

CORKIN GALLERY

Barbara Astman Emergence, 1998

Emergence, by Barbara Astman, commemorates the 100th anniversary of the admittance of women into the legal profession in Canada. The work consists of collages which have been scanned and printed onto canvas. It combines archival images of these early pioneers with photos of Osgoode Hall Law School. Emergence grew out of a fascination Astman had with a specific photograph, labeled "Women's Law Association of Ontario, December 14th 1946," showing a dinner party of one of the first graduating classes. Fragments of this photograph are interspersed with architectural shots of the Osgoode Hall interior. The collaged women, surrounded by archways, cornices, and chandeliers, seem to be emerging from what was, for a long time, a prohibited space. The rectilinear framing of the pillars reinforces the rigidity of the newly conquered social sphere - a space which Astman describes as masculine, since all of the portraits in the main hall are of men, except the Queen. Emergence comments on and documents an aspect of our collective history by creating contemporary "portraits" of women who were among the first to graduate, opening the door to one of our most important institutions for subsequent generations.