

'See No Evil' lacked artistic quality

By Michael E. Endicott

"You do not have to love what I love
You do not have to pray how I pray
You do not have to dance like I dance..."

But you do have to view what I create
You do have to look into my tortured soul

You do have to accept my images
You do have to see the expressions of my anger, frustration and shame
If you want to use the upstairs of the Erb Memorial Union!

That is what the ACLU's sign should have read in the showcase on the stairway leading to the art "hallway" absent the curtains.

Before we get to censorship, how was this show selected?

Anna Spickerman, visual arts coordinator for the EMU Cultural Forum, "selected the 12 artists because their work has a history of being censored" (ODE, Sept. 29). Due, we assume, to content.

What is the EMU Gallery/Oregon Arts Policy?

"Consideration or actions of funding which the state, its counties, or municipalities render unto its citizenry shall be made on the basis of artistic quality, not on issues or matters of content." This quote comes from several posters titled "artistic freedom" posted in and around the exhibit.

The posters, one of which was quite large, had several typos that were hardly noticeable unless one actually read one of them, whereupon one would have noticed that bit about content and artistic quality.

I had viewed the show several times both before and after the curtains. I must say the quality of the works remained very low. Most of the works were strong on concept but fell very short in design, execution and presentation and should have been juried out as low-quality art. What

would have remained would have been a basis for a good show with a strong powerful theme. However, I thought all the works required the artists' statements to coordinate the theme where higher-quality work would allow it to stand alone. So much for "artistic quality."

This theme does not belong in a First Amendment exhibition, its presence reduced to mere shock value and a lightning rod for practiced First Amendment debates. It belongs on its own because of its importance. As a freedom of expression theme it has no meaning unless... Enter content!! The content of this show appears to have been chosen for its graphic nature and its proven ability to facilitate First Amendment conflict. So much for "not on matters of content."

Both themes (First Amendment and gender/sexuality/abuse) should be explored through the arts here on campus, but we must be aware that content is a selection criterion for where art is exhibited and not whether it is exhibited. An open public hallway was not the place to show graphic material, whether the hallway is called a gallery or not.

I do not think many people would have raised the First Amendment issue had the exhibit originally been set up in a room that was both easily accessible and provided choice to the viewing public. Thus, the appearance of censorship would have been avoided and freedom of expression would have been triumphant.

But it seems Anna Spickerman was looking for confrontation, and this whole situation appears a contrivance or at the least an ill-considered decision that harms First Amendment arguments and gives the censorship crowd a leg to stand on. The show was clearly not suitable for all age groups.

Now to censorship. No works were altered or taken down. Access was not denied to anyone and the office of Roman censor was phased out centuries ago,

which was a phenomenon in Italy. By any definition, I saw no censorship.

Now to the curtains. Those curtains were not a symbol of censorship. They were a reasonable attempt to provide a viewing choice to the general public. If those curtains were censorship then there is a blacker treachery on campus, a censorship so vile and blatant and perverse that I wonder if I should speak of it at all lest we be moved to violence of rage.

To know of this black hole of modern artistic expression would surely bring this edifice to flaming ruin from the wrath of the "freedom of expression at all cost" crowd. Yes, I will speak it — the Museum of Art. It has doors easily as formidable as any 60 meters of curtain. And the worst thing is, you make the choice everyday not to go in and see what affirmation of the First Amendment is currently showing.

As for Jessica Frah's comments about walking downstairs to go to the bathroom (ODE, Sept. 29), that is fine if your legs are not wheels. There is only one way up or down for a significant number of our campus community. Because of her inflexibility, Frah would have consigned this group to viewing this show without choice in order to use the least little bit of the upstairs ballroom. No doubt if art of graphic content was placed at the entrances to the University, those who objected would kindly be asked to enter the University somewhere else or perhaps drive with their eyes closed. Thank you, Jessica, for your culturally aware comments.

Selection process content dependent — strike one.

Artistic quality lacking — strike two.

Disabled access restricted — strike three.

All around bad call. Better luck next time.

Michael E. Endicott is a chemistry major at the University.

What agenda?

In reference to Patty Duncan's letter on the "homosexual agenda:"

Do you think you could get her to send me a copy of the agenda? I seem to have lost mine...

Vote No on 13.

Susan N. Roehr
Graduate student

Costly tickets

Are you driving without an Oregon driver's license? Last year, too many students holding out-of-state licenses were cited for driving illegally. No one, including the Eugene police, could agree exactly when one must get an Oregon driver's license after moving from another state. The 1993 Legislature put an end to the guesswork.

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