner office had a stove and was very higgledy-piggledy. He would

allow no one to go in and tidy it up.

The Doctor sat in a round-backed wooden chair before a table; there were three kitchen chairs against the wall for invalids. He took you over to a very dirty, uncurtained window, jerked up the blind and said, “Tongue!” Then he poked you round the middle so hard that things fell out of your pockets. He put a wooden trumpet bang down on your chest and stuck his ear to the other end. After listening and grunting he went into the bottle room, took a bottle,

blew the dust off it, and emptied out the dead flies. Then he went to the shelves and filled it from several other bottles, corked it, gave it to Mother and sent you home to get well on it. He stood on the step and lit a new cigar after every patient as if he was burning up your symptoms to make room for the next sick person.

Emily Carr

From Emily Carr, “Doctor and Dentist,” in *The Book of Small*, Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1942