

Sadomasochism isn't quite what you'd expect

BY PETER GODDARD
ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

Talent doesn't get spotted. It spots itself.

Deanna Bowen, the video-ista showing her art until April 29 at the YYZ Gallery, works with the absolute certainty of someone who knows right in her bones that there's nothing much she *can't* do.

By calling her installation at the 401 Richmond St. W. gallery *Sadomasochism*, the Toronto artist knowingly sets up certain specific expectations.

But rather than meeting them — there's certainly no consensual kinkiness here — these expectations become an emotional pivot point for an even deeper exploration into ideas of repression, acceptance and — through the narrator's text — ways to freedom.

Everything's interior. To see Bowen's video you must enter a small rectangular tent set up in the gallery.

It has soft walls and an inch or so of sand on the floor — a direct link with the patch of sand shown on a video.

On the screen, the

narrator walks barefoot in the sand. Nothing is shown above calf-level. But this trip is about souls as much as soles.

Also on the screen, interspersing images of street violence during Civil Rights protests in the 1960s, several matches are lit. Each flickers out. Then two lines of text alternate on the screen, appearing soundlessly.

At the top right, you read line after line of blunt, arrogant, male pedophilic sex rant.

"I'm not finished with you," goes the text in black against a stark white background after having already taken you through a nightmarish description of non-consensual sex.

Written in white across the bottom left portion of a blackened screen — is a child's plea, "I'm sorry daddy."

A little white dot, bouncing over these words like the bouncing ball in the old cinema sing-a-longs, makes for a frightful irony with its innocence.

The deliberate pacing, the spare imagery and the narrator's richly evocative text are bound

tightly together by a fiercely-focused intelligence.

Lest anyone think visual starkness is Bowen's thing, her epic-like, colour-drenched *Deutschland* — where the "Haunted Girl" meets her cousin and her country after the war — is being screened as part of the *The Images Independent Film & Video Festival*, on April 16 at 7 p.m..