

SAW takes art to the outdoor people

By DENIS ARMSTRONG

FINDING winter a little dull without the NHL?

A new exhibition of interactive art, *The Winter Life*, presented by SAW Gallery and Winterlude, is hoping to bridge the gap.

The collection of eight major pieces provides a bold and fun-loving look at Canadians' national obsession with hockey as a means of surviving winter.

This indoor and outdoor artistic playground is the brainchild of co-curators Stefan St-Laurent and Tam-Ca Vo-Van who saw the opportunity to reach a wider audience during last year's Winterlude.

From their front porch they watched thousands of happy-go-lucky skaters within a snowball's throw of the artist-run gallery.

'Provocative'

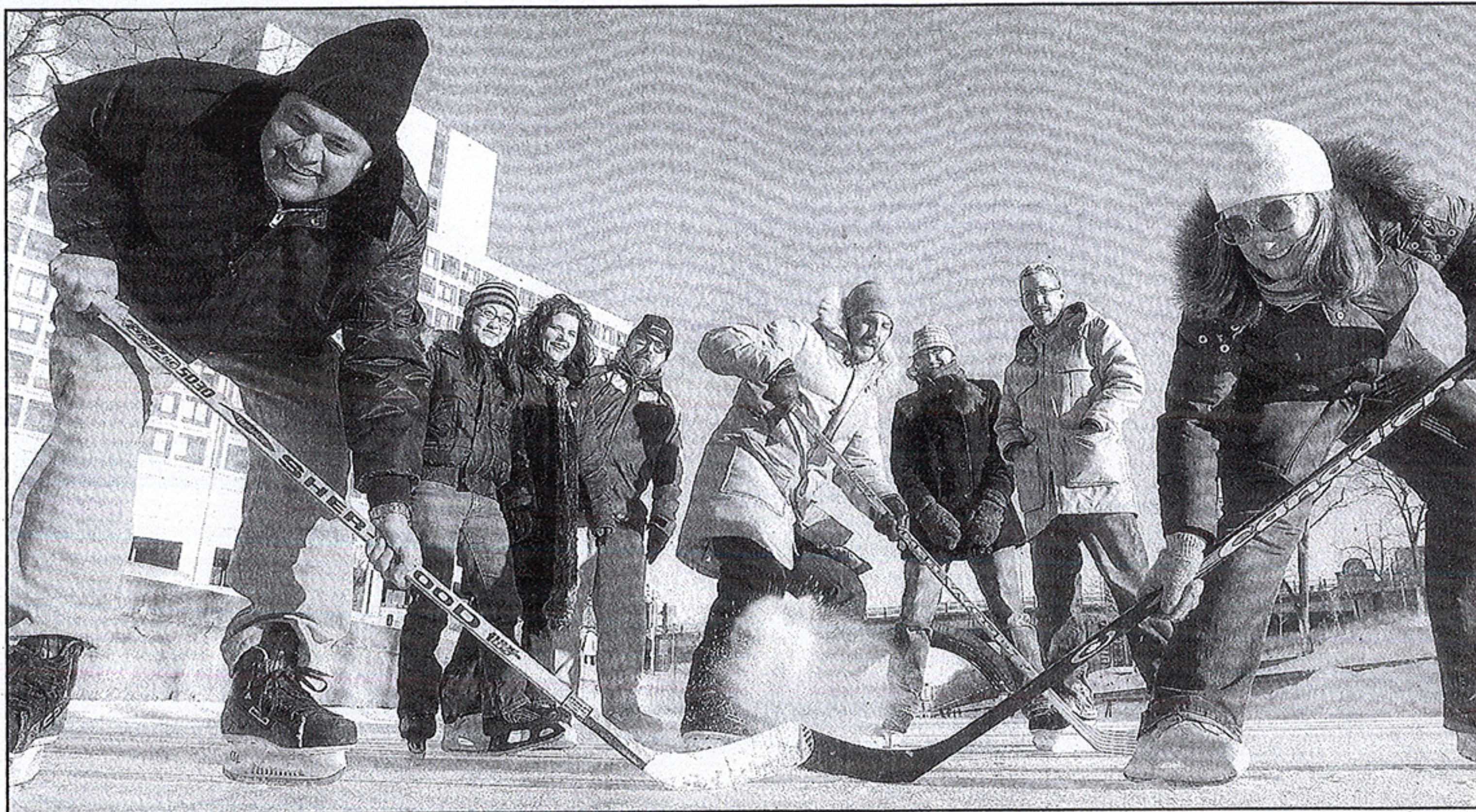
That's when the idea hit them to create a snowbound, winter wonderland. And that's what makes *The Winter Life* as unconventional as unconventional gets, even for a gallery as avant-garde as SAW.

"There are no pretensions to *Winter Life*," said St-Laurent at an advance peek. "We wanted to do something fun that families at Winterlude could participate in without compromising our artistic integrity."

"We wanted to add something more critical than ice sculptures and pretty decorations," he added. "Something a little provocative that looks at our relationship with our harsh reality."

That all sounds like conventional marketing-talk, except St-Laurent is the enfant-terrible who staged the controversial *Scatalogue* exhibition of excremental art in 2003.

The Winter Life, on the other hand, goes out of its way to be family friendly. Most of the eight instal-



Geoff Robins SUN

THE STAFF from SAW Gallery, from left, Tony Asimakopoulous, Tam-Ca Vo-Van, Kate Barry, Lee Demarbre, Ryan Stec, Erin Kelly, Stefan St-Laurent and Darsha Hewitt are taking their art to the ice with *The Winter Tale* exhibit that opens tomorrow.

lations are intentionally funny, such as Barney Pattunguyal's video of Inuit superhero *Super Shamou*, a spinoff of the cartoon caped crusader protecting Canada's far north.

Also on video is *Don Cherry's Nightmare* in which eight video artists remix a clip from last year's playoff between the Calgary Flames and Tampa Bay Lightning.

What's supposed to be an ironic commentary about the excess of

money and power might turn out to be the closest thing to NHL hockey you see this season.

Meanwhile, the kids are invited to help Halifax artist Eryn Foster make her sculpture *Ice Utopia* in SAW's outdoor courtyard.

Liss Platt's *Puck Paintings*, located on the canal, invites skaters to create art by shooting pucks at a canvas suspended across a hockey net.

Not surprising for SAW, there is a dark side to the exhibition as well. San Francisco photographer Laura Splan's *Blood Scarf* — plates showing a woman keeping warm with her own blood — is not for the faint of heart, while Joelle Ciona's video triptych *Condensation* shows the naked artist locked in an ice box on a frozen Lake Louise.

"Being a part of Winterlude, we're hoping that people who wouldn't

normally be interested in performance art will see us as a part of much larger outdoor event," St-Laurent said. "After all, how often do you get the chance to see art outdoors?"

The Winter Life opens tomorrow with a dance party and runs until March 19 at SAW Gallery at 67 Nicolais St. Admission is free.