



MEREDITH HERALD

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Educating Women To Excel

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Meredith's Weekly Weather

WEDNESDAY Partly Cloudy High 55/ Low 28

THURSDAY Wintry Mix High 39/ Low 30

FRIDAY Partly Cloudy High 53/ Low 30

SATURDAY Partly Cloudy High 54/ Low 27

SUNDAY Mostly Sunny High 51/ Low 28

MONDAY Partly Cloudy High 55 Low 37

TUESDAY Showers High 57/ Low 39

"Women in Prison" comes to Weems Gallery

JENNA CHAMBERS
Staff Writer

Jane Evelyn Atwood, the featured artist in the Frankie G. Weems Art Gallery, came to Meredith Monday, February 14 for a slide presentation. The slides featured additional pictures from her work on issues typically ignored by society, exposing worlds people do not face in ordinary life.

Atwood said she went to France without knowing she was going to stay. She was mainly interested in people outside of "normal" society, people shunned and looked down upon, or those struggling to survive extraordinary circumstances. "I wanted to go to the very intimacy," she explained. She wanted to know the people and understand them.

She discussed the very first project she ever worked on. Arriving in France in the 1970s, she wanted to meet a prostitute that her friend knew. The woman sparked her interest in exposing reality. Atwood wanted to get to know the woman and what her experiences were like. She said she was able to be with the woman for extended periods of time; but when clients came, she had to disappear.

Atwood talked about her exhibit, "Too Much Time: Women in Prison," which was featured in the Meredith art gallery. She also elaborated more on the stories behind the pictures. Many of the women did not want to be photographed, and she was taught a lesson in patience. Believing in real photographs, she protested against setting up photos.

Pure documentary pho-

tography, her photos span a wide variety of prisons within the U.S. and France, and also feature a prison in Russia where body searches were still legal. A disturbing picture of a woman enduring a genital probe for concealed weapons flashed

on the screen, and the audience gasped in unison.

The women in the prisons she studied and photographed included those on death row. They were women who made wrong decisions because of mental problems or made wrong choices in horrible situations. Atwood said, "I asked one of the prisoners if she regretted killing her husband. The woman responded, 'I wish I had been given a better choice than what was given to me.' The woman was treated like a prisoner in her own home. She could not go out at all unless her husband was with her [...] and she was beaten everyday to the brink of death when, finally, one day she snapped and shot him." Atwood explained that her mission was not to excuse the actions of the women, but to better understand their situations.

After her first book was published in 1979, Atwood started a project on the blind. Her idea for this came when she was riding the bus in France and watched three blind men as they boarded every day. She decided then



Courtesy of photography-now.com

Featured Photographer Jane Evelyn Atwood

that not only did she want to show reality, but she wanted to show those people who were considered abnormal in the world. She said, "The blind live in a world made for those with sight." She wanted to explore the harsh realities of "abnormal" people in a world made for the "normal."

Following her project with the blind, Atwood said her next project came in 1987, during a time when everyone was paranoid about AIDS (Auto Immundeficiency Syndrome) both in France and America. Through a friend, she met a French man

who had AIDS. He had lived in America for 18 years; but due to his lack of insurance, he had to return to France when he became ill. Atwood said she wanted to photograph him in order to put a face on people with AIDS. At the time, she believed it was a disease the public would better understand only through education.



Courtesy of photography-now.com