

Quebec special effects artist not guilty of corrupting morals

Couture charged with creating and distributing obscene material

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MONTREAL — A Quebec special effects artist charged with corrupting morals has been found not guilty in a case that tested the boundaries of creative expression and Canadian obscenity laws.

Remy Couture received the verdict from the jury late Saturday, after two days of deliberation.

"It's like a 400-pound weight has been lifted," Couture, 35, told reporters after hearing the verdict at the Montreal courthouse.

"It's been the most stressful thing I've ever had to go through in my life."

Couture said the ruling means he can continue to create his art, without infringement on his right to free expression.

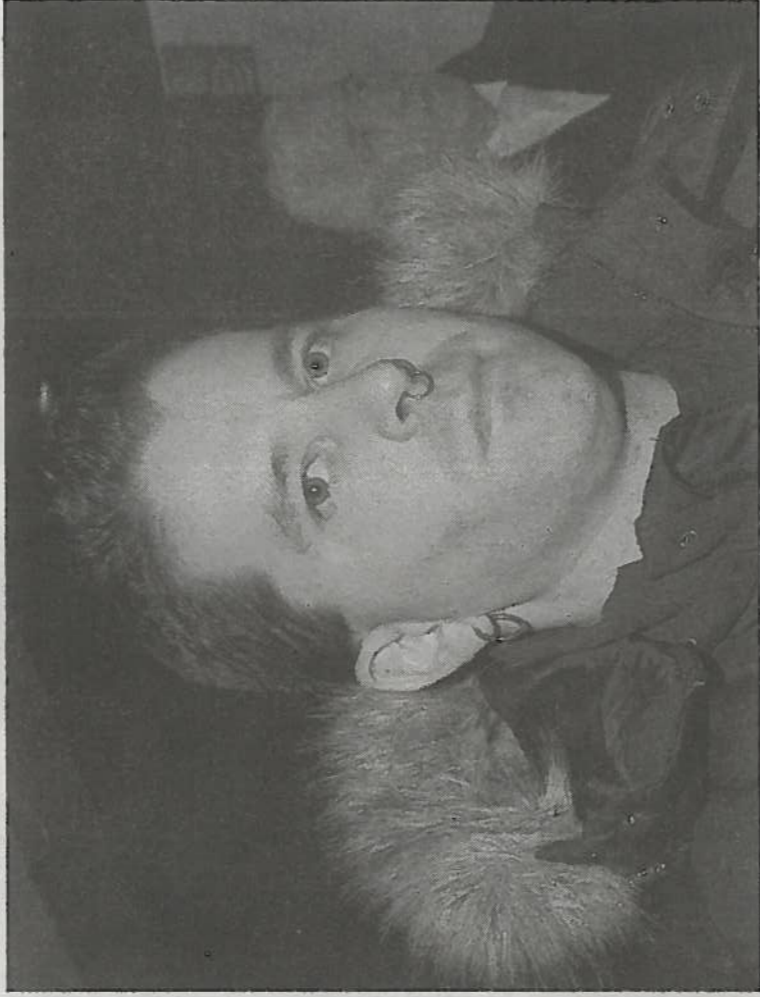
He was charged with three counts of corrupting morals by distributing, possessing and producing obscene material.

During the trial, Couture argued his gory works, roughly a thousand images and two short videos that appeared on Couture's website, Inner Depravity, should be considered art.

The material in question depicts gruesome murders, torture, sexual abuse, assaults and necrophilia — all with young female victims.

The jury was tasked with determining whether the material in question was obscene and dangerous enough to actually incite people to act out what they see, as the Crown contended.

The jurors were sequestered Friday and were asked to first decide if they felt the images were obscene under the Criminal Code. If yes, they were asked



Quebec filmmaker Remy Couture arrives at the Palais de Justice in Montreal last week. Couture was found not guilty Saturday on several counts of corrupting morals through the possession, production and distribution of material deemed obscene. CANADIAN PRESS PHOTO

to determine if the works had artistic merit.

If they deemed it to be artistic, they had to find Couture not guilty. If they deemed the work to be obscene and gratuitous, they had to find him guilty.

The website was part of a personal project by Couture designed to raise the bar of his make-up and special effects work. Couture, who is self-taught, sought to bring a psychopathic killer character of his own making to life.

Couture described it as a sort of "fake diary of a serial killer," complete with his own universe inspired by horror movies and literature.

But there was no victim in the case — all of the works were staged with willing actresses and a combination of fake blood, latex

and silicone to create life-like, horrific images.

Couture testified the reason behind the work was to highlight his skills and abilities as a master of special effects horror and that the goal is to make his work look believable.

Couture told the jury that his was a creation of horror and aimed to disgust.

He denied the Crown's contention that he was making pornography with a violent twist. He argued the sexual nature of some of his work was secondary.

"My objective was to create horror, plain and simple," Couture told the court.

Defence experts testified that Couture's work was in line with other similar work in the genre.

A university cinema professor testified that what was acceptable in the genre had changed greatly over

the span of seven decades.

The trial heard that Interpol received a complaint in 2006 from a user in Austria. The scenes were deemed so realistic that a pathologist in Europe couldn't rule out that a homicide had actually been committed.

Montreal police began their investigation in early 2009.

Police officers who testified had doubts that Couture's work was real homicide, but still engaged in an elaborate sting operation with police posing as clients looking to do a gory photo shoot around Halloween.

Couture, who has no criminal record, pleaded not guilty in 2010, arguing that the state has no business defining what art is, or infringing on his right to free expression.