1989

Obscenity: News Articles (1989): News Article 31

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Mapplethorpe Backers Picket the Corcoran and Plan New Shows

Washington, June 16 - Chanting slogans and waving photographs and signs, a hundred or more artists and advocates of gay rights demonstrated today at the Corcoran Gallery of Art to protest the cancellation of an exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's work.

"We had to tear up a book," said Urvashi Vaidi of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, speaking of the cancellation. "The Corcoran has denied the people their right to express themselves and to question the merit of a work of art."

Laser Show Is Planned

Today's demonstration is but one of the protests planned in the Washington area this summer. The Corcoran announced this week that it was canceling an exhibit of works by Mr. Mapplethorpe that was to open July 1. Mr. Miller, the curator, put together for L.C.A., the night of June 16, when the opening reception was to have been held, Rockne Krebs, the editor of the Washington Post, said, "This is not a gay issue, it is an aesthetic issue. A museum is a public forum for esthetic dialogue. In canceling the Mapplethorpe exhibition, the Corcoran has denied the people their right to make their own decisions about the merit of a work of art."

An Alternate Site

Another arts institution, the Washington Project for the Arts, is seeking to show the Mapplethorpe works. "We felt the Corcoran was stuck to its guns on this issue," said Mr. Miller, "but we were glad to phone the Mapplethorpe show, the Corcoran's board, consisting of artists and one of today's protest speakers.

Robert Mapplethorpe, whose photography exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery was canceled, angering gay-rights protesters.

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

Michael Stout, executor of the Mapplethorpe estate and a member of the board of the Corcoran, which represents neither the artists nor the collectors and directors of the Corcoran, said he had done business with the Corcoran. "We are glad to register our protest," he said, "and we think it is an aesthetic issue. A museum is a public forum for esthetic dialogue. In canceling the Mapplethorpe exhibition, the Corcoran has denied the people their right to make their own decisions about the merit of a work of art."

"We didn't think of this as a gay issue," said Ruth Bolduan, chairman of the Coalition of Washington Artists and one of today's protest speakers. "We think it is an aesthetic and social issue. A museum is a public forum for esthetic dialogue. In canceling the Mapplethorpe exhibition, the Corcoran has denied the people their right to make their own decisions about the merit of a work of art."

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