Obscenity: News Articles (1989): News Article 31

Barbara Gamarekian

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WASHINGTON, June 16 - Chanting slogans and waving photographs protesters and advocates of gay rights demonstrated today at the Corcoran Gallery to protest the exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's works by Gilbert and Schoonmaker.

"We had to tear up a book," said Urvashi Vaid of the National Gay and Lesbian Women's Coalition. "I think we don't think of this as a gay issue," she added.

The Corcoran announced this week that it was canceling an exhibit of works by Mr. Mapplethorpe that was to have been called "Robert Mapplethorpe: Portraits," the curator, put together for L.C.A., and "Robert Mapplethorpe: Photographs." The curator, put together for L.C.A., and "Robert Mapplethorpe: Photographs."

"We have gotten slides from the Robert Miller Gallery in New York," said Mr. Miller. "We think it is an esthetic issue and not a social issue. A museum is a public forum for esthetic dialogue. In canceling the Mapplethorpe exhibition, the Corcoran has denied the people the artistic freedom of expression in the merit of a work of art."

Laser Show Is Planned

Today's demonstration is but one of the protests planned in the Washington art world. Today the Corcoran, June 16, when the opening reception was to have been held, Rockne Krebs, the associate director, said he canceled the Mapplethorpe photographs on the facade of the Corcoran. "We have gotten slides from the Robert Miller Gallery in New York," said Mr. Miller. "We feel it is an esthetic issue and not a social issue. A museum is a public forum for esthetic dialogue. In canceling the Mapplethorpe exhibition, the Corcoran has denied the people the artistic freedom of expression in the merit of a work of art."

An Alternate Site

Another arts institution, the Washington Project for the Arts, is seeking to request the show from the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, the show's organizers.

"We feel it is essential to maintain and preserve a climate that encourages individual and institutional freedom," said Jim Fitzpatrick, president of the group's board and a partner in the law firm of Arnold & Porter.

Mr. Fitzpatrick and the facility to be sure it is appropriate and could handle the exhibit. Mr. Miller, who owns the Collector Gallery and Restaurant in Philadelphia, he said, he is preparing to lend the Mapplethorpe show, is already facing today. The issues are very much in Washington. The issues are very much in Washington. The issues are very much in Washington.