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Three Variations on the Muse

Jean Howard: Video Poet

Having had poems published by Harpers Magazine, Another Chicago Magazine and Banyon Press Anthology II, Jean Howard switched to poetry videos a decade ago, when award-winning sculptor Tom Scattl asked her to build a performance around some of his pieces for a TV special on his work. Since the images she creates are both lush and laden with history, this "marriage of poetry and images," as she terms the medium, seems ideal for her. In her most recent work, she contrasts sensuous orchids with her own life and that of her Mormon, polygamous forbears. Her father, she says, was a "Jack Mormon," religious but also interested in whiskey, dancing and Harley Davidson motorcycles. Her female ancestors she describes as religious, polygamous, and "fiercely independent." Many old still photos of them appear in the videotape.

In one stanza of the piece, which is titled "Women Without Children," she writes that such women grow orchids. They *hard the stamens and sticky*
push into the rats,
then let them rant free
and reckless in front
of company.

Writing poetry, she says, "has nothing to do with making money. It's a sacred place I can go that is untouched by politics and commercialism. It's a sanctuary."

Jean Howard has found the "marriage of poetry and images," as she terms video poetry, to be ideal for her.



Photo by Bill Mahan

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GOES ON
A POETRY REVIVAL
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