

# That's Ms. Sasquatch to you



RM VAUGHAN

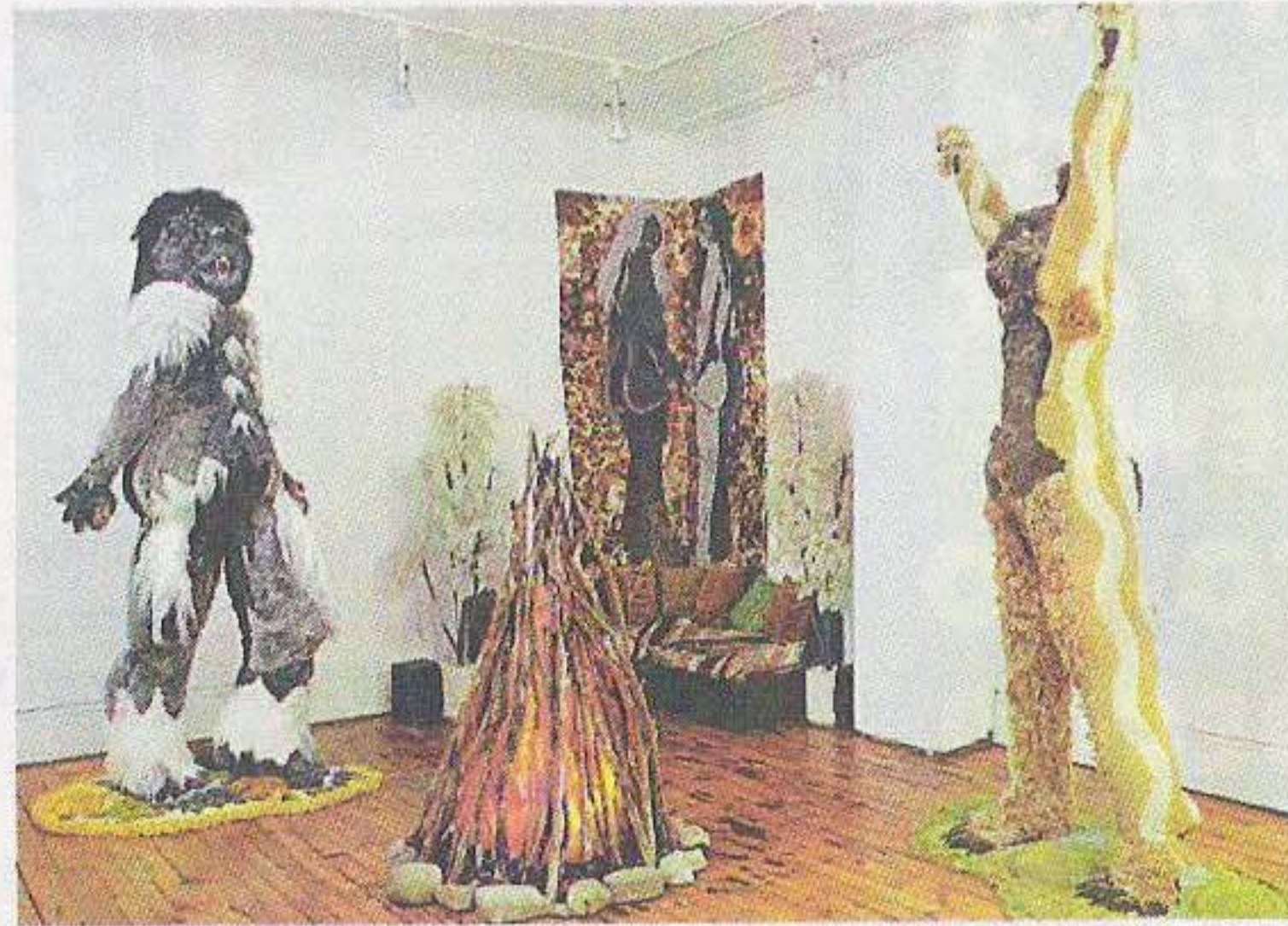
Evergon has his dewy, shot-through-gauze boys, Greg Curnoe had his bikes, Aganetha Dyck can't stop smothering appliances in beeswax and Alyson Mitchell is addicted to the velvety, inviting caress of fun fur. Maybe Mitchell, Dyck and Evergon could smother a nubile underwear model in sticky plush?

Mitchell's new exhibition, *Lady Sasquatch*, solidifies her reputation as the preeminent fake-follicle artist of our time, not merely because she

has tamed the tufted medium into a material as pliable and evocative as any high-grade oil paint, but also because she never forgets that anything made out of the same stuff as a Sponge Bob doll (or, for that matter, a plastic shopping bag) is inherently fun, and funny.

*Lady Sasquatch* continues Mitchell's ongoing project of recasting mainstream erotic images of women in her own idiosyncratic, smart-ass style of feminism: an enterprise that resulted last year in a delicious series of updated fat-positive vintage *Playboy* cartoons reworked in candy-coloured fun fur. For her new exhibition, she takes on the Bigfoot/sasquatch mythology and uncovers its hidden female history: a story populated by large-and-in-charge fanged beast-women and their happy human love slaves. If you go out in the woods today...

The move from extra-voluptuous *Playboy* bunnies to full-on monster women was only a step away,



PAUL PETRO CONTEMPORARY ART

Mitchell says, because the only thing more threatening to patriarchal concepts of femininity than a fat chick is a fat chick with a mighty pelt.

"Lately, I've been thinking a lot

about hairy, large women, and how they're perceived as scary, which, by association, led me to start thinking about sasquatches.

"I grew up watching *In Search of...* with Leonard Nimoy and all those

1970s fake occult 'documentaries' — the ones where the sasquatch always turned out to be a muskox or whatever — and I still remember with love the sasquatch character on *The Bionic Woman*. But I started to wonder why, after all the years of hearing about sasquatches in pop culture, I never heard anything about female sasquatches? How can there be tribes of sasquatches running around the woods without females — where do baby sasquatches come from?"

Well, then, Ms. Mitchell, why aren't there any lady sasquatches in popular culture?

"Because men are terrified of big hairy women. So I decided to give them something to really be afraid of!"

That's an understatement. At 11 feet tall, with hairy teats the size of tennis balls, engorged, fire-coloured vulvas that look like mutant bird of paradise flowers, long black claws, vampire incisors and white-trash mullet hairdos that brush the ceiling, Mitchell's lady sasquatches are the furry equivalent of the monster mothers from the *Alien* movies. And yet they are far from repulsive.

The baby's-bottom smooth fun fur mitigates the initial fright, of course, but it's the beasts' round and confident bodies, exuberant celebrations of plenty and confidence, that finally draw you in, making you

question your initial apprehension. Mitchell's she-hulks appear just as likely to protect you from marauding bears (and the cold nights) as they do ready to eat you for lunch.

"They're totally sexy, but they're scary monsters at the same time. It's possible to be both."

■ *Lady Sasquatch*, Alyson Mitchell, Paul Petro Contemporary Art, 980 Queen St. W., through Oct. 8.