

Artwork recreates isolation

Portland artist David Olstein has created an installation designed to give the viewer the sense of the isolation felt by people living with HIV. The 140-square-foot structure features a vial of the artist's HIV-positive blood, an X-ray of his skull and a five-by-three-foot enlargement of the HIV virus.

Olstein wants viewers to actively participate and be integrated into the exhibit. Upon entering the structure, viewers are asked to wear surgical gloves, isolation masks and orange stickers reading "Biohazard." No more than six persons will be allowed into the structure at a time.

"As a 'positive' person," Olstein said, "I've come to understand a certain continual sense of shock, a loss of control over the world around me, as if alienated from my own body."

The exhibit opens First Thursday, Jan. 7, at Galleri 8, at 314 SW 9th Ave. The opening reception starts at 6 pm. The gallery is also open Mondays through Fridays from 2 to 6 pm.

This is Olstein's first major installation. The work utilizes his background as a student at the Rhode Island School of Design and Pacific Northwest College of Art and as a journeyman electrician. He has worked on many sets for the Portland Gay Men's Chorus and Storefront Theatre.

Bigots get boycotts for Christmas

Citizens in Springfield, Ore., and Colorado are about to pay the price for voting to forbid civil-rights protection for their gay and lesbian residents. The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners has joined the cities of Atlanta, Ga., and Seattle, Wash., as well as countless individuals in boycotting Springfield and Colorado.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners voted Dec. 10 to forbid "the spending of any County funds for travel to or from or activities within any state or locality that has constitutional or charter provisions, laws or ordinances which prohibit the adoption or enforcement of laws or ordinances protecting the civil rights of individuals based on their sexual orientation."

The resolution, which was sponsored by Commissioner Pauline Anderson, passed unanimously. Anderson describes it as "very compatible with the philosophy of the present board." That board also spoke out against Ballot Measure 9. Anderson said that although the boycott is mostly symbolic, such boycotts are the most effective way to protest official bigotry in other states and cities. She points as an example to the boycott of Arizona protesting that state's refusal to declare Martin Luther King Day to be an official holiday.

The resolution reads in part, "...it is incumbent on all citizens to take a stand against overt hatred directed at persons because of sexual orientation, race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability or condition...the public good is best served by not spending money in states or municipalities which discriminate against certain citizens."

The commissioners decided to allow two exceptions to the resolution. Law-enforcement officials will continue to travel wherever they need to prosecute criminals, and four county library officials will be permitted to attend a January conference in Denver because their travel arrangements have already been made.

Anderson says she has received only one call in support of the boycott and about a dozen opposed. The phone number for the Multnomah County Board clerk is 248-3277. Officials from neither Colorado nor Springfield have contacted the commissioners about the resolution.

Seattle's resolution also passed unanimously, but it exempts Aspen, Boulder and Denver. Those cities have pledged to uphold the anti-discrimination laws that they had before the election. Seattle Mayor Norm Rice has been directed to compile a

list of places where gay men and lesbians are denied basic civil-rights protection in the United States.

Atlanta's resolution forbids the use of city funds for trips or conventions to Springfield, Ore., Colorado and Concord, Calif.

"Atlanta has always been in the forefront of civil-rights activism," said Atlanta City Councilor Bill Campbell. "We felt this was something we just had to take a strong stand on."

Oregon Citizens Alliance spokeswoman Loretta Neet continues to insist that any money lost will be made up for by conservative "Christian" tourists. Springfield's law might not last until summer vacations, though. A local musician, Willie Nichols, is gathering signatures for an initiative petition to repeal the anti-gay charter amendment there. Nichols has until mid-February to turn in 2,339 signatures.

Murder: a traditional family value?

A record number of Oregon's children have been murdered by abuse in 1992. In the first 11 months of this year, 23 children were killed, just one less than the state's record in 1987. Two more 1992 deaths are still being investigated.

The jump in reported deaths by child abuse could be partially due to improved reporting. Those who work with children are more educated about and alert for signs of abuse than they were several years ago. The record number of reported deaths by abuse in 1987 followed the start of a uniform reporting system in 1986.

All the families in this year's cases were having financial problems. Drug and alcohol abuse were also common factors. Nationally, experts believe that in 60 percent of the homes where parents abuse drugs, they also abuse children.

Parents who realize they are in danger of abusing their children may find themselves lost in a crowd. The Relief Nursery in Eugene, which provides intervention and counseling for abusive and potentially abusive families, has a waiting list of 250 persons. One of this year's fatalities was a young girl on that waiting list; she was murdered by abuse four days before her family was due to enter the program. Calls to Portland's Waverly Children's Home's Parent Help Line are up from last year, according to coordinator Sue Cook. That help line counsels troubled parents on how to deal with their children.

"Any parent has [the] capability [to abuse]," said Cook. "They get frustrated, and they don't realize they have the potential to kill their child."

Many people don't know that shaking a child can cause brain damage or even death. "Shaken-baby syndrome" was the cause of death in five cases this year. Often the cause of death seems more deliberate. In 1992, two children were poisoned, two were drowned, one was shot, another was stabbed and a Sweet Home toddler was choked to death on chili powder.

Weatherization project seeking volunteers and cash

Many people enjoy winter because it's a time they can stay indoors and be cozy, but for others, it's a time when they must face cold drafts and skyrocketing utility bills. The Inner City Weatherization project is looking for volunteers and donations to help weatherize low-income homes.

The project has two objectives, according to organizers. Their first goal is to weatherize the houses. Currently, ICW is writing grants and working with local utility companies and other weatherization projects. Their second goal is to educate low-income people about energy conservation. Call Brian Lacy at 282-3570.

Compiled by Irene K. Hislop

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