

MORE THAN A BODY'S WORK

SUGGESTS THE
POSSIBILITY OF
ABANDONMENT
ONCE LOOSEMED

WORDS *Carol Cooke*

IMAGES *June Bianchi*

EK ZUBAN



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c/o 52 Carlow Street
Middlesbrough
TS1 4SD
Website: www.ekzuban.co.uk
E: bob@ekzuban.co.uk
E: andy@ekzuban.co.uk

BEAUTIFUL NORTH



Shiny Girls, How Desperate Can This Be?
Gay, New York Night, Braids,
The Chinese Life Shop, Barcode Tattoo,
Unto the Moment ©Carol Cooke, 2005



Images ©June Bianchi. 2005

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Foreword

Image is a funny thing — June and I, in our time, have aimed to look like a mod, waitress, artist's model, postwoman, cook, potter, dental nurse, artist, shop assistant, follower of a religious cult, dancer, actor, singer, hippy, punk, intellectual, student, bride, happy young mother, career woman and ourselves — if only we knew what that was.

Image can make you act in a certain way, but not always — what about the gentle Hell's Angel and the unhappy clown? — enjoy the exhibition, enjoy the show, enjoy the mag and ... go figure.

Carol Cooke

How desperate can this be?

The skinny black girl, with ashen grey skin,
crawls along a freezing pavement.
wrapped in a blanket.
She rattles a paper cup and
begs for mercy.

She is not much concerned with image;
creating New York chic, personifying trends, wearing
Burberry check.
And will not, as far as I can see,
be bothered for a long time to come

In the face of such crushing need,
I turn away, continue to film the lullaby of Broadway,
and do nothing.

Carol Cooke



Gay

The queue for the loo at Taboo
snake hipped down the corridor
lounging the wall
sipping the air.

Guys "high fived", hugged, kissed and liked each others shirts.

Later, in the smart hotel bar,
swirling a latte, or squeezing lemon into sparkling mineral,
guys talked, made deals, met the in-laws, joined a baseball club,
changed gym membership, didn't smoke.
And never, not once, felt the need to explain.

"I am what I am" played in the background, quietly.
No need for full on volume.
No need to shout.

Carol Cooke



THE QUEUE FOR THE LOO AT TABOO
SNAKE HIPPED DOWN THE CORRIDOR
LOUNGING THE WALL
SIPPING THE AIR

New York Night

It was the wrong subway stop,
we got confused, but liked it.
The night was cool, crowded
and we were strolling ...

... strolling ...

in the wrong direction.

Half a block to where we had
no business.

Half a block to an elaborate deal:
three black men and gestures.

And on the sidewalk, someone's belongings
neatly arranged.



A car boot sale in the middle of the night,
without the car.

A pile of shirts, worn women's shoes, red
vase, trousers, neatly folded, laundered.

People checking, testing, buying.

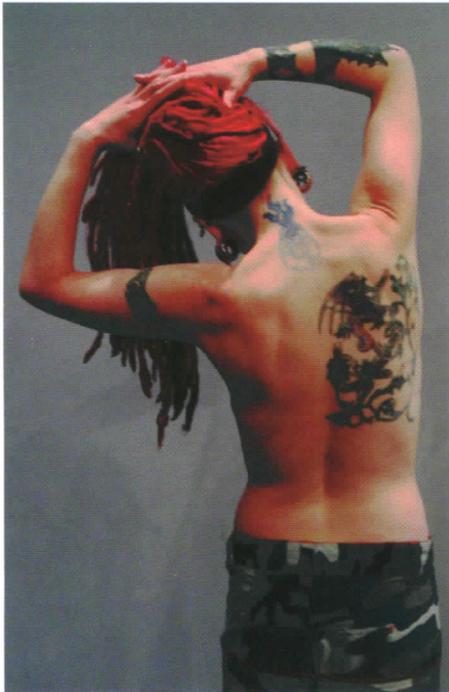
We didn't stare, didn't know the story,
but who arranged intimate possessions
on the sidewalk?

Who buys golden mules, glamorous, worn,
or a red vase, slightly chipped?

Carol Cooke

Unto the moment

The man at the bar, with horns implanted in his forehead,
a snake - split tongue and puzzle piece tattoo skin,
buying a drink for the woman with cat modifications,
is living in the moment.



Not for him the troublesome cares
of meeting the bank manager.

Blending at a parent/teacher meeting
hold no fears.

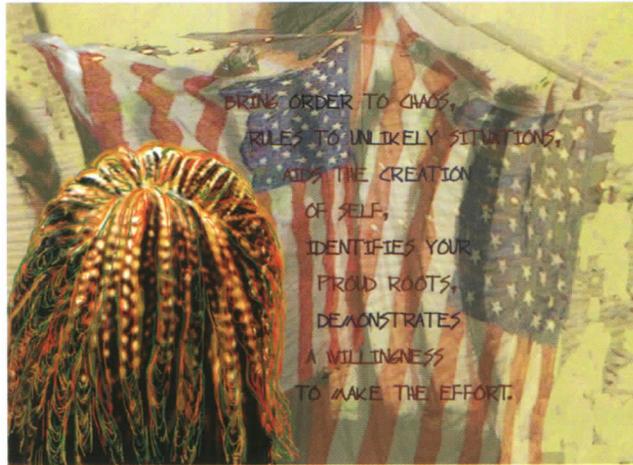
He never worries if his prospective in-laws mind
when he turns up for Sunday lunch wearing jeans.

His chief concern is whether to go for tusks beneath the nostrils,
and how to tell his feline friend that the whiskers
have to go.

Carol Cooke



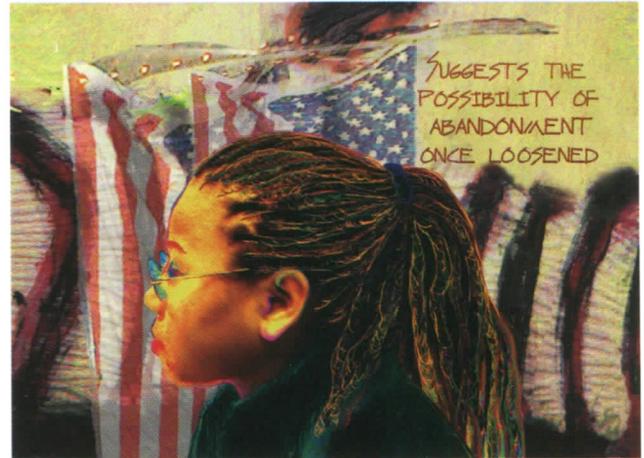




bring order to chaos,
rules to unlikely situations,
aids the creation of self,
identifies your proud roots,
demonstrates a willingness to make the effort,
suggests the possibility of abandonment.....

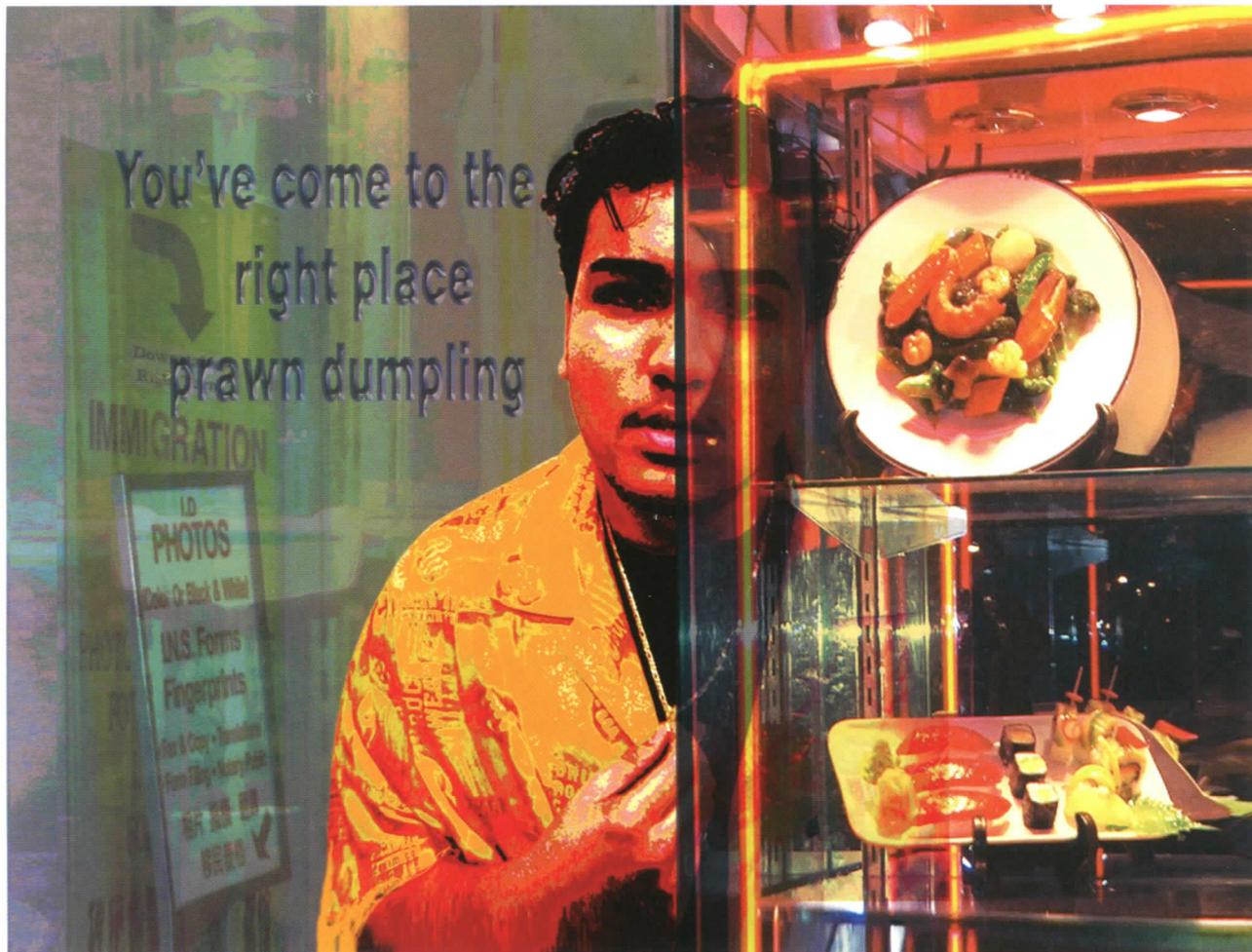
once loosened.

Carol Cooke



for at the Chinese life shop





You've come to the
right place
prawn dumpling

IMMIGRATION

ID
PHOTOS

Color Or Black & White

INS. Forms

Fingerprints

Pass & Copy - Immediate

Form 100 - 1000000

1000 1000

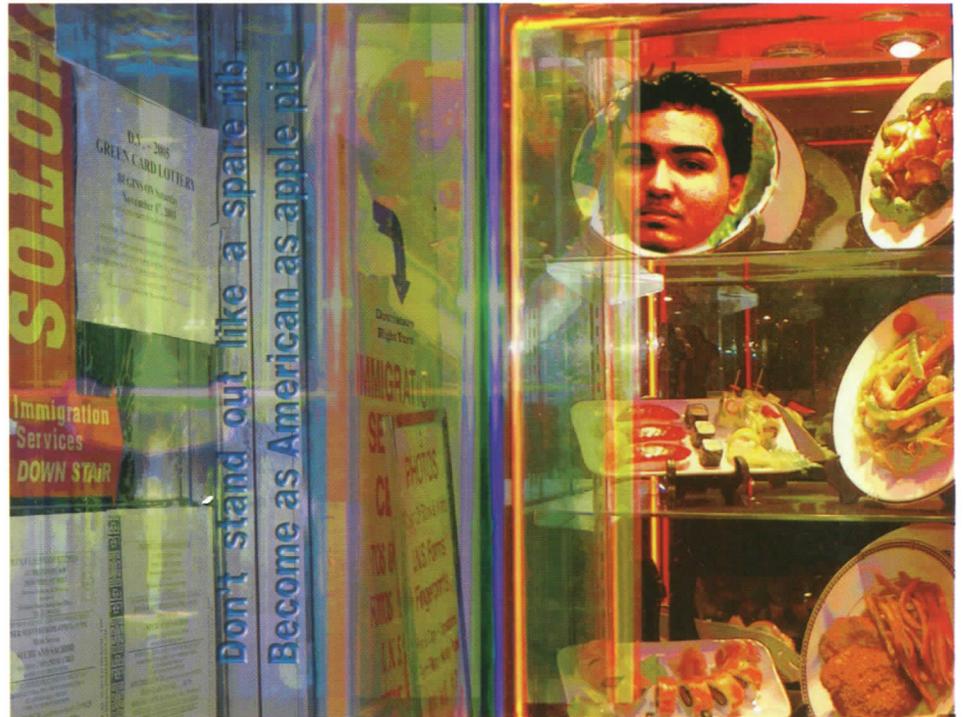
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You've come to the right place prawn dumpling.
Passport, work permit, certificates say you are healthy,
will soon be wealthy, and are clearly wise to want to belong.

Don't stand out like a spare rib.
Become as American as apple pie.

Carol Cooke





Bar Code Tattoo

Are tattoos unholy?

Denoting an unhealthy obsession with the body,
which could, eventually and oh so easily,
lead to dark alleys and derelict buildings.

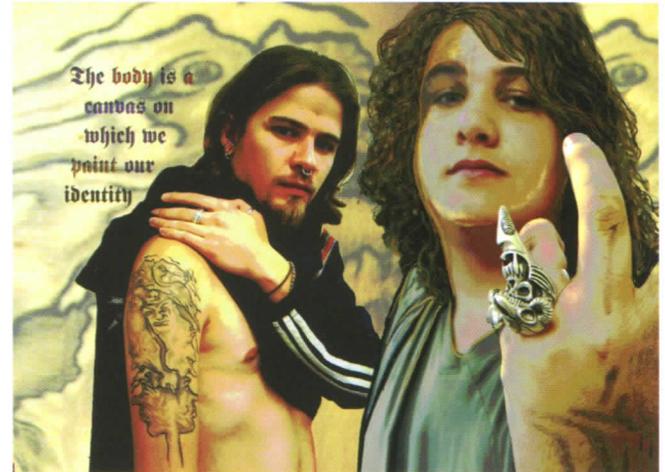
Or does it depend on who you are?

A marine, defending his country, surely has the right to an anchor
and a sign saying "Mom"

A beautiful blond can afford a butt butterfly without fear of censure.
And who could object to the baby's name on a footballer's neck?

The boy with a bar code on his spine is more problematic.
He is a commodity.

Buying, selling, commerce and raw flesh are linked by
the string of numbers.



It's the crude, homemade marks though,
which are most upsetting.

Blue ink crosses, carved into flesh.

"Love" and "hate" etched on knuckles.

Distressing, in their vulnerability and lack
of planning.

Tattoos - a reminder of who you were.

Carol Cooke

You hear people say they'll read anything, even the words on the side of a sauce bottle... well, I'll write anything, even the words on the side of a sauce bottle. I write plays, poems, short stories, chapters in books, film scripts, newspaper columns, pieces for web sites, and articles.

I was born in the north east and have worked here for much of my life. I am married with two sons, and granddaughters called Grace and Lily.

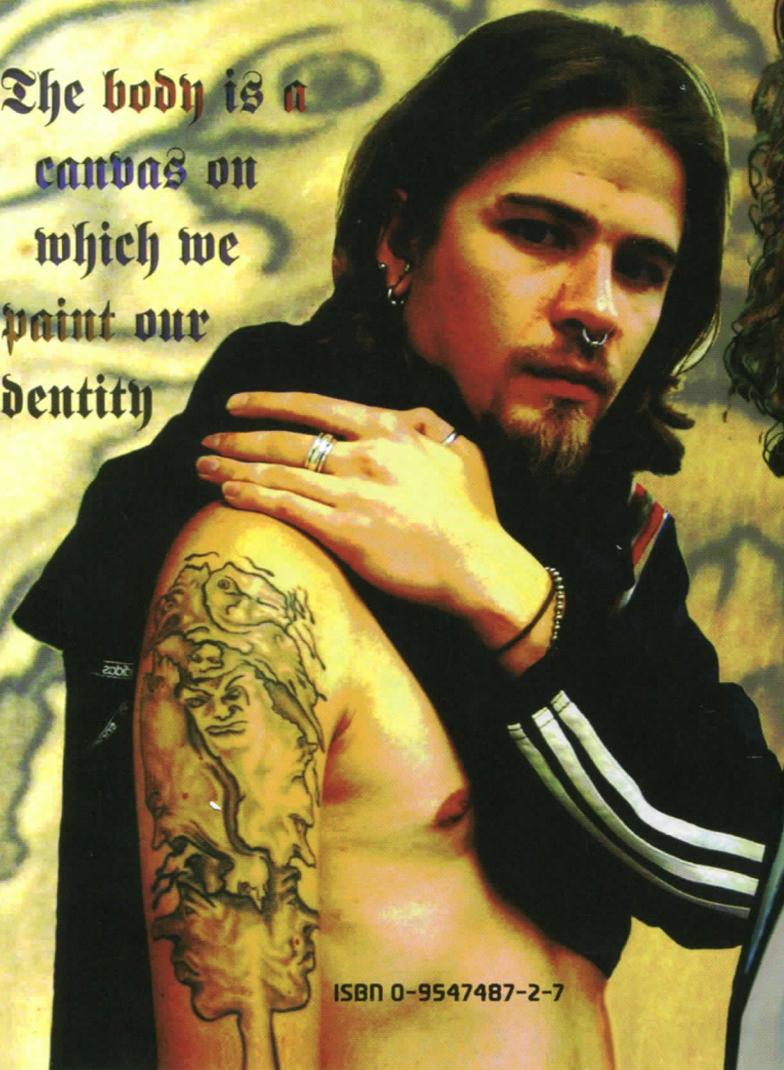
Carol Cooke

I am Teaching Fellow and Senior Lecturer in art education at Bath Spa University College, combining my two loves of working with people and as an artist. I am fascinated by how we express identity: our culture, gender, sexuality — my artwork explores personal and social meanings in the way we construct and adorn our bodies.

I have exhibited ceramics and multimedia artwork throughout the UK, lectured internationally and facilitated art projects across a wide range of contexts. My last exhibition *Get it off your chest*, incorporating an installation of over 50 breast casts with text and image film projection, premiered at Michael Tippett Centre Gallery, Bath, before showing at galleries in the North East. I live in Bath with my family.

June Bianchi

The body is a
canvas on
which we
paint our
identity



ISBN 0-9547487-2-7

More than a body's work is an international media arts production which explores the personal, social and cultural processes through which young people construct visual identity.

... a multimedia exhibition, an installation, text, images, film, audio, performance

More than a body's work has been made with the co-operation and participation of young people from:
New York: Columbia University, Pratt Institute, Heritage School, Harvey Milk School
UK North East: Middlesbrough College, Education to Employment
UK South West: Frome College, Wiltshire College, Sheldon School