

Pavilion takes gay experience to public

25-6-90

By DAVID RODENHISER
The Daily News

Curious pedestrians on Gottingen Street who ventured inside a pavilion constructed of bent saplings and felt on Saturday may have got more than they bargained for

What some of them received was a better understanding of the experiences of bisexual and lesbian women.

Others uttered profanities and hurried back outside, said Catherine Hughes, the pavilion's creator.

"The idea was to bring into a public place stories of lesbian and bisexual women... the hardships and pleasures of their lives," said Hughes, a 24-year-old Pictou County artist.

Set up in a small park across from the gay club Rumours, the pavilion was dark and earthy on the outside — made up of sheep hides and saplings — with no indication of what it housed.

Inside, there was a 90-minute audio tape of six lesbian and bisexual women telling how their sexuality has affected their lives.

Hughes explained the outside of the structure was meant to represent the "closedness" lesbian and bisexual women feel out of fear of discrimination.

Inside, saplings reached upward. At their bases rich-colored felt symbolized "the richness of our underground organization," Hughes said. Higher in the trees, a bird made of felt was trying to escape the confines of the branches.

"The bird is symbolic of craving freedom, openness, and understanding," she said. "We just want to be regarded as other people are."

Hughes called her work — entitled *Blowing Up a Storm for Lesbian Liberation* — participatory art, because those who listened to the tape were asked to talk about their feelings toward homosexuality.

The project was a "challenge to stereotypical views" she said.

The work was presented in celebration of Lesbian and Gay Pride Week, with the support of the Centre for Art Tapes and the Gay and Lesbian Association of Nova Scotia.