

facades of campus

by Doug Saunders

York University spends a lot of money so we can look at the campus in just the right way. It starts before we get here: we receive a battery of glossy images and phrases which force our eyes to see the campus in a regular, predetermined fashion.

Architecturally, it is a carefully regulated space where study, relaxation and travel take place in a timeless and balanced order.

The campus is a well-defined set of concepts and locations. Everything has a function, displayed clearly on maps and in calendars: teaching, study, relaxation, parking, all bathed in the perpetual golden light of an autumn afternoon.

For many students, the official image collapsed on December 6, 1990. The University of Montreal massacre cast a chilling blue light beyond the placid facade of the campus.

During the year that followed, a group of women at York University took action with spraypaint and phrases, turning the campus into a clandestine battleground.

Painted on construction hoardings (as a literal facade, a natural site for spontaneous art), their slogans, symbols and lists of names forced students to confront the collective voices of women on campus.

We were also forced to confront the vicious spraypainted counterattacks of male voices at York, lashing out against women, feminists and homosexuals, demonstrating vividly that misogynist violence is not a matter of "isolated incidents."

Claire Sykes chronicled these eruptions of hidden reality in a startling photo exhibit last April. Her stark images showed not only what challenges feminists face on the campus, but also how quickly the university acts to silence feminist messages with gallons of whitewash.

In her latest exhibit, Sykes has gone a step further by turning the gallery itself into an act of guerrilla feminism. By counterposing 'official' glossy images of the campus with scenes of painted hatred and chilling visions of inhumane architecture, she forces us to examine the repressive forces lurking beneath the veneer of liberal education.

A sunset scene of Stong pond, straight out of a recruitment brochure, proudly trumpets: "York University prides itself on being a people-oriented institution, able to provide a rewarding and enriching environment for the members of its community."

But on the pond Sykes has printed an image from last year's graffiti wars. Gender symbols are painted in three combinations: two female symbols, two male symbols, a male and a female symbol, linked together in pairs as a message of tolerance. But all the symbols but the last — the heterosexual couple — have been crudely slashed out with crosses of blood-red paint.

Even more intolerant messages follow, placed against and on top of serene images of wholesome campus life.

Amidst these jarring juxtapositions are shots of everyday campus objects (bus shelters, parking lots, blue emergency lights) photographed under unforgiving light. They present a terrifying and rarely acknowledged

gallery
De Construction A/T York
by Claire Sykes
Student Centre Art Gallery
September 9 to 20

view of the campus: as the scene of a permanent state of emergency, where women students must be permanently vigilant and defensive.

As a man viewing the exhibit, I was jarred: the campus, which I have viewed for years from a familiar and comfortable vantage, suddenly became a world of dark spaces, warning sirens, messages of hatred and scorn, saccharine lies and official contempt.

But Sykes does more than simply exhibit this distressing reality. She throws it back at the university, and smashes the campus facade.

Dispelling myths about gays

by Wayne Morrow

The title is *Quarantine of the Mind*, but the message is clear and concise.

"It's a snapshot of the gay community coping with and coming to terms with the often harsh realities of the AIDS crisis," said David MacLean.

MacLean is the solo performer and writer of *Quarantine of the Mind*, which has been touring major Canadian and U.S. cities for two years. He brings his show on sexuality and AIDS to Toronto from Sept. 17 to 22.

Concerned with society's lack of knowledge on the issue and spurred on by personal loss, MacLean tackles many of the misconceptions that cloud the issue of AIDS and sexuality.

"Being prudish about sexuality can be lethal," explains MacLean. "Not distributing condoms in prison or junior high school because society says [people in them] are not having sex is dangerous."

Quarantine of the Mind is an honest and personal account of the tragedy and sadness associated with AIDS and the difficulties our society has in merely discussing the issue.

"My show is based on the personal and anecdotal, often connected to my own hysteria and confusion about this

theatre

Quarantine of the Mind
written and directed by David MacLean
The Theatre Centre
until Sunday, September 22

issue and how I tried to come to terms with the largeness of it," said MacLean.

MacLean intended his show to focus on the gay community, but with each city and show it became clear that the audience was expanding beyond its boundaries.

"Initially I thought my audience would be purely gay, but since I have been touring there are more and more heterosexuals attending the show," said MacLean.

MacLean attributes this to public awareness (or fear) that AIDS is no longer just a gay concern.

MacLean doesn't profess to being an expert on the subject of AIDS but he hopes his play will make discussing the subject easier.

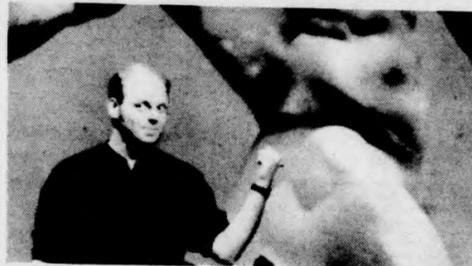
"My show helps break the ice with

the subject of AIDS and sexuality," and is meant "to dispel a few myths of what it means to be gay," said MacLean.

The solution to many of society's difficulties in dealing with AIDS and sexuality, according to MacLean, is through understanding.

"I hope in some small way I can facilitate discussion on the AIDS issue and to raise heads out of the collective sand," said MacLean.

Quarantine of the Mind, opens Tuesday Sept. 17 at The Theatre Centre and will play six days with a benefit show for AIDS ACTION NOW on Wednesday. Tickets are \$12.00 except for Wednesday's benefit performance, which is \$15.00. Sunday matinees are half price.



David MacLean and friend. MacLean's solo show, *Quarantine of the Mind*, is about the gay community coming to terms with AIDS.

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