

Pacific to Atlantic: Canada's Gigantic, photographs by Henri Robideau. Gallery TPW, 80 Spadina Ave., till April 11.

Monuments are normally put up by the powerful, which is why folk monuments almost always have a self-deflating air about them. The giant turtle in Boissevain, Man.; the dinosaurs at Drumheller, Alta., and Andy MacDonald's sprawling Dummy Farm at Port Elgin, N.B., all testify to some primal commemorative need, but they don't pretend to do it in a highfalutin way. They're just big things, made by ordinary people who resist being quieted by somebody else's idea of what's sophisticated or important.

This folksy independence gets an ironic salute from Vancouver photographer Henri Robideau, who drove across the country to make the images for his Pancanadienne Giantthropological Survey. The professorial conceit is Robideau's own gesture of self-deflation, as well as an acknowledgment that, much as he admires his subject's artlessness, he's not about to emulate it. Instead of the snapshot style used by others working with similar material, Robideau chops and splices his blown-up images into angular shapes and mock-fisheye effects. Balanced against these jigsaw manoeuvres are the handwritten captions that give the matted and framed photos a homey, scrapbook flavor.

But the best work in this show has nothing to do with giantness, and everything to do with the plights and gripes of ordinary life on this

planet. Robideau's *The Crossroads of Life* is a splendid little photo-textual essay on being a 40-year-old New Englander of Quebecois descent whose life-o-meter (as he says) is reading only half-full. The four-part series has some piercingly comic juxtapositions of text and image, and a palpable tone of ordinary-guy reality that is as pertinent now as it was for Aristophanes. It represents Robideau's latest work, which can only mean good things for the future.

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ENTERTAINMENT

BY ROBERT EVERETT-GREEN
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Bugsy The Giant Ant, a character from Lucy Maud Montgomery's undiscovered blockbuster, ATTACK OF THE KILLER ANTS, teaches giantthropologist Henri Robideau that Giantthropology can sometimes be BIG TROUBLE! Bonshaw, P.E.I., August 8, 1969.

Henri Robideau 1969

a photograph by Henri Robideau, who gives an ironic salute to folk art.