

■ UNIVERSITY

Board vetoes curtains

Friederich von Carp
Oregon Daily Emerald

The EMU Board voted Wednesday to remove the black curtains that, for two weeks, have shrouded in controversy the "See No Evil" art exhibit.

EMU Director Charles "Dusty" Miller vowed to appeal the decision to University President David Frohnmayer after the board voted six to four with one abstention to pass the proposal written by ASUO University Affairs Coordinator Zachary Kelton.

"Conjuring up phrases such as 'censorship' and 'dictatorial control,'" the motion read, "the director's decision most certainly did not have the effect of enriching the education of the University students, nor did it subscribe to democratic ideals."

"We're very concerned with the precedent that's being set, especially because there's no policy. It seems that if anybody could possibly be offended [by an EMU art exhibit], then the curtains could go up," said Polly Nelson, the southern district coordinator for the American Civil Liberties Union.

The art exhibit, designed and funded by the EMU Cultural Forum, is part of the ACLU's statewide "Uncensored Celebration." Nelson explained that the ACLU, for the past three Septembers, has encouraged the Cultural Forum to feature exhibits that "confront and renew the First Amendment."

Anna Spickerman, who is the visual arts coordinator for the Cultural Forum, explained that she selected the 12 artists because their work has a history of being censored.

The exhibit is scheduled to run through Friday. Spickerman said that the art will remain through Saturday if the curtains come down.

After the board's action, Miller said that he would appeal the matter to University President David Frohnmayer in writing early today.

"I believe that the board has made a decision that may not be in the best interests of the University and the EMU and that may have put us at risk of being sued," Miller said.

Miller said he hoped to "give people a choice if they want to view the art or not" when he erected the black, 8-foot-tall labyrinth of curtains, which allows spectators to walk through the gallery and use its bathrooms without seeing the exhibit.

Miller explained that, after receiving "concerns" from students and non-students about the art, he sought counsel from the University's legal advisor Peter Swan.

"There was a possibility that the University was at risk — a risk that we might be challenged and forced to take down the show. My responsibilities forced me to ask the question of what is in the best interest of the EMU as a public building."

EMU Board Chair Stephanie Dixon expressed concern over the show's possible effects on children. "My first reaction was that the curtain should come down. But this is a really hard issue because this is a public building. It would be very difficult to bring a child to the rest room and have

to explain the art to them. It's part of the art that you can read the explanation [printed on a card in the display]."

"Untitled," an installation by Brooke Molla, features four mutilated young-girls' dresses. Across the front of one is scrawled, "If hole isn't large enough, use her mouth."

"I don't think those curtains will stop children [from viewing the art]. I think children will see Mr. Spock down there, not the dresses," said Nelson, referring to the depiction of a sex scene involving Star Trek's Dr. Spock and Captain Kirk.

Matter of Consultation

The objections of several board members centered on the fact that Miller installed the curtains without consulting either the Cultural Forum or the EMU Board. According to Spickerman, Miller's office informed her of the move and told her that the Cultural Forum would be responsible for the \$720 cost of erecting the curtains.

Miller has since agreed to pay the cost of the curtains from other EMU funds.

"My concern is that Anna, the visual arts coordinator, was just told of this and not consulted," said board member Joshua Dockerty. Dockerty sponsored a second motion that would require Miller to consult the board on any "decision(s) that affect the EMU programs (or the events which they sponsor) ... if the aforementioned decisions are not approved of by the program they affect most directly."

The board voted to postpone Dockerty's motion until the next meeting Wednesday, Oct. 5.

"I think that it's unfortunate that [Miller] decided to do it without consultation with the Cultural Forum or the ASUO," Kelton said. "Choosing not to do so was a mistake. I think the director has learned that it's in his best interest to consult the board."

Spickerman explained that, had Miller consulted her, she would have agreed to put up fewer curtains or additional signs warning onlookers of the exhibit's content.

"I think a sign is enough, and beyond that you don't need a sign. People have a choice to see what they want to see, to digest what they want to digest, and anything in this world can offend you," Spickerman said.

Where to go

Much of the board's discussion focused on the issue of the two public bathrooms located in the art gallery.

"The vast majority of students up here using the ballroom know that's the bathroom they go to," said board member Cody Johnson.

"If you bring down the curtain, we don't give people a choice. If they have to go to the restroom, you don't have a choice," board member Suh-Shyn Yeo said.

"If they have to go to the bathroom they can walk down the stairs," board member Jessica Frahs rebutted. "If they aren't willing to walk, they can close their eyes and walk through."



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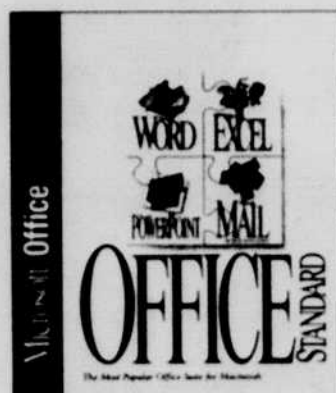
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