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**Anis - founder, publisher.** Can't remember if having a memory like an elephant is a good thing or a bad thing.



**Derrick - editor.** He can remember caring and cherishing and smiling, only barely and upon reflection he thinks it was stupid.



**Veronica - writer.** Remembers that time at band camp when she cried herself to sleep.



**Elliot - photog.** Lost a game of memory to his cat... he insists pot was involved.



**Dan - writer.** Can recall exactly what he was wearing on September 11 2001 because he hasn't changed in order to show his solidarity.

**Additional Contributors:**  
Paco, Mike Foster, George Rizok,  
Peter Pritchard

# Adopting the Wretch:

Judy Wambera and the stuff nightmares are made of.

By: DerrickRuston

TWISTED GENIUS OR EXHIBITIONIST LUNATIC? LABELS. ONE OF THE FIRST RULES TO GIVING A PROPER INTERVIEW IS TO AVOID SEARCHING FOR ALL ENCOMPASSING CATEGORIZATIONS FOR YOUR SUBJECT. ALLOW THEM TO BE ORGANIC, ALLOW THEM TO THINK THEY'RE CONTROLLING THE INTERVIEW. MAKE THEM FEEL INTERESTING. I'VE SUFFERED THROUGH MANY OF THESE WITH A PROFOUNDLY VACANT SMILE AND QUESTIONS THAT ARE ONLY SEARCHING FOR ONE LINE OF PROFUNDITY THAT WOULD ALLOW ME TO PULL THE RUG OUT ON THE INQUISITION. THIS WAS NOT ONE OF THOSE DAYS.





I met Judy Wambera at the National Gallery. Knowing that she had spent significant time in both Hungary and Quebec I thought that Gabor Szilasi's photos of those very subjects would serve as a searching backdrop for her grilling. In reality the location was her idea and I was the one on the hot seat.

"What would you do if you had only six months to live?" were her first words upon introduction. I looked back at the smiling, white haired, retired professor and carefully began to wonder where this interview went awry. How do I answer this query? What if she's dying and this is a cry for help, or attention. Only one way to find out, "why, are you dying?" She assured me she wasn't but the tone had been set for our conversation. Intellect, poet, play write, photographer, graphic artist, feminist and perhaps sociopath are all terms that you could quickly level upon Wambera. In most cases you'd be right but in all cases you would get a quick wave of the hand and a question about your darkest secrets.

Wambera has no secrets. And her art is about as raw and narrative as you would expect from a former professor of English literature that specialized in the treatment of birth in Victorian literature. The medium is perhaps what is unexpected. Wambera plays with dolls. Not just any dolls though, but dismembered spectres which are the things of nightmares. She didn't just wake up one day and decide to start tearing dolls apart, it was a gradual maturing that brought her to her gruesome imagery.

She began by shooting women's underwear hanging between Europe's snugly

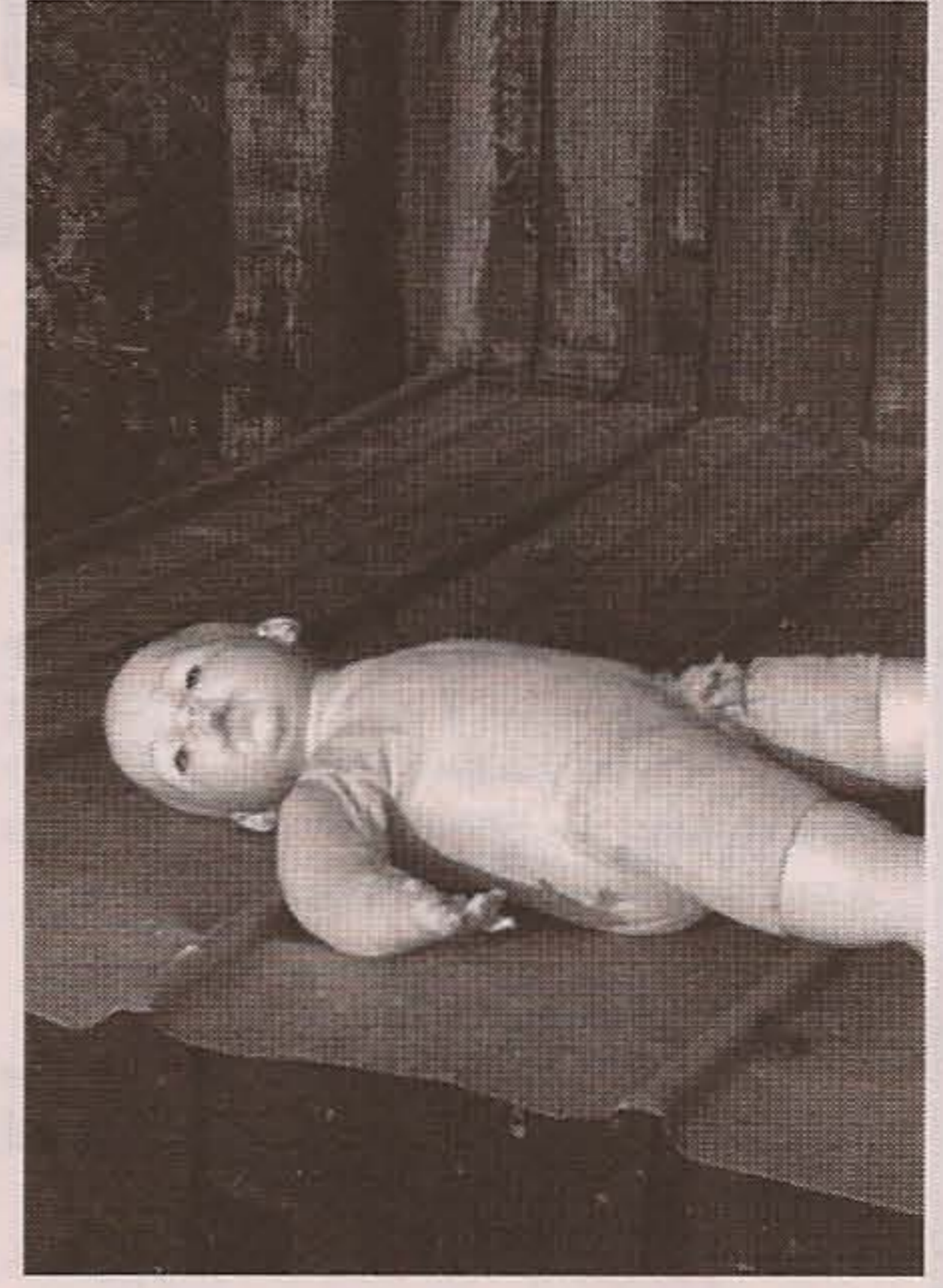


placed buildings, on low slung wires, nowhere to hide from the penetrating stares of strangers. Gradually she moved onto photos of children's clothes and from there ideas began to morph. Her idea to shoot graphic pictures of birth was met with chilly reception by pregnant friends. The idea to shoot children crossed her mind but she was quick to realize that "kids suck, they whine and complain... cry uh". One day while pulling old dolls out of a box the body of one of her future subjects became detached from the head. A light bulb flashed as Judy realized she would "no longer be encumbered by her body" yet the eyes were piercing "not judging, but seeing", it was these omnipresent plastic mutilations that would now "tell the stories".

The stories are as unsettling as the narrative medium. Wheel barrels with limbs and wedding dresses, kids' outfits and severed heads attest to Wambera's belief that nothing is sacred. Scattered heads and bodies of children dominate a piece entitled Kosovo. The message may seem laid on a bit thick but what would you expect from someone seemingly completely unencumbered by social mores.

"I do a lot of cross dressing in my work" bellows Wambera much to the chagrin of the pious museum goers surrounding us. In an unselfconscious voice she continues "dildos on dolls helps me play with the concept of intrusion". An eavesdropping woman with an all too smug look on her face recoiled at both "dildo" and "intrusion".

Wambera's latest project has her delving into an even more morose and socially awkward subject matter. "A woman who



has an abortion never forgets it" attests Wambera. Her new project has Judy surrounding photographs of women with dead dolls representing the number of abortions they've gone through. The idea is chilling before you even know that all the photos and corresponding corpses are historically accurate.

"I've always been obsessed with dying" Wambera sputters needlessly. But her interests go beyond that. The challenge of parenthood and the imperfection of the family unit are everywhere in Wambera's work. Wrecked doll corpses thrown into bushes carries the title "Abortion". Judy also delves into her own past to confront the issue of parentage. It is a universal condition that a child resents their parents.

In the 2002 play, written by Wambera, entitled: "Splinters from the Graveyard: Mary Shelley's Dream" the Wretch from "Frankenstein" confronts Shelley in Italy to confront her about the sad condition in which he has had to live his life. He is bitter about abandonment, rejection and the fact that he's ugly. Wambera attacks these issues with abandon in every medium in which she sets her formidably twisted mind to. The result is wholly accessible art with a profound message. Does this make her genius or lunatic? Your decision won't phase her because she's controlling the narrative.

Judy Wambera's work can currently be seen at Le Petite Mort Gallery. She will also be doing a one night stand at said gallery in early June. Stay tuned to these pages for date and time. **up**