

Kitsilano (1963-69)

G. Maria Hindmarch

For Judith Williams

1963-69 I lived on
the corner of Yew & York
on the 2nd floor
above a corner store
with my sister Leni & and soon her boyfriend (husband to be) Neap Hoover
her friend Jo-Ann Huffman and soon her boyfriend Mike Sawyer
then Elsa Young (just left Robert who was with Maxine)
who met her lover painter Jack Wise next door
then my sister Mary
and my boyfriend soon to be (later to unbe) husband Cliff Andstein
below us:
bill bissett & martina & ooljah then painter-runner Gordon Payne
& Marilyn (who becomes my friend in the 70s) then bill again then Gordon again
next to us:
Bing Thom, Rick Clark, Jay Bancroft & sometimes Marian Penner
across the landing:
John and Susan Newlove & children fathered by Gerry Gilbert
later the Ridgeways
and next to them directly opposite us:
Gerry Geisler (New Design Gallery)
and Helen Sturdy & their children

our kitchen faced theirs
apple pies in my oven & stew or toast in theirs
we could smell everything like the time Cliff and I fell asleep as pork hocks
simmered in my big red pot (Joan cleaning them for an art project)
charred and burned almost caught on fire

would have if Gerry hadn't woken us up
and that building a total tinderbox
always worried Bill would start one

my bedroom / study faced east
to the Molson's Brewery and the Burrard Street Bridge
and I could watch the West End highrises grow
and across Yew Street white sheets on a clothesline dry
as I'd sit at my bay window
and write and mark
on a smooth board cut to fit exactly the sill

I'd glance out and see
people like Judy & Bobo & Carol & Jamie & the Trumans
walking down Yew to Kits Beach
open the window & shout
drop by on your way back

dropping by
everybody did it
days filled with coffee, tea, poetry, cigarette smoke
crises, trips, talkedy talk talk

during and after the Vancouver Poetry Conference —
Olson, Creeley, Duncan, Levertov, Avison, Whalen, Ginsberg —
Roy Kiyooka and I became friends
and there were readings in my bedroom
every second Sunday
red cast iron pot full of bean soup or corn chowder or spicy meatball vegetable stew
simmering and cheese scones baking
people would come and read new work one week
and the next week there'd be a Tish meeting
with Daphne Marlatt, Dan MacLeod, Pete Auxier, David Dawson and David Cull

painting hard-edged strong coloured
also intricate silver point mandalas
and collages

a gallon of Calona Red
one warm October night
became a party
of 100 or even more
dancing in my bedroom to music on a tape recorder
dancing in the other to records
two bongo drummers drumming in the kitchen
talking in the room with the blue-tile fireplace
so many bodies I couldn't hear the music
from inside our hallway
just saw the taller heads
moving together to different beats
in almost darkness

similar to that crazy night at the Wahs' place
during the conference
everybody landing on one bed
everybody kissing everybody in the hallway
something to do with space
so tight that everybody had to rub other
bodies simply to go anywhere
so gorgeous

someone was always being followed
someone was always writing a poem or beginning a painting
or working all night

in the spring of 64
Roy said he had a painting he wanted to give me
but it was big and heavy (hardboard not canvas)

he borrowed a truck and someone perhaps Dallas Selman helped him
up the dusty always dirty long stairs with Hoarfrost
which we hung on a wall in a room just big enough to hold
my round oak table (used to be Bowerings' they bought a whole household of
furniture for \$80 and when they moved to Calgary they gave it to Joan and then
when she moved she stored it with me)

months later Elsa and I tore apart the wall on which Hoarfrost first hung with
our screwdriver and hammer and Gerry's crowbar
we were shouting angry hexes at Robert all the way
and Hoarfrost got the prime wall in our now bigger living
room with the blue tile fireplace

rent \$60 a month didn't change
and some years the wind was so cold on the side facing the North Shore
that the wall froze behind my pillows
utilities in winter: \$60 a month

the police were something else
the narcs had a right to question anybody anywhere so
Cliff was up at the laundromat on 4th and they burst in: what are you doing?
Ray from Ladysmith was stopped nearly every second time he dropped by to
visit: where are you going? and what is your purpose? and how long will you be?

someone was always getting busted
someone was always tripping out
someone was always going to Europe or Japan or Tibet

here is my journal entry on June 9, 1968:
(the evening of the first ever National Leaders Debate on TV)
"I am looking forward to seeing Pierre Trudeau—hope he gets pushed into/onto
answering more directly than he has in the past. I, like many others including
every gay man I know, do have a crush on him: he has much more style than
any Canadian politician so far. I mean style in the true sense of the word, it is

him, not affected... Cliff, of course, doesn't trust him at all and thinks he's a sell-out. I don't go that far, yet. But I do think that compromising is the only way a politician can work this country and I do not like all the PR, razzmatazz, fundraising, and allegiances that go into just getting elected: our system seems to be based on gullibility..."

coming home at night up Yew Street
whether from downtown or the beach or Paul the butcher's or Elsie the baker's
I loved looking up at my north-facing windows
goldy gold mesh curtains
light filtering through
so warm and so inviting