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

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Why it matters: Describes the 8 x 9 foot painting used as the set for ten short anti-war plays in Phoenix, April 2005.

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March 31, 2005: Headlines: COS - Solomon Islands: Art: Painting: Disabilities: Iraq: Get Out: Matt Sesow says he created "Collateral Damage (Living Hell)" to shine a light on the grief and pain of war.

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By [Admin1 \(admin\) \(pool-151-196-181-108.balt.east.verizon.net - 151.196.181.108\)](#) on Saturday, April 02, 2005 - 10:04 pm: [Edit Post](#)

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Playwrights explore politics through painting, acting

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.

[Excerpt]

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."

'Collateral Damage'

When: Opens Fri. April 1, runs 8 p.m. Thu.-Sat. through April 16

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

How much: \$10, \$8 for students

Info: (602) 258-4798

When this story was posted in March 2005, this was on the front page of PCOL:

Peace Corps Online The Independent News Forum serving Returned Peace Corps Volunteers

The Peace Corps Library

Peace Corps Online is proud to announce that the [Peace Corps Library](#) is now available online. With over 30,000 index entries in 500 categories, this is the largest collection of Peace Corps related stories in the world. From Acting to Zucchini, you can find hundreds of stories about what RPCVs with your same interests or from your [Country of Service](#) are doing today. If you have a web site, support the "Peace Corps Library" and link to it today.

Crisis Corps arrives in Thailand

After the Tsunami in Southeast Asia last December, Peace Corps issued an appeal for Crisis Corps Volunteers and over [200 RPCVs responded](#). The first team of 8 Crisis Corps volunteers [departed for Thailand on March 18](#) to join RPCVs who [are already supporting](#) relief efforts in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and India with other agencies and NGO's.

This Month's Feature Stories - only on PCOL

[Dream Come True - Revisiting India after 34 years](#)

[The Coyne Column: Read Winning Vanity Fair PCV Essay](#)

[Tomas Belsky's paintings inspired by service in Brazil](#)

[RPCV reunites with friend after 40 years](#)

[RPCV reviews "Los Heraldos Negros" by Cesar Vallejo](#)

[Photo Essay: Taking it to the Streets](#)

March 26, 2005: This Week's Top Stories

[PCVs in Kyrgyz Republic Are Safe](#) 25 Mar

[The Coyne Column: A Good Friday Message](#) 25 Mar

[Frederic Zenhausern developing "biometric bodysuits"](#) 24 Mar

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[Fred Poses meets with Vice-Premier in China](#) 22 Mar

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[Bill Moyers takes time to "sit and vegetate"](#) 21 Mar

[Tony Hall says Ethiopia may need more food aid](#) 21 Mar

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March 26, 2005: RPCV Groups in the News

[Houston RPCVs sponsor "Around the World in a Day" on April 6](#) 25 Mar

[Minnesota RPCVs need Photos for Exhibition](#) 24 Mar

[Vasquez to visit DePaul University on April 6](#) 22 Mar

[New Jersey RPCVs host exhibit in Maplewood on April 2](#) 20 Mar

[Maryland RPCVs eat crab cakes in Annapolis](#) 17 Mar

[Connecticut RPCVs held fundraiser on March 5](#) 3 Mar

RPCVs: Post your stories or press releases [here](#) for inclusion next week.

RPCVs in Congress ask colleagues to support PC

RPCVs Sam Farr, Chris Shays, Thomas Petri, James Walsh, and Mike Honda have asked their colleagues in Congress to add their names to a letter they have written to the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee, asking for full funding of \$345 M for the Peace Corps in 2006. As a follow-on to Peace Corps week, [please read the letter and call your Representative in Congress](#) and ask him or her to add their name to the letter.

Add your info now to the RPCV Directory

Call Harris Publishing at 800-414-4608 right away to add your name or make changes to your listing in the newest edition of the NPCA's Directory of Peace Corps Volunteers and Former Staff. Then read

our story on how you can [get access to the book](#) after it is published. The deadline for inclusion is May 16 so call now.

March 1: National Day of Action

Tuesday, March 1, is the NPCA's National Day of Action. Please call your Senators and ask them to support the President's proposed \$27 Million budget increase for the Peace Corps for FY2006 and ask them to oppose the elimination of Perkins loans that benefit Peace Corps volunteers from low-income backgrounds. Follow [this link](#) for step-by-step information on [how to make](#) your calls. Then take our poll and leave feedback [on how the calls went](#).

Make a call for the Peace Corps

PCOL is a strong supporter of the [NPCA's National Day of Action](#) and encourages every RPCV to spend ten minutes on Tuesday, March 1 making a call to your Representatives and ask them to support President Bush's budget proposal of [\\$345 Million](#) to expand the Peace Corps. Take our Poll: Click [here to take our poll](#). We'll send out a reminder and have more details early next week.

Read the stories and leave your comments.

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Story Source: Get Out

This story has been posted in the following forums: : Headlines; COS - Solomon Islands; Art; Painting; Disabilities; Iraq

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