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Demanding peace, one film at a time

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Photo : Audrey Duckworth ©

"My parents gave me my passion for peace," admits Martin Duckworth. Twenty-six thought-provoking documentaries later Duckworth became the 2002 Quebec Artist for Peace.

For Duckworth this award was particularly rewarding. While his work has been recognized around the globe, this was the first time the anglophone filmmaker was recognized by his Quebec peers.

His topics have ranged from a friend returning to the German city he helped bomb in World War II, to Hiroshima survivors, to Canadian participation in the Gulf Wars. One major theme always comes to the fore: the devastating effect of war on civilian populations. "As a film director," Duckworth says, "I consider it an obligation to use my talents to immunize and socialize the world. It is difficult, though, under the American empire."

This socially conscious view, concedes the documentarian, has been profoundly influenced by the women of his life. His mother Muriel was a founding member of the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, a pacifist group founded in 1960. For 40 years it has promoted peace and disarmament to the Canadian government. "Women are more effective on the left," asserts the filmmaker, "because they combine comprehension, articulation, and passion in a better balance than men."

Duckworth began at the National Film Board of Canada in 1963, but became independent soon after. "Freelancing is difficult," he admits, but the position helps him reflect the life of most of the world's inhabitants and their fight for economic survival. To make ends meet, he has to hold down another job teaching film production at Concordia University's film school.

After 40 years, Duckworth has no intention of toning down his message. He recently filmed the Montreal protests against the war in Iraq and is collaborating on his next project with another Quebec director, Louise Lemelin. Times may change, but for Martin Duckworth, the message of peace remains the same.

PS:

Karine Projean, special collaboration