

MORALITY TALES

Margie Kelk's current works include paintings on canvas, mixed-media drawings, and etchings. They centre upon the rift between human aspirations and absolute perfection. Each work evolves around one of four elements: 16th Century characters, Spirits, Clouds, and Female Body Builders. The works show a contrast between the worldly and the ethereal.

The 16th Century characters are inspired by figures in the works of Antoine Watteau's paintings. They are mainly women, who are reminiscent of the idealized ladies whose praises were sung in the courtly love tradition. In courtly love poems, women were the embodiment of absolute perfection, promising their lovers eternal happiness. Margie Kelk uses these women in the same way that Dante uses Beatrice, and Petrarch uses Laura: the women are the signposts pointing the way to salvation.

The courtly women inhabit a world parallel to the realm of the spirit beings. These creatures are pantheistic deities who cavort in the shadows just beyond human awareness. The spirits dance in a world entirely their own, unencumbered by human concerns.

Cloud imagery extends the symbolism of the salvation promised within the courtly love tradition as it pulls the spectator upwards beyond the realm of physical human concerns into the ethereal. It constitutes an appeal beyond involvement with one's self, towards spirituality in harmony with the

natural universe. Clouds represent ascent into the sublime, which is the way to Paradise.

The Muscle Women are modern figures, who symbolize human aspiration to attain perfection and become godlike. The Muscle Women stand in direct antithesis to both the spirits and the courtly characters because they cannot see beyond their own physical development. They represent physical limitations and mortality. They have molded themselves, trying to achieve perfection but are limited by the confines of the human body. In Kelk's work, these women symbolize a threshold to be surpassed.

Margie Kelk's paintings and drawing combine figurative elements with abstract ideas. They weave both mythological and historically-inspired figures into an invented universe which suggests human possibilities in a modern world.

PERSONAL HISTORY

Margie Kelk has a diploma from the Toronto School of Art and a Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literature from the Johns Hopkins University.