

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Montreal artist unravels mystery thread through streets of Sackville



PAUL LITHELAND PHOTO

Above, Millie Suter, Nate Moser, Sam Haley and Moya Craik help Montreal artist Karen Trask unwind a huge ball of string made from the pages of dictionaries as part of the performance 'Do Undo Redo', which took place Friday, Oct. 20.

BY SCOTT DOHERTY
MANAGING EDITOR

SACKVILLE, N.B.

Recent visitors to downtown Sackville were treated to a sight reminiscent of something found in the pages of a fairy tale: a mysterious line of string that trailed off into the distance in both directions.

Some stood in small groups examining the thread, others tried to guess at its purpose, while some even followed the string in an attempt to discover its origin.

Upon closer examination, the string wasn't really string at all, at least not in the traditional sense. It was, in fact, created from the pages of dozens of dic-

tionaries, woven together using the Japanese technique for spinning paper called 'shifu' by Karen Trask, a multidisciplinary artist based in Montréal and currently in the Maritimes, having already served as artist-in-residence for L'Université de Moncton and now Mount Allison University.

After the pages were woven into string, it was wound into a giant ball of paper, which was originally created in 2008 as a sculpture entitled 'Where the words go'. The sculpture has since been exhibited in many solo and group exhibitions.

For the Sackville performance, entitled *Do Undo Redo*, Trask started out at the Purdy Crawford Centre for the Arts on the Mount Allison campus and slowly unwound the ball as she moved

down Main Street to the Bill Johnstone Memorial Park, proceeded to Struts Gallery & Media Arts Centre, then worked her way down Bridge Street until the ball was completely unwound. Once finished, Trask retraced her steps, rewinding the thread back into a ball as she went. The entire performance took her just over five hours to complete, having left the Purdy Crawford Centre for the Arts at 2 p.m. and returning just after 7 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 20.

Trask said the performance, which was part of Sackville's recent *A Handmade Assembly*, was originally meant to be a reflection of daily life as well as a way to give the former sculpture a new purpose.

"I guess for me it was this idea of doing and undoing and redo-

ing and how every day... is a new day and we essentially remake and redo and carry on."

As the performance unfolded, however, Trask said she began to view it in a different light.

"What I hadn't anticipated, or I hadn't really taken the time to think about, was the interaction I would have with people along the way," she explained, "and it was so wonderful.

"It was more than I ever entertained or thought about and seeing kids just having so much fun... it's the mystery of art and the reason for why we do things.

"For me it's a poetic gesture about language and how we can relate to each other through words. There's still a lot of mystery in it for me otherwise I would have stopped doing it a long time ago."

About the artist

Karen Trask is a multi-disciplinary artist living in Montreal known for her innovative use of paper and her explorations of language. Her works include installations, artist-books, videos and performances. She has had numerous solo exhibitions in Quebec, Canada, Europe and Japan. She has participated in various group exhibitions in Canada, India, Mexico City, USA and Europe and artist residencies in Helsinki, Paris and Tokyo. Her work can be found in public and private collections such as: Qube Arts, Oswestry, UK, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. USA, The National Library of Quebec and The National Library of Canada. Her videos have been presented in various video and film festivals and museums: Travers video, Toulouse, France, Centre culturel canadien, Paris, Rendez vous cinéma québécois, FIFA, and Vidéos de femmes dans le parc. In 1999, she graduated from Concordia University with a Masters degree in sculpture.

For more on the artist, visit <http://karentrask.com/>.



SCOTT DOHERTY - SACKVILLE TRIBUNE-POST

Karen Trask enters Struts Gallery & Media Arts Centre as she unwinds a large ball of string along the streets of Sackville recently as part of an arts performance.