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"Collateral Damage" 10 plays about a Sesow painting

(Phoenix, 2005)













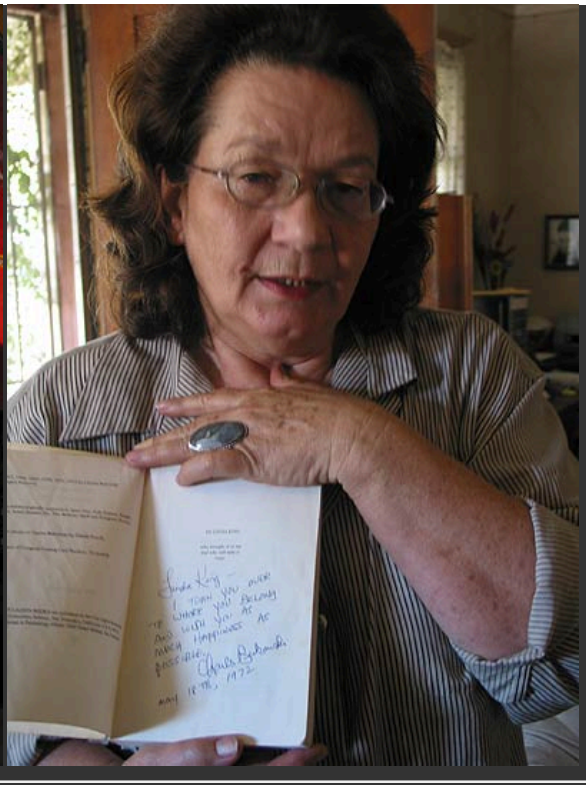












Cheap theatrix @Metro Arts Presents

'Collateral Damage'

A theatrical response to a painting by Matt Sesow

Ten of Phoenix's finest playwrights write in response to the emotionally charged war painting, Collateral Damage, (a living hell) , by Washington D. C. painter Matt Sesow. In addition, Matt Sesow's work will be in exhibit in the theatre gallery before and during all of performances

The Playwrights :
Brenda Edwards
Judith Eisenberg
Chuck Hinckley
Gerry King
Linda King
Nick Newberry
Susan Simpson Lafave
Renee Simms
Raymond Shurtz
Tom Wooler

The Directors :
Dan R. Hitt
Raymond shurtz
Fernando Teson

The Actors :
Danielle Addison
Sue Baker
Selina Cupell
Maggie Donnelly
Jessica Forrister
Gordon Giles
Frank Gonzalez
Jeffrey Holden
Laird Palmer
Karie Rae Pesserillo
Michael McGregor
Cale Richarson
Tracee Rohde
Curt Stetter
Fernando Teson

April 1st, 2nd, 7th, 8th, 9th, 15th and 16th

Where: Metro Arts Institute
1700 N. 7th Ave. (Just North of McDowell)

Time: April 1st – 6:30pm for opening exhibit of Matt Sesow's paintings
8:00pm - theatrical performance of 'Collateral Damage'.

All other dates – 7:00pm exhibit -
8:00pm theatrical performance of 'Collateral Damage'

Tickets: $10 for adults $8 for students

Reservations: (602) 258-4798 or cheaptheatrix@earthlink.net

"Collateral Damage" named best experimental theater production in phoenix/tucson for 2005 (East Valley Tribune, Chris Page/critic)
BEST EXPERIMENTAL THEATER

"Collateral Damage," Cheap Theatrix: Raymond Shurtz collected a handful of antiwar plays and strung them together against a painting by Washington, D.C., artist Matt Sesow. Somewhat thoughtprovoking, occasionally brilliant, entirely fresh."





'Collateral' melds acting, painting, politics

Series of 10-minute plays brings war back into spotlight

ARTS 38

The Arts



Courtesy of Matt Sesow

Chaos prevails, with a hint of Munch's "The Scream," in Washington D.C. painter Matt Sesow's "Collateral Damage (A Living Hell)" (acrylic on canvas, 2005), which forms the basis — and title — of Raymond Shurtz's latest collaborative theater project.

Art of war

Playwrights explore politics through painting, acting

PLAY PREVIEW

'Collateral Damage'

Where: Metro Arts Institute, 1700 N. Seventh Ave., Phoenix

When: Opens Friday, runs 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday through April 16

How much: $10, $8 for students

Info: (602) 258-4798

By CHRIS PAGE
Get Out

We interrupt the regularly scheduled coverage of the Michael Jackson trial to bring you the following reminder:

There's still a war going on.

Nearly two years after President Bush declared major combat operations over in Iraq, Valley playwright and director Raymond Shurtz is contributing a wartime wake-up call with "Collateral Damage," a theater production staging 10 plays, each 10 minutes long, written in response to a painting by Washington, D.C., artist Matt Sesow, exploring the ancillary effects of war.

"We've started to let our guard down a bit," Shurtz says. "I want to keep the dialogue going."

For the show, Shurtz penned "American Eagle," a piece of magical realism in which a mother prepares an eagle for family dinner.

Brenda Edwards' "Wifedom" interweaves stories of wives from Iraq and Middle America with military spouses.

And Tom Wooler contributed a piece that finds television family the Cleavers ("Leave It to Beaver") debating the war in Iraq.

"I didn't want it to be an antiwar

See WAR, Page 39 ▶



Photo by Chris Page

Selina Cupell plays a dog hovering over an Iraqi corpse (played by Fernando Teson) in rehearsals for a short play by Renee Simms, as part of "Collateral Damage."

The Arts

WAR

▶ Continued from Page 38

show," Shurtz says, "but I'm sure it has its artistic protest."

Shurtz — who co-founded Playwrights Workshop Theatre and, besides teaching drama at Metro Arts charter school, runs his own Cheap Theatrix company — has a history of creating conceptual collective theater pieces like this one. In 2002, he enlarged an artwork by French painter Balthus and invited five playwrights to write around it.

This time, he scoured historical war paintings before stumbling onto a Web site of Sesow's war-themed paintings. "As soon as I saw them," Shurtz says, "I immediately responded."

Sesow, 38, is a former software engineer for IBM who has established himself as a self-taught painter. He's known both for a childhood accident with a landing airplane that resulted in the amputation of an arm and for colorful, powerful abstract paintings that channel the artist's inner demons and anger.

Sesow says he created "Collateral Damage (Living Hell)" to shine a light on the grief and pain of war.

"The idea," he says, "was a family caught in some bombing campaign."

Coffins are lined up in a corner, and severed arms holding scimitars — a nod to Baghdad's "Hands of Victory" arches — float above. The artist's emotions, he says, are on full display in his exploration of death and suffering.

"I was traveling back from a solo show in Atlanta, and some guy stopped me and asked if I was in the military, if I had just gotten back from Iraq, because I'm missing an arm and my hair is cut short," he says. "As a society, we have a lot of feeling for those who are suffering. I want to give a tribute to the troops."

The painter says he spent a week working on the large-format "Collateral Damage," and that the 8-by-9-foot painting filled the floor of his cramped studio apartment. Sesow says he accepted the almost pro bono commission (Shurtz paid the cost of materials and for Sesow's flight to come to opening night of the show; the piece will go on sale for $2,000 after the show closes) because he's impressed by the artistic boldness of Shurtz and the participating playwrights.

"The historical significance of taking a chance on something like this during a war is pretty ballsy," Sesow says. "Sometimes we like to wait to see how things shake out before we form our opinions on them."

Shurtz expects audiences anticipating an evening of screaming, "Embedded"-style agitprop will be surprised by the varied tone of the plays presented in "Collateral Damage."

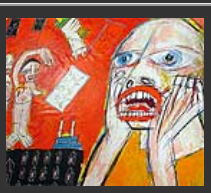
One poignant piece comes from Metro Arts humanities teacher Renee Simms, 38, who juxtaposes a news conference asking Americans to stop donating food to military bomb-sniffing dogs with a scene in which an Iraqi family dog, loose in the city after her home was destroyed, contemplates eating a human corpse.

Other plays explore wartime journalists, soldiers assigned to identify bodies and, in Chuck Hinckley's "Chili Cheese Fries," a soldier dealing with his first kill — his interpreter and guide.

Shurtz says bringing the show together has sparked lively debate among cast members, and he hopes discussion continues with audiences. A self-described pacifist, Shurtz says the show has helped him further formulate his own opinions.

"Usually, when I don't know," he says, "I'll do theater to find out."

NEW PAINTINGS
Canvas/Large un-sold works
Paper/Small un-sold works
"Very Small" paintings
"31 Days in July" project
Paintings (2000-2004)
Solomon Islands and Bulgaria



"Collateral Damage (Living Hell)"
8 feet x 9 feet
acrylic/mixed on canvas
DETAIL 1 ... DETAIL 2

Press Release

cheap theatrix @Metro Arts announces

"Collateral Damage"

Raymond Shurtz, Artistic Director of cheap theatrix, has assembled plays from ten of Phoenix's finest playwrights to create "Collateral Damage". The show will consist of ten-minute plays by these playwrights **in reaction to the painting 'Collateral Damage' (a living hell) by internationally known painter, Matt Sesow.** This collaboration began several months ago after Mr. Shurtz contacted Mr. Sesow at his home in Washington D.C. in response to his stunning paintings involving the war in Iraq. Mr. Sesow agreed to paint a large 8'X 9' canvas which will serve as the center piece of the ten minute plays.

The playwrights, Brenda Edwards, Nick Newberry, Susan Simpson LaFave, Judith Eisenberg, Tom Wooler, Chuck Hinckley, Renee Simms, Gerry King, Linda King, and Raymond Shurtz, were selected during a two-month 'call to playwrights' period. The ten plays range from the very serious issues facing our soldiers in combat, to biting satire, from the left to the right, from the fallen to the risen. Seventeen actors will perform the over fifty roles required for this full-length production.

Paintings (1994 – 1998)

Short Film

Contact Sesow.com

Biography

Interviews and Articles

Shots from Shows

In the Studio

Sesow.com

In addition, cheap theatrix and Metro Arts, will be exhibiting Matt Sesow's emotionally riveting work in the gallery adjacent to the main theatre before, after, and during intermission of all the performances. Mr. Sesow will be attending the opening along with the playwrights and performers. Music will be provided by 'Drawbridge', with the theatre performance of 'Collateral Damage' to follow.

Dates: April 1st, 2nd, 7th, 8th 9th, 15th , and16th.

Times: The April 1st opening will begin at 6:30pm for Mr. Sesow's exhibit, and 8:00pm for the theatrical performance of 'Collateral Damage' . All other shows will consist of a 7:00pm exhibit and the 8:00pm performance.

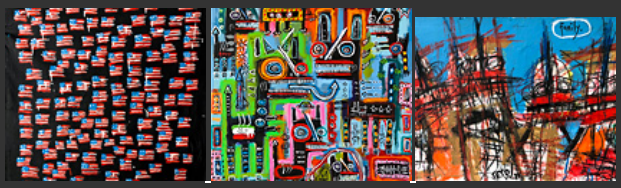
Location: Metro Arts Institute, 1700 N. 7th Avenue. (Just North of McDowell Rd. on the West side of 7th Avenue.

Tickets: $10 adults $8 students

Reservations or more information: (602) 258-4798

Reservations can also be made by e-mailing cheaptheatrix@earthlink.net.

Matt Sesow's paintings can be viewed on line at www.sesow.com



click image above to visit new paintings by Matt Sesow

CLICK HERE FOR MORE PAINTINGS...