

EDITORIAL

Springfield not alone in questioning art

If art is subjective, then apparently the Springfield City Council is rejective.

A rejection is exactly what happened last week when the City Council voted 5-1 to stop the placement of a controversial 16-foot-tall bronze sculpture outside City Hall. The sculpture, which depicts a gymnast balancing on a rhinoceros with a bird perched atop the gymnast, was rejected because its environmentalist theme seemed incongruent with the values of a conservative timber town such as Springfield.

Some council members voiced the concern that the bird in the sculpture looks too much like a Northern spotted owl — the species that has become a symbol of the statewide debate over land use and forest preservation.

In another fit of civic-minded ignorance, the City Council also delayed acceptance of a recently donated 12-foot cedar totem pole. The pole was said to have "sexual connotations," stemming from the presence of "breast-shaped protuberances" all along the length of the pole.

The controversy over the two pieces of art has elicited more than a few snickers outside of Springfield, as *The Associated Press* and several local TV stations have addressed the issue. But other cities have had similar troubles, and this should not be considered just another excuse to go Springfield-bashing.

Register-Guard columnist Karen McCowan reminded readers last week that Portland ran into similar obstructions when it tried to erect a statue of a pioneer family downtown. The statue, considered by some as an affront to the Native American peoples who preceded the pioneers, was also attacked because the young boy in the family holds a copy of the Bible in his hands.

McCowan suggested a swap between the two cities — a sentiment echoed by Tori Orr in today's letters section. Orr proposes that the University trade its "Pioneer" and "Pioneer Mother" statues for the homeless art of Springfield. Considering the regular assaults against the dead-white-Christian-maleness of the Pioneer statue (the most recent being a Columbus Day demonstration in which protesters covered the statue with a white sheet), it hardly seems fair for liberals to attack Springfield for exercising the same kind of shortsighted censorship.

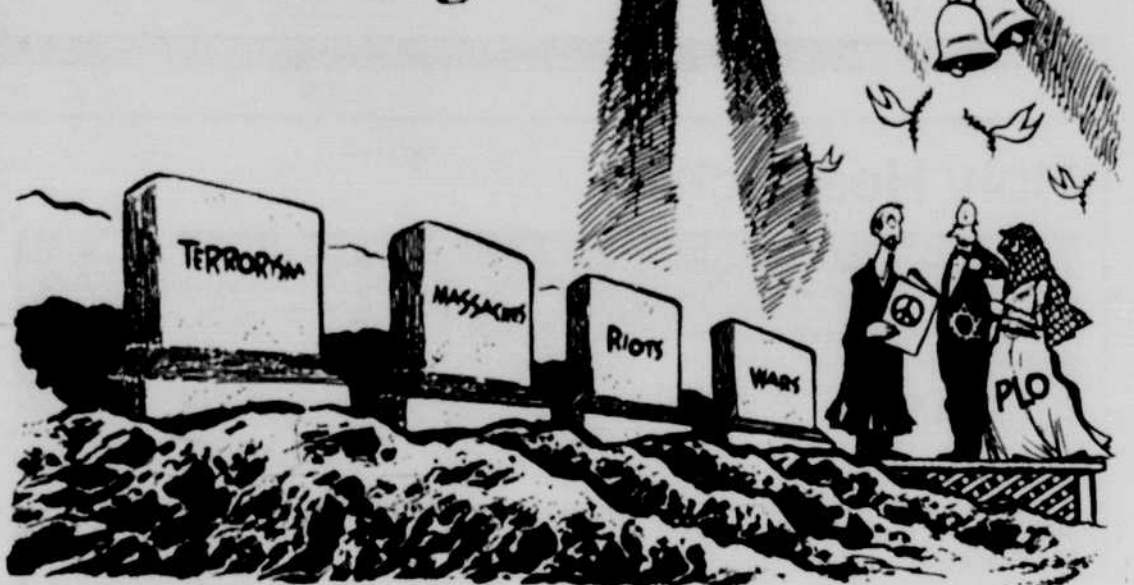
Art is not intended to please everyone — at least not good art. Art that pleases everyone belongs on a motel wall, or in your grandmother's bathroom. It can't bring a city respect. It can't provoke thought or emotion. It can't do any of the things that art is supposed to do.

Good art, on the other hand, also has its limitations. It can't capture every aspect of an issue, or every component of a society. It can't, and it shouldn't, be expected to.

The Springfield City Council ought to reconsider its opposition to both the statue and the totem pole. Such an act — public appreciation for provocative art — might be a way for the city to reclaim some much-needed respect, and set an example for others who insist that art needs to be acceptable to everyone.

Journalist's Dream

Four Funerals and a Wedding...



LETTERS

Wrong paper

This letter is to inform the University community that our graduate school finds recycled paper unacceptable for thesis submissions.

John Flanery
Political Science

Excuse to party

I'm from Mexico City and it's really weird for me to see that Cinco de Mayo is a more important celebration here than it is in Mexico. In Mexico we only have a parade with the army, but no big deal.

Wouldn't you be surprised if you went to my country and found all these Mexicans celebrating Pearl Harbor Day? Anyway, many people asked me if I was going to the Fiesta Latina celebration where there was going to be a salsa band playing. I decided not to go since I only like salsa with chips. However, I'm celebrating big time, why not?

David Miller
Advertising

Good and bad

Open letter to Troy Shields, Betsy McCluer and other gay/lesbian students:

Troy, I am 41 and have been a politically oriented lesbian for 23 years. While the Oregon Citizens Alliance does not distinguish between us, I dare say that you and I would find ourselves to be very different. I commend your courage in being out, but I would ask you to notice that you are not the only gay person around, and we are not all identical to yourself. Expressing yourself on the nature of sexuality, your preferred terminology, is great — as long as you do not presume it to issue an edict or to speak for all of us. I do not view my sexuality in quite the way you view yours, and I am quite comfortable with the word "preference." In fact, I prefer it.

Betsy, I can appreciate your feelings about the word "queer." However, we all have different "takes" on language. For instance, I am offended by the word "normal." To me it means "average," something to which I have never aspired.

I have occasionally been irritated and amused to realize that

particular young lesbians I encountered assumed I was heterosexual. Apparently I did not look like they thought a lesbian must look; perhaps they believed we all die at 30.

Perhaps we all should remind ourselves and each other about the good news: We may have many more allies — gay, lesbian and otherwise — than we may think.

The bad news: They are not all just like you (or me, damn it)!

Sami Gray
Pre-Botany

Neat

I read the classifieds (ODE, April 15, 1994) and discovered that "neat" and "friendly" petitioners were being hired to recall Kevin Hornbuckle, a member of the Eugene City Council. I'm as friendly as the next person, even though my roommate wants me to move out because she thinks I'm too much of a slob. Wait one minute, what crime is Kevin Hornbuckle guilty of?

The truth of the matter is that Hornbuckle is a populist who believes Eugene should be a city for all of us, not just the powerful elite. Hornbuckle opposed the firing of a department head by the Eugene city manager, Michael Gleason. Mr. Martinez, the department head, was well-thought of by his colleagues. In contrast, several members of the Eugene City Council felt that Gleason's arrogant style of leadership prevented open communication to take place.

It's power-struggle-in-paradise time again! Last year the *Register-Guard* ran an article bashing Hornbuckle, inferring that he is "in our face." Actually, Mayor Ruth Bascom and others said mean things about Hornbuckle. I believe that the article was unprofessional. Two months ago or so an opinion piece appeared in the *Emerald* which supported the recall of Hornbuckle. I feel that it was completely off the mark. Hornbuckle has served well on the City Council and he should be allowed to continue.

Where is the money coming from to pay these petitioners? Does it have anything to do with corporate fat-cats who care so much especially when they can make profits at the expense of others? Hornbuckle is a courageous person, a person that we

need in City Council. I urge you to decline from signing the recall petitions. And will the real Bru-tuses please stand up?

Ron "Misha" Seymour
Eugene

Art swap

I have read in the local press the excruciating process of installing public art in Springfield (ODE, May 4). My heart goes out to those council members who spend hours diligently inspecting every angle and agonizing over every aspect of the art intended for public consumption in order to protect their citizenry from any possible impropriety or scandal. I propose a solution to their dreadful predicament that could possibly save them from being forced to solve their quandary by an expensive time-consuming battle.

I believe the student body might enthusiastically support a cultural exchange between the city of Springfield and the University. We will trade our "Pioneer" statue (modeling traditional values and completely without stain that might cause discomfort), for the unnamed "12-foot cedar totem pole believed to have sexual connotations." I am sure the majority of the students on this campus would find these "breast-shaped protuberances carved along the length of the sculpture" an exciting and refreshing breath of creative air next to our gun-toting Grizzly Adams.

To sweeten the deal, and as an additional incentive to promote our goodwill toward the city of Springfield, we would happily consider throwing in the Pioneer Mother in exchange for the more academically appropriate "The Balancing Act." Under my plan, council member Larry Schanz would be relieved of the perceived risk of combining the oil and vinegar of art and government.

All satire aside, I only hope the Springfield City Council can support those artists they have contracted with to provide insightful and provoking public works and therefore create at least a facade of harmonious unity, thereby setting a higher example to those citizens they represent.

Tori Orr
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EMU Cultural Forum

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