

# Local artist needs new material



**A**r. O', to be somebody's muse. To be immortalized in artwork that is named especially for you. To be the Dante's Beatrice, Shakespeare's Dark Lady ... or George's Amy.

You know George. The oafish man with the sunburned face, the overalls, the sculptures on the front lawn of his Alder Street home. The man who peered like a lonely puppy from beneath the front-page headline on *The Register-Guard* — the headline that read, "Art or Intimidation?"

The man who's been stalking Amy Klauke for three years in the name of art.

In case you didn't catch the article, or if you don't get down to Alder Street much to chat with this classic Eugene screwball, here's the basic story: George Von der Linden and Amy Klauke were neighbors. He became obsessed with her, "sending her letters, following her on the street, watching her house — and ultimately using his art as a weapon to persecute her," wrote Bob Keefer of *The Register-Guard*.

But, wrote Keefer, "the artist sees it differently. Klauke, he says, is simply his muse."

Muse, schmooze. Von der Linden sees nothing wrong with showing the "Amy Series," an eerie-looking bunch of figures made of brightly painted wood, with bits of hangers and tools and faucets and swords and tennis rackets and who-the-hell-else knows what. These figures grin wooden grins and stare with huge disc-like eyes. Some of them bear the name "Amy" or have a red "A" on their chests. The whole effect is that of a bunch of rejects that didn't quite make it into the nutcracker suite that have finally found a permanent place to

roost where they can spook everyone out.

And people wonder why Amy is not impressed?

It's a pretty nice racket that George has going for himself. He spends all day working out his frustrated obsession by creating a small army of junk women, torments "his muse" so much that she moves to a new neighborhood, puts his "art" in local art shows, and then laps up all of the media attention focused on him when Amy accuses him of harassment.

But he would insist that he's just another thwarted artist, and that the "Amy Series" is his First Amendment right. He is supported by the University's own Maude Kerns Art Gallery, which refused to remove the sculptures after Amy complained that they were offensive to her, because they were neither violent nor pornographic, and anyways, the gallery already had a contract with Von der Linden. He is also supported by a University law school professor who says that Von der Linden has broken no laws and "that's the way it should be. Think of the *Divine Comedy*. Where would the *Divine Comedy* be if Dante couldn't write about Beatrice?"

I cry foul. George Von der Linden is using artwork as a legitimate excuse to stalk her. True, the art alone breaks no laws. He is entitled to free expression. But that's not what he's after. George is just an embittered man who can't get what he wants, so he'll throw a public tantrum in the name of an art show — and receive a few bucks and a lot of attention while he's at it.

As for the grand allusion to Dante and the *Divine Comedy*, give me a break. Although art is subjective and I am no art critic, I'd have to say that George is no Dante, and the "Amy Series," is a far cry from the *Divine Comedy*.

And there was no anti-stalking bill or sexual harassment laws in those days. And I'd hardly call the repeated phone calls, letters and instances where he followed her "artistic expression." It's been three years since this ordeal started. It's resulted in Amy Klauke moving from the area, a search

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warrant for Von der Linden's home (based on Klauke's complaints as well as unrelated complaints from another woman), and, recently, a media spotlight on the two.

Even if Von der Linden is "innocent" and only wants to express his unreturned love (and not harass this woman), if she is offended by his sculptures, he should stop. He's received so much attention that I'm sure anything new he created would get lapped up by local art enthusiasts eager to keep a Eugene icon alive. He could quit cashing in on someone else's discomfort and create art for art's sake.

Amy Klauke wrote to the letters to the editor section of *The Register-Guard*. "As a poet myself, I cherish artistic freedom of expression. I do not wish this man to stop making or showing his artworks. Based on his admitted harassment of me, however, I do ask that out of respect for my feelings they bear no direct reference to me ... the real story here is not about love, but rather about obsession. ... Many people, especially women, are stalked. Many, understandably, flee. I am choosing, instead, to seek community support, to address this issue in our town."

Well, Amy, you've got support here. Any woman (or man) who has ever been the recipient of unwanted attention, ranging from some pest in the street asking them for their phone number to being followed to a bunch of tacky wooden soldiers of love erected in their "honor," would have a quick answer to the question, "Art or Intimidation?"

Unquestionably, intimidation.

*Lia Saliccia is a columnist for the Emerald.*

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