

Nude Art in Halls of Justice Stirs a Storm in Bronx

By GRACE GLUECK

Disclaiming any attempt at "censorship," Owen McGivern, presiding justice of the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court, First Department, has asked the Bronx County Museum of the Arts to dismantle a show of work by women artists that contains "explicit male nudity" and at least one four-letter word.

The museum, established in 1971, is in the rotunda of the Bronx County Courthouse and, although its landlord is nominally the city, the Appellate Division has jurisdiction over courts.

"I took it up with my learned brethren," said Justice McGivern, referring to the other justices of the Appellate Division, "and we think that while a show of this nature may be appropriate for a museum where people have a choice of visiting, it is not for the corridor of a courthouse."

"We're all in sympathy with the arts," he added, "but explicit male nudity in the corridor of a public courthouse is something else. And there's a certain vulgarity about four-letter words—if that's art, I'm not with it."

The show is actually due to close today, which would render the matter moot. But

Justice McGivern said he had understood the museum would take the show down "a week ago last Monday." Sol Shaviro, the museum's president, said he had had a formal request from Justice McGivern only yesterday, however, and that he had told the justice he would have to take the matter up with the museum's 18-member board.

"I told him, you understand I'm only one person, and while I respect the opinion of judges, I have a board of trustees," Mr. Shaviro said. "I said among the board members there might be differences of opinion, that I'd have to let him know. When I asked what would happen if he considered future shows objectionable, he said, 'We'd have to consider ejection proceedings against you.'"

Works by 60 Women

Justice McGivern confirmed yesterday that "ejection proceedings" against the museum had been discussed by the justices. "In the face of strong public opinion, we'd have to do something—but the question of what would have to be researched, maybe by the Corporation Counsel. We'll have to burn that bridge when we come to it," he said.

The show, titled "The Year of the Woman," presents works by more than 60 women artists, including such well-known names as Alice Neel, Nancy Grossman, Sylvia Sleigh, Miriam Schapiro, Alice Baber and Lynda Benglis.

While it contains a good deal of political and sexual imagery, the most offensive works, apparently, are a clinically detailed male nude seen from front and back, titled "Double Image," by Miss Sleigh; a feminist poster with some four-letter advice about housework; a painting by Joan Semel that shows an integrated couple coupling, and "The United States of Attica," a poster by Faith Ringgold that notes acts of political and racial violence on a map of the United States over a period of three centuries.

Justice McGivern, who has not seen the show, studied photographs of the offending material after receiving "several phone calls and letters from lawyers and individuals."

"Please believe me, we're trying to avoid the role of censor," he said yesterday. "We're trying to use diplomacy instead. We don't want a confrontation with people of the art world."

Yesterday James Crowley,

a court clerk who works in the courthouse, displayed a petition against the show signed by 60 of his co-workers that he said had been forwarded to Governor Carey. "We resent the pornography and anti-American theme," the petition stated.

Abrams Upholds Museum

Judith Van Baron, the museum's director, said that it was not necessary for people coming to the courthouse on business to visit the museum.

"The museum is clearly identified as such," she said. "The rotunda is a short cut, but no one is forced to walk through it on court business. The fact that we are unique in our public location as opposed to other museums shouldn't dictate what we put on the walls."

In a letter to Robert Abrams, Bronx Borough President, at whose initiative the museum was established and who has upheld it in the present controversy, Miss Van Baron expressed thanks for support of "our autonomy and freedom."

Asked about the reaction to her painting, Miss Sleigh said yesterday: "I wonder if the judge would object to a female nude? I don't see why male genitals are more sacred than female."

GOING OUT
Glueck

Andrew Sarris and Molly Haskell, film critics of The Village Voice and her... the evening. The... honor will be Bl... star of Griffith's... Bethulia," the... gram featur...

of ceremonies. Doug Henning and Dale Soules will do an excerpt from "The Magic... Andre DeShields and... water will rep... The casts... Gay

MANHATTAN
BRANDT'S
EMPIRE 42nd ST.
BET. 73rd & 8th AVES.
LOEWS 83rd ST.
83rd ST. & 8 WAY.
(Statis 2/26)

QUAD CINEMA #3
13TH ST. BET. 5TH
& 6TH AVES.

BROOKLYN
FLORIN'S
CITY ISLAND
CINEMA (Single Feature)

BROOKLYN
LIGHTSTONE'S
ZENSON #1
ZURER'S
BROOKLYN
HEIGHTS #2
LIGHTSTONE'S (Statis 2/26)
GRAHAM 7/26
GERRITSEN BEACH

QUEENS
FLORIN'S
BELLE HARBOR
ROCKAWAY PARK
(Starts Fri)
POZIN'S
BOULEVARD
JACKSON HTS.
CENTURY'S
COMMUNITY
QUEENS VILLAGE
TRIANGLE'S
DELUXE
WOODSIDE

WESTCHESTER
TRIANGLE'S
HASTINGS
HASTINGS
(Single Feature)
FLORIN'S
PELHAM
PICTURE HOUSE
PELHAM
(Single Feature)

UA
PLAYHOUSE
MAMARONECK
CREATIVE'S
PARKWAY
ST. VERNON
AND
HARRYTOWN

ARNAL K
MOST J