

Are Nazi Symbols Really Necessary to Make an Artistic Point?

A recent visit to the art exhibit *Das Pop* in the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery proved to be both provoking and disappointing. The

Commentary

GENA
BERLETT

works of one artist in particular made the experience somewhat depressing. The works of Joe Allen include *Axis Bold as Love* and *Victory Lane* which both, incidentally, use the swastika as a focal point.

The *Das Pop* brochure cites that the purposes of the exhibit are to "simply assume that we live in one culture" and that "the artist's task is not to play one ideology off against the other."

Obviously, if a swastika is used, ideologies are being played off against one another. Why would anyone assume that college students necessarily want to support art, with their tuition dollars, that purports the false idea that we all live in "one culture?" Didn't Adolph Hitler want everyone to be part of one culture?

Obviously, the ideologies of dead American veterans, Jews and many others from World War II doesn't mean much when it comes to "the synthesis to mitigate both the rarefied elitism of 'high art' and the commercial rapacity of 'popular art.'"

The questions that should "pop" into every student's head at this point is "Do we really need Nazi symbols to make a point about art at our school? Are our rights as students being violated by art being forced on us

that we neither choose nor support ourselves? Where do we draw the line in the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery — KKK art?

The point is not how often this symbol is used somewhere else, but rather the principle that our tuition dollars should support an environment free of any persecution symbology.

The seriousness of the question requires much thought and a look at the intentions of the artist, Joe Allen.

Allen stated "It was an experiment to see if the swastika's image could be detoxified and it didn't work. The intention is to get an effect and if art doesn't get an effect, it's boring."

If the idea that UNLV is being used as an experimental lab to see whether the swastika's image can be changed doesn't annoy you just a little bit, try the insensitivity of using the symbol even though you already know it is going to upset many people.

Allen stated that he chose the swastika "because its the most powerful symbol in the history of western civilization." Setting it in flowers does not detoxify the image of the swastika because "the image is so powerful it cannot be camouflaged."

Allen put the swastika in the television for *Axis Bold as Love* in an attempt "to put it into the same medium as MTV."

Great, an attempt to help college students familiarize MTV with the swastika. What kind of

person would think that this is going to "detoxify" the image of the swastika?

Granted, the swastika was once a symbol for Indian and Tibetan peoples and had nothing at all to do with mass genocide.

However, there was this little event called World War II and, unless everyone's memory is incredibly short, the image of the swastika cannot (logically) be detoxified in only 50 short years. Maybe logic is too much to ask for.

There might even be 6 million Jews who might have had a say about using art to detoxify the swastika if, of course, they were here to have a say in the first place.

No need to mention the dead Americans as a result of the Nazi atrocities. Allen's attempt to "detoxify the swastika" is more important to the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery than the sacrifices of our soldiers.

Allen even took the time to pleasantly describe Dave Hickey (UNLV Associate Art Professor and art critic) and Hickey's observation that "people got mad" when certain symbols were used "in a pleasant way" or in a pleasing scenario.

Gee, thanks for noticing.

Allen elaborated on the intention of *Axis Bold as Love* and *Victory Lane* by saying "I think that if you interpret it as trying to make the swastika beautiful you only get half the way there."

Allen defended his so-called

art work with "I'm not doing this to offend anyone, but neo-Nazism is kind of on the rise."

Allen even graciously noted that "the people in the Israeli Consulate at the Embassy in Houston had some complaints."

Allen's intention to stir controversy is apparent when he stated "I don't know if they think I'm cashing in on the issue, but I don't think it's possible to trivialize the image. It would be acceptable for me to take the swastika and make it ugly. If you put it into a beautiful context, it stirs people."

A university should be a place where students can feel comfort-

able at all times. It is not a place for experimenting with symbols that represent genocide and mass destruction. If it is, when do the KKK paintings arrive for the sake of experimenting whether those images can be "detoxified?"

Are your rights as a student being impinged upon when you cannot go into the Donna Beam Fine Art Gallery without being offended?

Is it a new UNLV policy to sacrifice the feelings of students for the sake of art?

—Gena Berlett is a news reporter at The Rebel Yell.

Mexico Showing Its True Colors

Culture shock.

As most students do over spring break, I decided to venture to the sun and sand of the south for a week of relaxation. Since I have family in the very southern part of Texas, near trendy South Padre Island, I decided Texas would suffice. Another part of my Holiday would be to venture to our neighbor, Mexico, to buy needless blankets and trinkets for virtually nothing. I had been to Mexico before NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and was curious to see what progress had been done in the last couple of years.

What better place to judge progress than a little village newly named Nuevo Progreso, just south of the Rio Grande valley area of Texas. After arriving there, I soon found out that the only thing rich in that town was the irony of its new title.

I had been to third world countries before. I had seen the peasant markets of Cairo, Egypt. For God's sake I grew up near Detroit!

Even then nothing could prepare me for the absolute destitution I observed there.

There were filthy children selling bubble gum, as well as parades of sweat drenched peddlers shoving things in your face. There were few signs of any successful (in United States standards) establishment. Any run down US. Woolworth or strip small shop would have clearly been the hottest part of town. Instead there were small shops that all seemed to carry the same blankets and pottery. The buildings housing these shops were barely suitable for garages let alone retail stores. Driving around the city I observed a living condition of brick and sheet metal shacks that most Northern Americans would be ashamed to keep their livestock in.

But wait-a-minute? Wasn't NAFTA supposed to bring Mexico kicking and screaming into the First World?

Time and time again we are seeing how greed and power is always linked with a hasty, unrealistic view of a situation.

With the Peso falling drastically in value and inflation crippling any hope of entrepreneurship, the only thing Mexico is kicking and screaming into is reality.

Only with patience can Mexico slowly change from what it truly is: A Third World country that can only get the short end of the stick when dealing with a First World country.

In the last few years Mexico has seen an Indian Revolution, a top candidate for President assassinated, and the former Pres-

ident Salinas make a fool of himself while fleeing his country after allegations of his involvement in that murder. These are hardly signs of a stable, or corruption free government.

Recently the newly created peso, which many US. and Mexican economic advisors thought was overvalued, fell to less than half its value in a few months and is still falling. Part of the blame is NAFTA's short-sightedness in thinking by raising the wages several fold and creating a new higher value peso everything would be fine. Common sense tells us that you cannot fool an economy into thinking it's worth more than it is, and likewise the inflation rate is currently over 90-percent, with interest rates at a mind-boggling 100 percent or more.

Newly elected President Zedillo has declared a state of emergency and is proposing measures to increase the value of the Peso at all cost. He plans to increase some taxes by 50 percent (obviously not popular), cut government spending, and raise interest rates. Anyone with even a basic grasp of economics knows what a disastrous recession will erupt.

Zedillo, who carries many of the same administrators as Salinas did, is now in serious trouble himself. Rumors of a deadline given to him to change things by the military big-wigs are common in Mexico City, as are rumors of a military coup.

The United States must stop thinking of Mexico as the Third World nation that can provide the cheap labor the large US. corporations love to exploit in pursuit of larger profit. This jeopardizes our own skilled work force and the money that these workers spend to create our large market. It also is not honest with what Mexico really has to offer as far as a skilled labor force and a stable government.

Mexico is now at a crossroads. The hype of NAFTA left many Mexicans with delusions of grandeur. Corruption has added salt in the wounds of an angry polarized nation that has already started to rebel. The easy, superficial way to stabilize the country would be through a military coup, a step backwards with the less messy totalitarianism. The harder way would be to struggle through the many faces of freedom and democracy and whittle out a piece of the modern free world.

—David Kanaan is an opinion columnist at The Rebel Yell.

Letters to the Editor

Reader applauds 'Yell' coverage

To the editor:

I have been an avid reader of the *Yell* for quite some time. Over the past few years there have been several occasions on which I have been prompted to write a letter to the editor, but have chosen not to for one reason or another.

This is the last straw!

I am fed up with the whining and the UNLV bashing that is going on. Not only across the nation but on our very own campus. The first issue I would like to address is our Opinion Editor, Mr. Scott Gulbransen. I enjoy his column every week and commend him on refusing to cave in to the criticism that he faces every week after his articles are printed. I am one who agreed with his article on Greg Louganis. If any of the whiners that objected to your commentary had read anything about Mr. Louganis, they would never have debated your statement about the "lifestyle choice" that has sealed his fate. I am not trying to argue the seriousness of the AIDS disease, I am merely saying that the responsibility lies with the individual. Greg Louganis chose, at least once, to have unprotected sex. Therefore, I too will not "shed one tear" for him. Keep up the good work, Scott.

Secondly, I voted for Ms. Boixo and, personally, I refuse to believe that Dr. Ackerman and Chief Hollenbeck did not help our dear Student Body President. They arranged for the boot to be removed from her car and then left her out to dry. Them's the breaks! I don't care if she gets away without paying her parking fines after all, we elected her, she has to receive some perks, so quit whining! I do not however believe that she has lived up to her campaign promises and can only hope that we can do better next year in our electing a more trustworthy president.

I would like to give some credit where credit is due. President Kenny Guinn, I have been very pleased with your stint as president of this university and I hope that our new president does half as good. I read in the *R-J* that rumors of a faculty revolt would prevent the bringing back of the only true candidate for UNLV head basketball coach, Mr. Jerry Tarkanian. I am appalled to the point that I can't even talk about it! Please, don't let him go to Fresno. This man was blackballed by his employer, Dr. Maxson, and left this university under a dark cloud. Allow him to help UNLV back up into the respectful eyes of the nation. I am still proud to be a part of this institution, this community, and this

country. Don't sour my optimism, as many other students already have been.

Gerry G. Zobrist
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'Yell' should do homework before writing editorial

To the editor:

This letter is in response to the editorial opinion dated 2 February 1995. I think it is great that you all have an opinion, however, you do not have your facts straight. First of all, the correct terminology is pro-life or pro-choice. What exactly is an "Abortion Activist"? Is it someone who takes action to maintain abortion rights or is it someone who fights against it? Your letter implies that it is someone who fights against it which is a contradiction in terms. Secondly, you are correct in that pro-life activists follow the fundamentalist principles set forth in the Bible. However, you are way off base when you state that pro-life activists believe in killing abortion clinic physicians and employees!

As a Christian, I believe in the pro-life movement. Not all pro-life activists are Christian, nor do they all hold Biblical principles and values. Just as there are a number of reasons why one would become pro-choice, there are also a number of reasons one would become pro-life. Unfortunately, there are some groups that do not interpret Biblical literature literally and pose their own views regarding this issue. They do not represent the Christian pro-life view! If a member of your family commits a crime, does that make the whole family criminals?

I also agree that killing abortion clinic physicians and employees is deplorable, irrational, and inconsistent with Biblical beliefs. Those who commit such crimes stand alone and are not supported by the general pro-life movement. The pro-life activists have shared equally in the grief of these violent acts because it is unbiblical.

My hope in writing this letter to you is that you may become more informed on this issue by researching both sides. It is unfair to publish your opinion, without supportive evidence, and influencing many minds to be one-sided.

Norma Goode
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