

Some found church whimsical

MIRO CERNETIG

From B1

It does what good art is supposed to do — it makes you think, stirs emotion, sparks debate and is simply impossible for the eye to miss.

Yes, for some *Device to Root Out Evil* is an unsettling symbol of the church and religion being turned upside down in contemporary society. One collector I know called it a church going to hell and didn't like it.

Others, though, find it whimsical, evoking the spinning buildings caught in

the fantastical tornado in *The Wizard of Oz*. Personally, I think it looks like the church's steeple is being used like a gardening tool to root out weeds deep under the grass. I find it ironic and iconic.

But the board doesn't seem to want public art to stir the mind or soul to such a degree. In its damning report the park board staff reported "public response to the work has been mixed, with a greater proportion of the response being negative."

So what? I thought that was what art was supposed to do. You know, get a response. Create a sensation. I guess not

in Vancouver.

So our upside-down church is history. After standing for 18 months on the waterfront, it'll be taken down by the end of the week and go to the windswept prairie. Maybe for good.

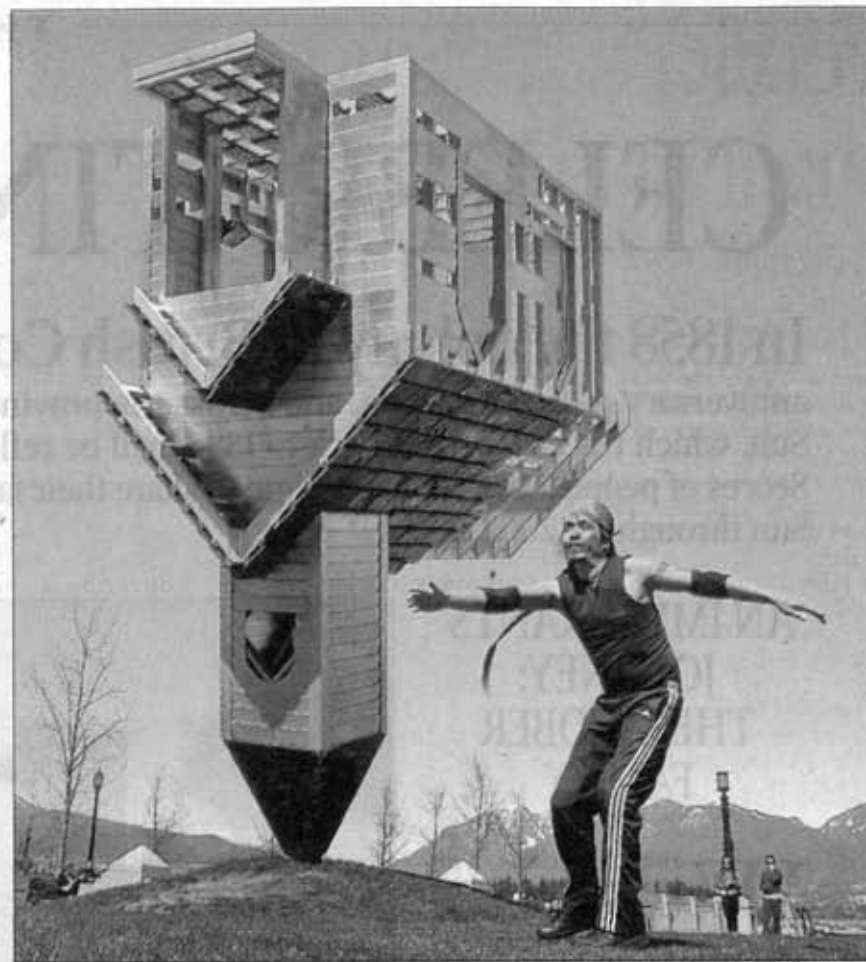
Who knows what the park board will deem worthy of putting up in its place. Maybe a coffee kiosk. Perhaps something safe like another totem pole. Whatever it is, I wouldn't count on it filling the vacuum of what was probably our city's greatest piece of outdoor public art.

"It's a major loss for the city," said John Bromley, a representative of the Benefic Foundation, which bought the piece and leased it to the city.

"This was never a money-making deal," Bromley said. "We hope a major loss of this magnitude will stimulate a major debate of public art policy in Vancouver. Hopefully at some point it can come home."

There is an important lesson from this embarrassment, though, as we begin to build our new \$400-million art gallery, not to mention public art projects associated with the 2010 Olympics: Keep the people who make up the *Device for Rooting Out Interesting Public Art* — a.k.a. the Vancouver park board — far away from the collection. After this debacle, they need to stick to pruning our parks not picking our art.

mcernetic@png.canwest.com



BILL KEAY/VANCOUVER SUN FILES

Raven spirit dance is practised at the upside-down church, which will soon no longer be a part of the Vancouver landscape.

La Luna

