

NEWS FEATURES

Gallery debates placement of 'offensive' art

Warning signs foretell exhibit's explicit content

By Tracy Peel
 ■ The Argonaut
 U. of Idaho

After an anonymous complaint about artwork depicting nudity, U. of Idaho administrators decided to put up warning signs around an exhibit to explain its content so passersby would not be disturbed.

The administrators originally planned to move the exhibit, which consisted of drawings by student Lisa Eisenrich, to a less conspicuous area of the gallery.

Some interpreted the move as censorship. Coordinator of the Student Union Building Gallery John Goettsche said, "No matter what you put up, somebody is going to be offended. If you listen to that complaint, are you going to listen to them all? Are you going to tear down every show

people don't like?"

The gallery manager, Dean Vettrus, defended the request to move the artwork, saying, "This is the most public area of the building. A lot of little kids come by that area in the morning before they go to school."

Vettrus said he objected only to the placement of the exhibit, not the content or quality of the art.

Eisenrich, or "Izey" as she signs her paintings, said she heard mostly positive comments about the exhibit. Comments were also listed in a book at the gallery's information desk, and positive comments outnumbered the negative ones.

Goettsche tells those who may question his choice of display art to "go through an art history book and look at the impressionists. They all painted naked women."

But because no consensus can be easily formed as to the appropriateness of a piece of art, the university has decided to evaluate its own selection process.

Hal Godwin, vice president of student affairs, said Goettsche has done a good job of selecting art for the SUB Gallery, but has been a "committee of one."

Godwin suggested a larger committee be responsible for selecting artwork in the future.



BRIAN JOHNSON, THE ARGONAUT, U. OF IDAHO

Eisenrich's piece was at the center of debate.



Two UF students embrace during a silent prayer vigil.

GONE
 BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



(Above) Alachua County sheriffs are pallbearers for Christa L. Hoyt, a records clerk for the sheriff's department.

(Right) Sandra Carlis joins 100 protesters at a National Organization for Women march.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHERRY JONES, THE INDEPENDENT FLORIDA ALLIGATOR, U. OF FLORIDA

In Gainesville, Fla., a college town that was preparing to start its first week of classes, students banded together after a series of five shocking murders. The deaths haunted students all across the nation, not just those at the U. of Florida and Santa Fe Community College, where the victims were found. Greg Rivara, a student journalist at Western Illinois U., wrote a column urging his fellow students to look to the southern tragedy as a lesson in mortality. "Everyone in their early adult years got a little reality break. Young people die. Simple fact."

NEA

Continued from page 1

Some students in California agreed. Erin Braddock, the U. of California Student Association representative for the U. of California, Davis, said she thinks "the essence of these amendments is repressiveness, which puts limits on human expression. When a government attempts to define those limits, it is very, very dangerous."

However, Braddock admitted that artists should have the right to accept grants. "There is a lot of truth behind the term 'starving artist,'" she said.

Last year alone, the nine UC campuses received more than \$1 million from the NEA, and as much as \$150,000 of that amount was used for various arts programs, said UCD Vice Chancellor Richard Methany.

Turning away the money isn't easy, said Ron Carlson, director of Arizona State U.'s creative writing program, which rejected a \$9,965 NEA grant in protest of the clause this fall.

"We turned down funding three times as much as our operating budget," Carlson said.

The U. of Iowa found itself trying to meet similar costs by accepting private donations after rejecting a \$12,000 NEA grant to fund production of the Iowa Short Fiction Awards.

But many artists have accepted the grants, despite the possible ethical ramifications that could accompany them.

"Of course it gave me pause," said Indiana U. English professor and writer Tony Ardizzone. "But to turn down that grant would have been like shooting myself in the foot."

In addition to the financial strain put on universities, those involved have said the clause infringed on their "academic, social and artistic freedoms."

Alberto Rios, ASU English professor, did not criticize the NEA, but condemned the wording of the mandatory oath, saying it resembled "a communist witch hunt."

Despite such accusations, NEA

Chairman John Frohnmayer continually reiterated his position on art versus obscenity.

"I and the National Endowment for the Arts oppose obscenity unequivocally. It is the antithesis of art. It is without soul. It conveys no message. It degrades humanity, and it sickens me," he said.

NEA spokeswoman Virginia Falck said the ASU committee could have made a more effective statement by directly contacting members of Congress.

While Carlson and his committee decided to embark on that route, other universities took a more overt stance by protests and marches.

At Southern Methodist U. in Texas, marchers in front of Dallas City Hall carried colorful signs, some decorated with luminous Jackson Pollack-style paint splatters and stylized images of human heads with tape over the eyes and mouth.

Dallas poet and SMU graduate Tim Seibles, who recently received an NEA fellowship, said, "Art is supposed to stir us and provoke us and keep us awake, and to challenge our staid and often antiquated ideas of what's OK. When there no longer are challenges to our minds and hearts, then we become a society of sleepwalkers."

Artist Elizabeth Stirratt, who accepted a 1990 NEA grant, said the clause may have had the effect of pushing artists in the direction of becoming more experimental.

"This whole thing has made people focus more on obscene works," she said. "It makes you wonder what it would take to cross that line. It's an intriguing thought."

Writers contributing to this report: Rebecca Deaton and Marisa Ferrino, *The Daily Cougar*, U. of Houston; M.L. Garland, *The Argonaut*, U. of Idaho; John Kenyon, *The Daily Iowan*, U. of Iowa; Sonja Lewis, *State Press*, Arizona State U.; June Lyle, *Indiana Daily Student*, Indiana U.; Chris Piper, *The California Aggie*, U. of California, Davis; and Matt Seitz, *The Daily Campus*, Southern Methodist U.