

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.