

WHAT DOES THE GODDESS LOOK LIKE?

What is your take on "The Goddess"? Is she Fat? Thin? Young? Old? Happy? Angry? Hirsute? Muscular? Running? Leaping? Reclining? My original representation of her is called "Leaping Goddess" (illus.1). Here is a link to my design as it is shown on my website (www.dorrieratzlaff.com): <http://www.dorrieratzlaff.com/design.html>.

Recently my design has been challenged for an alleged infringement upon the trade mark rights of Womyns'Ware Inc. regarding their registered trade mark, a drawing of a naked woman running, called "Woman Design" (illus.2). In a letter to me dated October 12, 2005, Womyns'Ware Inc. asserts its' belief "that it is most certain that the public on seeing the "Leaping Goddess" design associated with these items will infer that these are Womyns'Ware Inc.'s products as the trade marks are confusingly similar". Note that "these items" referred to in the previous statement are t-shirts, hats, journals, totebags, hoodies and other similar products, as found at my on-line store "Autonomous Tees" (Goddess Department) located at the website www.cafepress.com/autonomoustees.

I have been making images and designs of various kinds with the theme of "woman" for at least three decades. I have created drawings and images of women who are fat, thin, tall, and short. I have focused on the entire woman and parts of her. I have rendered her naked and clothed, and have taken approaches from seriously sad to satire. My first recorded "fat" woman drawing was in March of 1979, as indicated in my journals which I have kept faithfully, since 1970. In 1980, the "woman design" called "Punky Woman" (illus.3) was born. She is "fat", clothed, has big hair, and struts happily over the imagined Vancouver, BC, landscape (note, "The Lions" mountain peaks in the background). She's clothed because it's cold outside.

I began putting specific "deity" images into my journals in 1995. The "Leaping Goddess" was conceived from my notes and research on deities and goddesses, in early 1996, and finalized in 1998, for an exhibition called "Deities, Shrines and Totems" at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre gallery. This image (Leaping Goddess) was derived from my studies of the well-known "Venus of Willendorf" (illus.4), a "woman design" which is estimated, by art historians, to be about ten thousand years old.

At my online store, Autonomous Tees, my business intent is stated as follows: "Funky, artistic, edgy designs for the imagination on t-shirts and other products." (note, my store is made possible by subscription with "Cafepress" who provide the products and the website, excluding products and designs with "sexually explicit content". At their website, (see: www.womynsware.com) Womyns'Ware Inc. states its' business philosophy, or intent, as follows: "Womyns'Ware Inc. seeks to compel those who find us to examine their sexual expression in much greater depth than is generally invoked by social constructs presented in the business, health, education and media realm." In my opinion, noting the obvious visual differences between the two "woman" designs, and the obvious difference in the kinds of products offered for sale and the differences in business intent, there is no possibility of finding the two offerings "confusingly similar".

The convenience of The Internet has allowed me to research references to "The Goddess". I have found there a number of artists who choose to represent not only a "female deity" in the form of a fat, happy, naked, woman-in-motion but who also choose to address the more mundane theme of "woman" in a similar way. Give it a try: "google" phrases like Leaping Goddess, Jumping Goddess, Running Goddess, Running Woman, Leaping Woman, and so on. Further inquiry, via "Google", into the art history of images of "The Goddess", will lead you to many drawings and sculptures from the earliest of human societies, showing a big-breasted, fat, naked woman, in various postures and modes of mobility. Here is a particularly eye-opening example, from a website in the UK, which I found upon searching for "leaping goddess" on the internet: <http://www.amamenec.co.uk/images/wpe41.jpg>. The image is called "Leaping Goddess" and, in my view, it's a tribute to the power of synchronicity.

I grew up to my womanhood through "The Sixties". I was, as millions of other women were, part of "Women's Liberation" and "The Women's Movement". From this perspective, I question how any individual or group of individuals can monopolize the corner on "woman designs", even on such designs whose only common feature is representation of a fat or robust woman. Womyns'Ware Inc. states on its' website, what it calls its' "extremely lofty goal", that is, "Empowering women sexually" (by selling sex toys through a retail outlet). In closing, I offer you my "Goddess of East Vancouver" (illus. 5), by way of commentary that we women are forever grateful to realize that "The Women's Movement" is still alive and well, providing a guiding star of compelling philosophy in an ever-darkening world!



Illus.1



Illus.2



Illus.3



Illus.4



Illus.5