Commentary

An artistic misunderstanding

By Glenn Brownstein

The recent furor over the treatment East Campus residents have given "Transparent Horizons," which involves the Committee on Visual Arts (CVA), the Campus Patrol, and Ralph Landau, whose philanthropy helped make the Chemical Engineering Building possible, and over art at MIT in general, has prompted me to make a few general comments.

Objections to the CVA's handling of procuring art for the Institute center on two arguments, neither of which have anything whatever to do with art appreciation. In fact, their prime concern is "people appreciation," if anything at all. The CVA doesn't listen.

"Transperent Horizons" is clearly in a dangerous place for oncoming cyclists, although MIT has made some effort to relieve that problem; the new Great Court adornment is a perfectly legitimate, striking artistic work, but does it belong there -- or somewhere else?

Now the specific complaint. While further defacement of "Horizons" serves little purpose, the alleged use of Campus Patrol to blackmail MIT students is a deplorable practice and one that everyone would learn from past experiences. The CVA will revert away from form and set a leading example of the MIT administration short-sightedness, not only regarding the MIT community but for the rest of the Institute community. However, there's a very good indication that the CVA doesn't listen.

Objection number two: why does the CVA buy only modern art? If campus acquisitions are to be a reflection of the artistic taste of the community, does this mean that all of those qualified to make the purchase decisions prefer modern art to everything else? And more importantly, is there sentiment on campus to get something a little less trendy and a little more traditional? Those of us who object to the way the CVA has handled its responsibilities at the descending treatment the MIT community has received, the "know-all" attitude of the Committee on Visual Arts, and the lack of input regarding sculpture placement and selection. But we do not dislike art, nor should we be portrayed as a bunch of frisbee-throwing, calculator-toting idiots who feel the only use of sculpture is to climb on or deface.

I cannot believe that those who have physically demonstrated their dislike for "Transparent Horizons" dislike art. Some East Campus residents do distinctly dislike "Horizons" as a piece of art -- yet I'm sure not all of them are unqualified boors.

I don't believe that the majority of the MIT community dislikes "Reclining Figure," either. In both cases, the issue is placement. "Horizons" is clearly in a dangerous place for oncoming cyclists, although MIT has made some effort to relieve that problem; the new Great Court adornment is a perfectly legitimate, striking artistic work, but does it belong there -- or somewhere else?

Now the specific complaint. While further defacement of "Horizons" serves little purpose, the alleged use of Campus Patrol to blackmail MIT students is a deplorable practice and one that should end immediately. Using the threat of possible felony (I'm not a lawyer, but I can't find anyone who could explain how defacing a sculpture demonstrated such a severe penalty unless one shoots at it), certain persons associated with MIT -- reports indicate that Ralph Lan- dau may be a key figure -- have decided that the continually embarrassing defacement of "Horizons" must be stopped. It's important to note that by embarrassing, I mean embarrassing to the MIT administration -- in my view, the actions of the CVA for the past few years and its blatant disregard for the MIT community are at least equally embarrassing. So perhaps we can get some sort of end to this controversy, and an end to the "one-first, you-not-at-all" practices of the CVA. I propose that somebody initiate multilateral discussions between East Campus residents, the CVA, the Campus Patrol, the MIT administration, Ralph Landau, and whoever else wants to join in, to settle an issue that would never have come up if there'd been a little dialogue of sculpture placement a couple of years ago.

But then again, we're used to MIT administration short-sightedness, not only regarding sculpture placement, but overcrowding and other issues as well.

One would think by now that the rest would have come from past errors of judgment -- let's hope that the CVA will revert away from form and set a leading example for the rest of the MIT administration, although it afraid it's probably an idle hope.

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MIT Hillel Announces the Beginning of a New Minyan

Emphasis will be placed on study and the sharing of insights and experiences. The minyan will be traditional in practice but will be open to equal participation of men and women in all roles. The new minyan will begin Sat., morning Dec. 4th at 10:00 A.M. in the Religious Counselors Bldg. 312 Memorial Dr.

"From privileges which obscure our vision, isolation and poverty of care, paralyzing doubt and closed windows of hope."

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