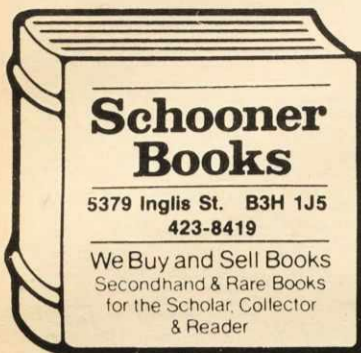


Emma Productions provokes Halifax



by Beth Cumming

Bullets for a Revolution, Stronger than Before, No Small Change and Playing with Fire are provocative videos by Emma Productions, a women's video collective in Toronto. It started 4 years ago with a mandate to document and promote women's issues. Most of the members are not paid and so rely on Unemployment Insu-

rance, moonlighting, and welfare to get by.

Recently, they were asked to accompany a brigade (work crew) who were going down to the Matagalpa region of Nicaragua to help harvest coffee beans. Half of the productions costs were covered by Canadian Action for Nicaragua and Participatory Research, and the rest from miscellaneous sources such as someone's borrowed OXFAM grant.

The video, to be used as an orientation for future brigadeers, stresses the need for international aid to Nicaragua. There are interviews with Nicaraguan peasants and soldiers, but mostly the video explores the concerns of the visitors — why they came, what they did when they went there, and why they are needed.

In 1983, Emma Productions was asked to do a video support at a demonstration at the Litton Systems plant in Rexdale, Ontario. The idea was that the police would be less violent if there were media present. It was while viewing the footage that they realized that the video, *Stronger than Before*, was going to be about women's resistance, the "actions that have been edited out of history" to convince us all that there were no active dissenters in the past.

Some little-known actions of struggling women are recounted in the present tense, using archival photos for visuals. A sampling:

1915 — Carey Davies, an immigrant domestic worker, shoots her employer after he molested her.

1927 — 13,000 Colombian women sign a paper declaring the right of indigenous people to Colombia and condemning foreign exploitations.

1931 — 500 International Ladies Garment Union members go on strike for a 44-hour work week and recognition of the union.

We hear from women presently active in the peace movement. Each talks in turn about how she became politicized, what she is involved in now, and her thoughts on civil disobedience. The part resembles a "go-round" discussion, a technique that feminists have adopted to give everyone a chance to speak, uninterrupted, on every topic at meetings.

No Small Change is also about women's resistance, specifically the recent strike of Eaton's workers (80 per cent of whom were women) to get their first collective agreement. The women met with intimidation from employers and condescension from union men. One woman remarked: "They have to recognize women's strength, women's power, and that they think differently and that it's a good thing."

The video follows the strike to its disappointing conclusion but ends on a positive note. As another woman said, she became stronger through it all and would never be inactive again.

Playing with Fire is quite a departure for Emma Productions — it's fictional and not a collective endeavour. The story arises out of "the need to create alternative images of sexuality". Artists were reminded of limits to freedom of expression recently when the A Space art gallery in Toronto was raided by the police. Feminist, gay, and lesbian videos were confiscated under the "anti-porn" bill C-54. The case was eventually won, but the defendants were required to prove their innocence on the grounds of "artistic merit".

Playing with Fire deals with surveillance, fear, desire, vulnerability, and pleasure — and politics are never far behind. One of the main characters has a memory lapse that has made her forget society's conventions. She asks a stranger: do you like sex? Often? — the same questions that social workers have asked her. In her wanderings, she meets an ex-social worker who lets her stay at her place so she can have a mailing address to get welfare. The two women eventually become lovers, observed all the while by hilariously snooty and obtuse social workers. It's surprising how much humour there is in the video, considering the complicated and heavy subject matter. It's hard to imagine a documentary on the same subjects being as effective.

All these tapes and more can be viewed until January 27 at the Centre for Art Tapes, 2156 Brunswick Street, open 1-5 p.m. on Saturdays and 1-6 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

EVERY WEDNESDAY
From 9 pm — 2 am.

Grand Prize Draws

Wednesday, February 17th
A Weekend For Two At Squaw Mountain
courtesy VIA Rail

A complete downhill ski package
Retail value \$649

You must be here to win. Enter every Wednesday.

scoundrels

"The Best Party In Town"
1786 Granville St., Halifax, N.S.

JANUARY SALE!

The Futon — a sofa by day, a bed by night. . .

our house

DISCOUNTS ON ALL OUR FURNITURE:
FUTONS
CHAIRS, STOOLS
LAMPS, BLINDS
KITCHEN & BATHROOM ACC.
AND MORE. . .

"THE FUTON STORE"
1578 ARGYLE ST.
HALIFAX
425-6997

auditions

FOR
THE NATIONAL THEATRE
SCHOOL OF CANADA

**Acting
Design
Technical Production
Playwriting
Directing**

1988-89 School Year

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION

FEBRUARY 1st, 1988

If you are interested in finding out more about the School, please write or telephone:

The National Theatre School of Canada
5030 St. Denis Street
Montreal, Quebec
H2J 2L8
Tel.: (514) 842-7954