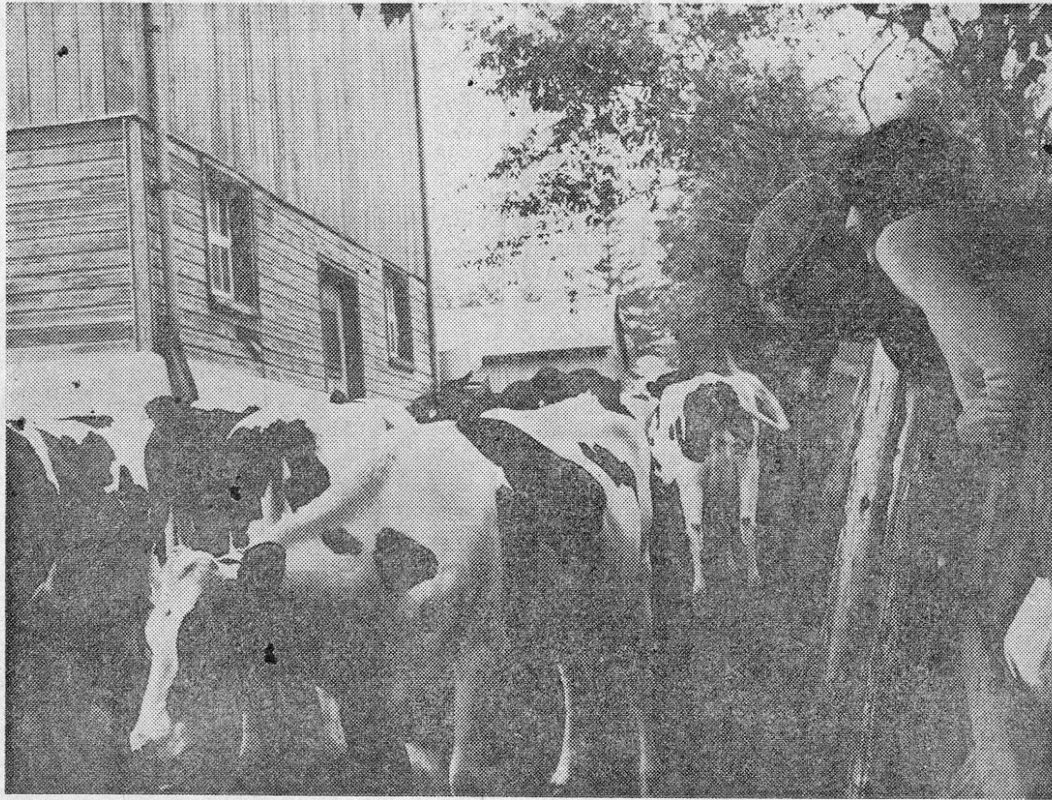


The placid way to communicating



Photograph by Barbara Astman: delayed exposure technique allows photographer to get into picture.

AT THE GALLERIES

BARBARA ASTMAN

It would create too narrow an impression of Barbara Astman's show, which opened yesterday at the Baldwin Street Gallery, to call it simply an exhibition of photographs.

True, photographs are the factor unifying the show, but many of them are presented as part of a larger non-photographic whole. There are a half dozen simple head-and-shoulders studies of Miss Astman's friends, but these pictures are in the minority.

Miss Astman herself is the subject of three different motion study sequences in which her body is blurred variously against a void black background, on a lawn, and through a fine piece of muslin-like material.

Miss Astman prefers to use herself as a subject because she finds it difficult to instruct other people how to move as she wishes. It also allows her to enact her fantasies which, in one stuffed multi-media work, includes wearing a Lone Ranger-style mask and a laundry bag plastic covering.

Plastic is a frequently recurring medium in her work. Many photographs, such as a series of cows, come neatly sewn into plastic wrappers. Self Portrait is divided into two photographic parts called Barbara Coming and Barbara Going in which the artist is seen, front and rear, in a back-of-the-hand-to-the-forehead pose reminiscent of a Perils of Pauline heroine.

Miss Astman's photographs achieve widely differing effects by being printed on various materials, none of them paper. Self Portrait, for example, is printed on clear plastic which has been sewn to canvas backing and then sealed in another layer of plastic. It gives an unusually three-dimensional quality to the picture.

She has also printed photographs of grazing cattle on canvas and mounted the nine pictures in the sequence on a stuffed canvas backing. The use of materials like canvas, velvet and lace stems from her work in crafts and stuffed soft sculptures. One can see an interesting development and cross-pollination of influences from her previous shows at the Ontario College of Art and the Me and My Friends gallery.