

Letters to the editor

Mantle Takes The Mound and Responds to Article; Rips Stonewall Library, Express, and Arts United

Concerning the cancelled "exhibition" at The Fort Lauderdale Gay and Lesbian Community Center Stonewall Library and Archives, here is my position.

Chris Yoculan and ArtsUnited approached me in November 2001 about the possibility of showing my work—black and white nude photographs featuring women of color. I accepted his invitation, and we agreed to a showing in February 2002.

I accepted the offer with the agreement that he would secure a credible review from a local mainstream newspaper. He assured me that he would do his best to guarantee at least three reviews.

I advised him that it was a reality that showing fine art photographs in a venue like the Fort Lauderdale Gay and Lesbian Stonewall library and Archives, which is not a gallery or museum, would not generate any sales. The event would be only of benefit to me for local public exposure.

A week before the opening date, I delivered the photographs at an obscure venue not affiliated with ArtsUnited, to my knowledge. I asked about the status of local mainstream newspaper coverage. He advised me that he has been busy, and any local arts writer like Candace Russell of the Citylink would not set foot in The Stonewall Library and Archives to do a review.

He stated *The Express* might show up to do a review. This was not the original agreement. I wanted a review from a mainstream daily or weekly, not a special interest group newspaper. Not because of any bias, but based on reasons of credibility. Arguably, the body of work is not of lesbians, nor does it embrace any lesbian theme. It is the viewer, who identifies as lesbian that would celebrate the images in a lesbian context.

I advised Chris Yoculan/ArtUnited that I was not pleased with his actions and he advised me that I should be grateful for having a solo exhibition. That comment terminated any interest in participating in showing my work at The Gay and Lesbian Community Center Stonewall Library and Archives. Arguably, this venue is not a gallery or museum. What it is without exaggeration is an overcrowded library with temporary dividers creating storage and office spaces.

There is a main wall about 10 by 15 feet where framed art is hung. An opening reception with coffee and donuts for an hour and a half is scheduled and the work is left for a month, during which time the facilities is used to accommodate meetings and support group activities.

The only attempt of publicity is a lightweight 4" by 6" postcard sent to members, which has the month's itinerary. This he advised me was an achievement on their part

for it being the first time.

I therefore advised Chris that I was no longer interested in showing my work. For accuracy, I CANCELLED THE EXHIBITION.

I was further annoyed by his implication that I should have been grateful for the favor of having my own show. This would have been a futile favor and I dreaded the reality of such presentation becoming solely, a social event for the organization members, at my expense. Neither any artist nor I is in the business of solely entertaining. There is a greater economic side to exhibitions, one that I made secondary, prioritizing a review.

However, I was not at liberty to having an open discussion about my work concerning any topic of the subject matter, being women of color and the scheduling, being black history month. I foresaw that hour and a half being very exhaustive with the game of twenty questions. Concluding with a pat on the shoulder, compliments or complaints and no manifestations of a review.

I made comments concerning the patrons more commonly attending gay and lesbian community centers, which are true, based on my previous voluntary experiences in several cities across the country. Negative they may seem they are the truth. You see I am black and negative, as it may seem. I do like fried chicken. But it is the truth. Let's call a spade a spade shall we?

My only disgust with your article is that I am in no way "linguistically-challenged." Attending Howard University from 1992-1997, you would hope that I learned how to express myself and that I am quite competent at doing.

I do believe, had there been a presentation, the review, if any would have been slated on a less important page. So I thank you for the recognition of your page one article.

To refute ArtsUnited opinion that I do "not present a positive image about the gay and lesbian community" I will be launching my photography website this spring featuring my black and white male nude series. If you are interesting in viewing and possibly purchasing signed open editions custom prints go to www.arthurmantlephotographs.com. 10% of each sale will be donated to a local gay and lesbian charity.

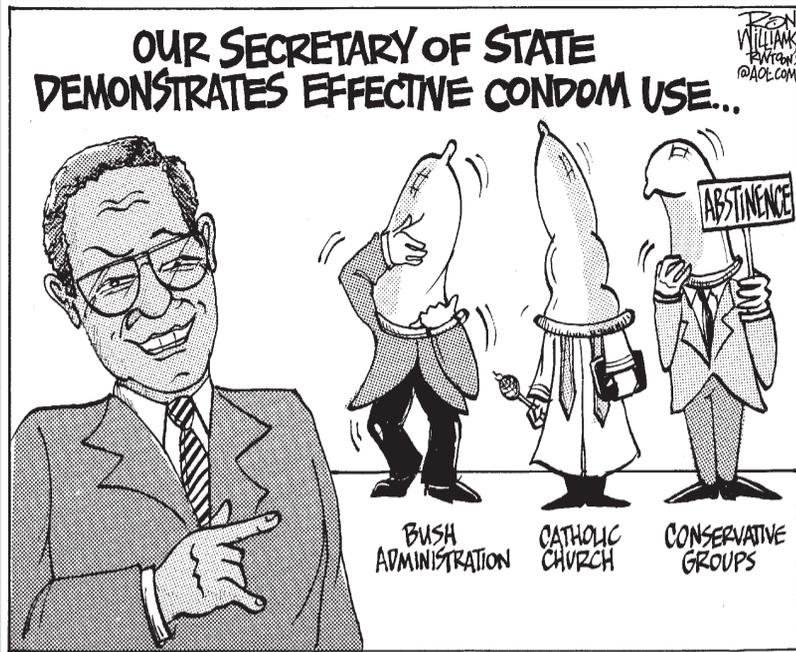
I guess I did get a review of my "dramatic exhibition of female nude photography" after all.

By the way, *The Express* article refers to me as a 'local' artist. There is nothing local about me. I was borne to German and Caribbean parents in England. I grew up in Westport, Connecticut. Attended preparatory school in Bermuda. Attended college in Washington, DC and will be living in Europe this fall.

Arthur O. Mantle

Ed.Note: We wish you well in Europe, and a very long stay there at that. Don't rush home.

EDITORIAL CARTOON



Libertarian Party Headed in Troubling Direction

The story, "Gay Senior Center is an 'Insult to Conservative Christians,'" which quoted Libertarian Party executive director Steve Dasbach, was revealing as to the direction in which the Libertarian Party is heading.

Back in 1993, after "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" became military policy for gays, Dasbach, then national chairman of the party, was one of the first to denounce the policy as unconstitutional.

Yet since the '96 elections, a number of conservatives, upset over having Bob Dole as their candidate and then losing the presidential election, left the Republican Party and joined the Libertarians, attracted to a political philosophy

that would dismantle most government agencies (except the military) and social service programs.

On political philosophy alone, the Libertarian Party would oppose government spending directed at any one group.

However, it seems the conservatives have gotten to Dasbach. Now it appears that a conservative religious philosophy that condemns homosexuality as sinful and equates funding a gay senior center with forcing people to "subsidize that sin" is a taking the party in a troubling direction.

William Butte —Deerfield Beach

Dickerman Responds to Hunker Letter

As an observer to many of the Dolphin Democratic Club Board meetings of the past year, I saw nothing of what Mr. Hunker described. If there was disharmony amongst the board, it was caused by the deceitful ways of the former president, Percy Johnson.

As treasurer, Bill Rettinger presented complete and full reports. Yes, sometimes the reports were six or more pages in length, but accuracy and integrity are crucial when transacting with other peoples monies.

If my memory serves me correctly Mr. Hunker, it was you in June of 2001 that suggested to Mr. Rettinger that he provide a "readers digest" version of the report. He complied with the request only to be lambasted the following November for not providing detailed reports (No meetings July, August, No meeting Sept. 12, and a report in October delivered to President Johnson's home,

but never given to the board). At no time did Mr. Rettinger refuse to provide a proper report. It was you, Mr. Hunker who was never satisfied with the reports presented. As far as a list of those who are in debt to the club, I ask that you first look no further than yourself (\$100 for Dolphin VIP reception), and the former president (\$200 for the 2001 J-J Dinner), debts that I am sure the Dolphin Democratic Club will never see.

Since January of last year I have had the distinct honor of working with Bill Rettinger through Americans For Equality (where were you when your rights were being challenged?). Yes Bill can be brash, loud, and wordy, but he is also thorough, honest, and forthright. Your accusations are libelous and without merit. Shame on you.

To quote the Bard, "the fault dear Mr. Hunker (sic), is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

Marc S. Dickerman

New Gay Network a Positive Move

In guest columnist Miles Christian Daniels' article he writes that the new Showtime/MTV channel will isolate gay people. It Sounds like Mr. Daniels needs to push that door open just a little bit further. This channel will not isolate us. Instead, it is a great opportunity to shine more light upon us.

A channel dedicated to providing gay related programming gives the gay community another venue for its voice, creativity, and encouragement. It is long overdue.

The Channel provides people who are specifically looking for that type of programming a place to go. It also provides the public in general a better and more varied look at our lives. People outside of the gay community will tune in and find something to watch.

As a gay white male originally from North Carolina, I often tune into and enjoy programs on channels geared towards other groups such as Lifetime for women and BET, Black Entertainment Television.

I also enjoy watching a wide variety of programming on individual channels such as the HBO line up of *Sex and the City* about women, *Oz*, a drama about prison life and racial tensions, or *Six Feet Under*. There is also Showtime's *Resurrection Blvd* about a Latin family, or *Soulfood* a drama about one black family's journey through life.

I would like to give people more of an opportunity to see my journey through life.

I do not believe it is Showtime's or MTV's intention to pull all the gay related programming from other channels and limit it to the new one. I think their intention is to provide gay programming on a more constant basis and provide a venue for programs that probably would not show up on any other channel.

I am sure I would not be able to turn on the movie classics channels and see *Torch Song Trilogy* playing. It certainly is a classic to me.

This movie was one of the first films that I saw anywhere depicting gay life in a positive manner or any manner.

It was groundbreaking and instrumental in encouraging me, as a young gay person, that I could live a gay life. The idea of a channel dedicated to playing movies like these as well as showcasing new and upcoming gay filmmakers is awesome.

However, this will not keep me from watching my favorite programming on 'heterosexual' channels.

Most heterosexuals will not tune out simply because it is distinguished as a gay channel. I think that as long as it has actors that they love and quality programming, heterosexuals will tune in.

They have been watching quality programming provided by gay actors, artists, producers, and directors for years anyway. If they do choose to tune out, it is their loss.

The greater importance here is to provide more opportunity for the gay community to reach out to other gay individuals and provide positive entertainment, role models, news, events, and so on which directly relates to their lives. If it reaches the heterosexual community, which it will, that is even better and more power to us.

As a gay individual and as a community we should embrace any opportunity to have our voice heard. We should even be overjoyed that we can turn on the TV at any time and find programming relating to and representing our lives.

Being afraid of who we are and hiding in that closet isolates us. Coming out publicly and visually does not. Anyone thinking this channel will isolate the gay community has not opened their mind or that door wide enough to imagine the possibilities.

Amory Lewis, Miami Artist

**This Above All...
To Thine Own
Self Be True.**

**EXPRESS
YOURSELF!**

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