

Stairwell display carries totems' spiritual power

By Carrie Dennett
Emerald Associate Editor

Anyone who has used the EMU Ballroom staircase this month has probably noticed an unusual art piece in the mezzanine display case.

The piece has four white panels set in a black background and each panel has cutouts of photos from fashion and business magazines. When a light shines from behind each successive panel, observers can see what lies on the other side of the photo.

The piece's title is "Totems," because the each panel's images are stacked in totem form, an idea not uncommon in art, said John Chapman, the artist who crated and installed the piece.

Chapman said he is not an expert on the subject, but Native American totems usually incorporated images of animals and mythological creatures, carrying a spiritual power.

Advertising and capitalism carries that kind of spiritual power now, he said.

Chapman said some observers might think he brought together two magazine photos to get the desired effect, but what shows through from the other side is exactly how he found it in the magazines.

'The ways that magazines advertise suggest that we desire certain things for our bodies. The media have a tendency to corrupt our own sense of desire.'

— John Chapman,
installation-format artist

"I think that its truthfulness is central to the piece," he said. "I had to hunt, but I didn't hunt that hard."

Advertising and the media can have a powerful effect on our society, Chapman said.

"The ways that magazines advertise suggest that we desire certain things for our bodies," he said. "The media have a tendency to corrupt our own sense of desire."

Chapman said humans naturally desire things such as food, shelter and companionship, but media images lead humans to desire material goods.

In capitalist societies, Chapman said, people become like products, and products become like people. When people start to think of objects as having human qualities, they become like the objects.

For example, the piece includes a picture of a woman crouched down that reveals a

sports car when lit from behind.

Chapman also points to one cutout photo of a woman's eye. When the light shines through, several eyeliner pencils show through. Another cutout shows a woman's painted lips.

"Is the makeup there to make a better person, or is the person there to sell makeup?" he asks.

Although he is trying to expose some of what he thinks are advertisers motives, Chapman does not think he is doing a disservice to advertisers. "I don't think they are aware of

what shines through the page," he said.

Chapman said he rarely watches television or looks at magazines, and is always surprised when he does at "how much the image ante gets upped."

"I've stolen all these pictures to use them against themselves the way they are used against us," he said.

Chapman said he has heard people complain that "Totems" has too many images to look at, yet he had hoped to include more.

"I would have liked there to be more images of militarism behind the bodies, and images of sickness, especially AIDS," he said.

In 1990, Chapman created and installed "Fight Back Fight AIDS," a temporary mural for the front outside EMU stairwell. The work hung for two months before it was irreparably damaged by vandals.

Chapman is an installation-format artist, designing and installing pieces for specific sites by invitation.

"I like transforming a space

that people walk by everyday," he said. "Offering them a transformed space gives them a sense of surprise and possibility."

Exhibits like "Totems" expose Chapman's work to a broader audience than would normally attend an exhibit at an art gallery.

Chapman is a former University student who ended his studies three credits short of a bachelor of fine arts in visual design.

"I learned what I needed to learn," he said.

At the UO Bookstore It's Beginning to Sound A Lot Like Christmas!



1991 YEAR END
AUDIO SALE

■ PORTABLE STEREOS

- SANYO M9721 Portable Stereo • 3 band graphic equalizer • detachable speakers • AM/FM stereo **ONLY \$59.95**
- SHARP WFA 600 • AM/FM stereo • detachable speakers • 4 band equalizer w/ X-Bass • dual cassette **ONLY \$189.00**
- SHARP QT-CD5 • CD player • single cassette • X-Bass **ONLY \$199.95**

■ TELEPHONES

- BELL Photo Touch Phone • 9 number memory • last number redial • window number keys **ONLY \$39.95**
- ALL COBRA, CONAIR CORDLESS AND ALL SOUND DESIGN PHONES 20% OFF

■ HEADPHONES

- SONY MDR 24 headphones • turbo circuit • high quality digital sound • stereo plug adaptor **ONLY \$14.95**
- SONY MDR-34 headphones • gold plated plug • high quality digital sound • stereo plug adaptor **ONLY \$19.95**
- AIWA HP-X30 headphones • 8m cord • remote volume control • 24k gold plated plugs **ONLY \$49.95**
- SONY MDR-A10L headphones • in-ear design • 1.0m cord • folding headband **ONLY \$19.95**
- SONY MDR-A21L • in-ear design • turbo quality sound • mega-bass compatible **ONLY \$29.95**

■ FURNITURE

- CASE LOGIC Oak CD Cabinet **ONLY \$29.95**
- CASE LOGIC Oak Cassette Cabinet **ONLY \$ 29.95**
- OAK CASSETTE Caddy **ONLY \$19.95**

★ NO INTEREST
★ EASY PAYMENT PLAN

■ SELECTED DEMO HEADPHONES NOW ONLY \$5 TO \$15



STOCKING STUFFERS

- SONY Metal ES-90 audio tape **ONLY \$3.49**
- DENON HD8-100 audio tape **ONLY \$2.79**

UO BOOKSTORE

13th & Kincaid M-F 7:30-6 Sat. 10:00-6 Phone 346-4331

PROFESSIONAL DRIVING SCHOOL
UBEL
Serving EUG-SPRINGFIELD Since 1978
Your Full Service Auto Driving School

"TEENS OUR SPECIALTY"

- Private, Personalized Instruction
- Free Pick-Up (Most Eug-Spld)
- 12 Hour Or 30 Hour Classroom Programs
- May Lower Insurance Rates
- Car Possible For Driving Test
- Gift Certificates Available

"FOREIGN STUDENTS WELCOME"
Member Oregon Traffic Safety Education Association
747-4411