

# Artists paint grim view of housework in Queen St. show

It's reached the point where you can't walk down the street without bumping into an artist. They're everywhere. One of the best indicators of just how much is going on these days is the tidal wave of group shows sweeping Toronto galleries.

The latest, called *Interior Rites, Domestic Scenes And Rituals*, offers yet another collection of mostly young unknowns working in a variety of styles towards a variety of ends. Organized by Gwen MacGregor, it can be seen at ARC (658 Queen St. W.) until May 11.

MacGregor, a 1983 graduate of York University, represents the perfect choice for curator. At 24, she is young, ambitious and scrambling. *Interior Rites* is the first show she's put together. The idea, she says, came from working at ARC, one of Queen Street's most active parallel galleries, and seeing a lot of work that had "interiors." Though she calls the show, "a celebration of domesticity," it hardly fits the description. Almost without exception, the works present a grim view of humanity at home and doing its daily round.

Grimmest of all is Fred McSherry's *Veronika's Room*, an elaborate recreation of a room rented by a friend and fellow artist. A detailed text written in diary style accompanies the piece. It explains how Veronika ended up there — poverty was the main reason — and gives a depressing account of a struggling female artist's life in the big city.

Although clumsy and derivative, it is a powerful and passionate work. Toronto has seen any number of "rooms" recreated in art galleries over the



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Art

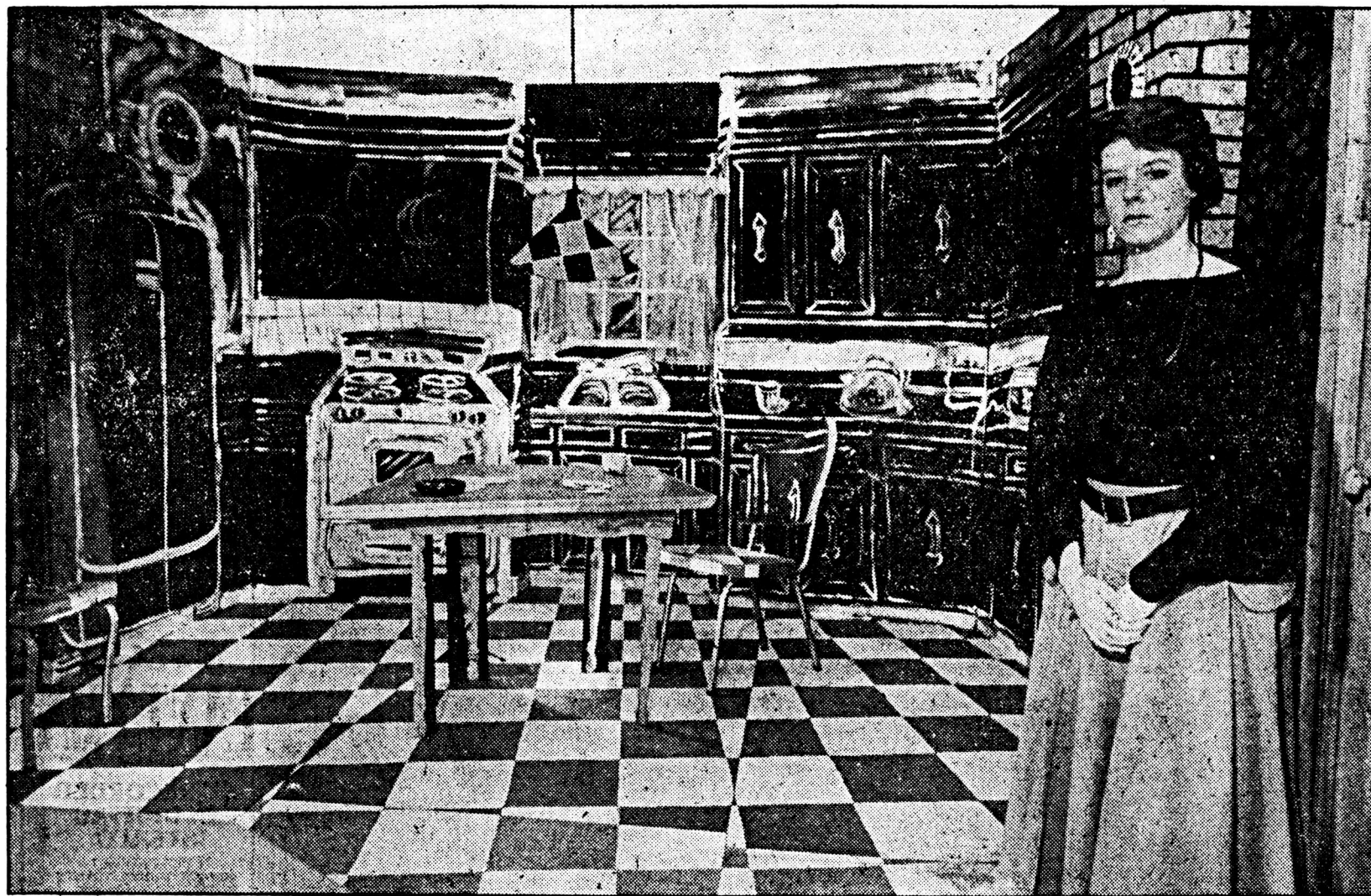
years, but McSherry's stands as one of the most honest in a sub-genre that takes pride in its willingness to get tacky.

The other room in the show belongs to Gary MacLeod. I don't know the story behind his installation, *The Kitchen At 3 A.M.*, but it looks like a stage set. For example, the perspective has been deliberately distorted to add depth. Visually, it is a bold and exuberant work. Emotionally, however, it leaves us empty. Like a stage set, it isn't complete until the actors arrive.

With contributions by the nine artists, the show covers a lot of ground. Of the painters, Dan Hudson is the most interesting. His soft-focus depictions of interior scenes and domestic ironies are stronger on technique than content. But as the three art works by Hudson indicate, he's improving quickly.

The remaining participants — Janis Bowley, Eldon Garnet, Barrie Jones, Richard Storms, Pennie Umbrico and Carolyn White — have contributed installations, photographic works, drawings and paintings. It adds up to a vaguely disturbing tour through the fringes of the Toronto art jungle.

Beyond that, MacGregor's show offers dramatic evidence of how vital this art community has become.



**Not much cooking:** We hope ARC gallery's Gwen MacGregor isn't in the mood for home fries and scrambled eggs because there's little sign of life in Gary MacLeod's 3-D installation of *The Kitchen At 3 A.M.*

JIM RUSSELL/TORONTO STAR