

Stark testimony to nuclear madness

Shadow painters commemorate the 40th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

STARK SILHOUETTES OF THE dead and dying, twisted white shadows of men and women, children and babies — a mute testament to the agony of nuclear death clinging to the city's sidewalks and pavement.

Painted throughout Halifax and Dartmouth August 5 by artists and peace activists, the silhouettes commemorated the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Designed to help people understand the effects of nuclear war and the arms race, the shadows represented the vaporized victims of the atomic bomb.

Part of an international project involving 323 cities throughout the world, about 80 local participants went to work in the misty hours between two and 5:00 a.m., leaving in their wake hundreds of shadows depicting cringing or stricken adults and children, pregnant mothers, executives with briefcases in hand, pets and bicycles.

Although the impetus for the project came from the artistic community, everyone was invited to participate.

"I find the thought of Hiroshima sickening," said 16-year-old participant Scott Kendall.

"I got involved because I care. There are lots of kids out there who care and want to do something. This seemed to be a great way to educate the public."

Equipped with plastic silhouettes — which in many cases were traced stencils of their own bodies — an impermanent whiteing of chalk and water, and posters explaining the project, participants worked in groups of three taking turns at hanging posters, acting as look-out, and making the shadows.

Although 89 shadow painters in Montreal are facing charges of either public mischief or breaking a civil by-law prohibiting posting, the Halifax project was unimpeded by police interference.

"Patrolling policemen used their own discretion," said Superintendent Charles Cuthbert of the Halifax Police department, and though some shadow makers were asked by police to move along, no one was arrested.

A number of participants credit the success of the operation to the extensive organization involved.

Says activist Cathy McDonald, "I felt secure becoming involved because it was very responsibly organized. All bases were covered and they had checked into the legal implications. Therefore it also became fun."

Cathy Busby was one of the key organizers of the Halifax project. She admits the group did not ask permission from the city — explaining that they did not want to risk rejection — but says every participant was required to attend a training session before going out onto the streets.

We consulted a lawyer and outlined



Atomic bombings remembered through silhouettes painted in front of the Dal SUB. Photo: Rick Janson.

for everyone involved all the legal implications. We also ensured (by using zone leaders in each area) that no shadows were made on private property."

"The project was not meant as graffiti, or an aggressive act," she says, "but rather it was a commemoration." Cathy McDonald agrees.

"I didn't see it as an act of civil disobedience," she says, "the point was not to confront the law. I thought it was a unique form of political expression that would reach people yet remain within the law."

Receiving extensive and largely favourable publicity, the extent it reached people is hard to say.

"It's a question of accumulation," says Busby, "every little event gets people thinking and that helps to change minds."

"It is our hope that people, seeing what will be left after nuclear war, will take actions together to avert our annihilation."

As the September rain slowly blurs the lingering shadows, one is reminded that unless she is right there may come a time when the shadows that darken the streets of Halifax will not be so easily erased. □

—Erin Steuter

National cultural forum

Suzuki, Applebaum & Colville among participants

A WHO'S WHO OF CANADIAN culture — including such disparate names as artist Alex Colville, writer Rick Salutin and popular scientist David Suzuki — will be coming to Halifax this month for a major national conference.

The Halifax Conference: A National Forum on Canadian Cultural Policy (Sept. 21-22, Mount St. Vincent University) will explore the present state of the arts and provide direction for future planning.

The conference — organized by the Nova Scotia Coalition on Arts and Culture — will precede a meeting of the provincial ministers of culture with federal minister Marcel Masse scheduled Sept. 23-24 in town.

An estimated 300 participants from across the country will develop statements on past principles, current crises and future commitments of Canadian arts and culture. On the Sunday afternoon of the conference weekend, the general public will be invited for a summary statement and a performance presented by participants and special guests.

Louis Applebaum, co-author of the Applebaum-Hebert Report on federal cultural policy, will defend his controversial document in a special panel discussion on the current crises in the arts. Other panelists will include Thelma McCormack of the department of sociology at York University, a frequent commentator

on cultural matters; Jean-Paul L'Allier, international consultant and former Quebec minister of cultural affairs; and Jim Wilson, vice-president marketing for Harris Steel Group Inc. and past president of the Burlington (Ont.) Cultural Centre. □

(See also notice in Calendar page.)

A plea for a CBC of regions

Hello Midday, goodbye Heritage, Country East & Reach for the Top

THE CULTURE WARS ARE ON.

Government task forces and study groups are combing the country trying to focus debate on the role of Canada's cultural agencies in the wake of recent cuts in arts funding. The Task Force

on Broadcasting Policy arrived in Halifax Aug. 26 to hear consistent pleas for a properly funded CBC responsive to and representative of all regions of the country.

Members of Atlantic Canada's arts community are specifically up in arms over the gradual shift of the national broadcasting network away from regional programming to slick Toronto-based productions.

While CBC-Maritimes was announcing the demise of three locally produced programmes — *Country East*, *Reach for the Top* and *Heritage* — nationally the network was launching its expensive noon-hour magazine show, *Midday*. Not only does the shift endanger the livelihood of Maritime artists who depend on the CBC for much of their incomes, it raises questions about how the national network depicts Canadians and their culture to each other.

In a vision of a CBC of diverse regions communicating with each other, ACTRA-Cape Breton's Peter Kavanagh summed up the feelings of Nova Scotian representatives in a written statement: "In attempting to portray the Canadian mosaic, the more decentralized the production the better the broadcast will reflect a Canadian identity."

Kavanagh's statement — read by ACTRA-Maritimes Anna Cameron — criticized the commission for its approach to the hearings.

"By concentrating on the major centres of this country we have ignored the rural and remote regions of the nation," he states. "You are in effect seeking the opinions of those with the most choice in broadcast media by-passing the thoughts and views of those with the greatest stake in the maintenance of the diverse, multi-voiced and locality-sensitive broadcasting network."

Professor Leo Deveau of Acadia University told the task force that successful Canadian Programming relies on giving strength to individual communities.

"When people go to see *The Rise and Follies of Cape Breton Island*, they go to see it because it talks to them, their experiences, their feelings, their spirit. And that's why they see it and pack that house all summer," he said.

"Our nation's very cultural fabric that holds us together as a country has been severely weakened on the plains of the electronic battlefield. No one has paid any real attention to a cultural defense programme."

The centralization of the network is not always as overt as the chopping of local programmes for national ones.

Roxana Spicer, producer of the local current affairs programme *Inquiry*, says the coverage of stories may differ from the local angle if the national *Journal* programme is kicking in co-production dollars.

In covering the controversy over bilingualism in New Brunswick, *Inquiry* wanted to document the English backlash sweeping the province. Instead, the *Journal* wanted them to document the plight of the Acadians. When the ledger books were consulted the local angle lost out to the national demands.

"The strength of the CBC is in the regions," she says. "There you'll find the people who are really dedicated, reflecting their communities to themselves. We know our viewers. We know the issues that are important to the people who live here and frankly we're in the best position to tell those stories."

Like many presenters to the commission, Spicer lamented the lack of competition in the field of investigative journalism.

"The top level executives at ATV
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The Halifax Conference

A National Forum on
Canadian Cultural Policy

