Photography program cut

The Tech

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Chairman: V. Michael Bove '83
Editor in Chief: Barry S. Surman '84
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Column/Matt Bunn

Photography program cut

The arts have always been on the fringes of MIT experience; this is, after all, a technical institution. MIT has, in the past, shown a willingness to provide students with outlets for artistic exploration, and such courses have generally been treasured equally popular with students. But now, in a move reminiscent of Course VI's savaging of its introductory computing program, the Department of Art History has decided to eliminate the Creative Photography Laboratory.

The photography lab's courses are some of the most popular art courses at MIT. This year, as usual, two of its three introductory courses were vastly oversubscribed, and had to turn people away. A color photography course that was popular last year and unadvertised in the schedule is essentially full. Students almost invariably give the courses rave reviews. This year every one of its students with whom I have spoken has been outraged that the program was to be cut, and the students, of their own initiative, have already collected 350 signatures on a petition to save the program. In essence, what the courses at the photo labs provide (and what is now to be eliminated) is an opportunity to supplement a technical education with creative, humanistic exploration.

The Creative Photography Laboratory was founded in 1970, its first director was Minor White, one of the "gods" of modern photography. It is clear that MIT had made a genuine commitment to a photography program during its tenure.

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The Tech

Column/Richard Mylnar

A nerd in his own defense

I have finally been moved to action, or to words at least.

It happened last week. I was walking through Lobby 7 when I saw one of those pillar posters, whose origin and destination still remain a mystery to me. This one was soliciting comments on why there are so many nerds in our midst, and why we should continue to tolerate them. Quietly, a number of people put their names on it and quietly launched into written in-vective which would merit instant presidential letters to The Tech, had they been remotely connectected to the "real" world. No one else is; they just see things a little differently.

I'm not going to enter into a discussion about "nerds." I think it is people stereotyped as "negativistically unobtrusive, sel-dom venturing outside the Student Center Library, managing to amuse loafing which verges on the xenophobic." The "nerd," it seems, would be much more of the somewhat weird "outside world" as a real, genuine, guaranteed 100% nerd. And as effective practitioners of "dummy" people believe, it is a good way to escape one's own faults — real or perceived — to attribute them to some other sector. Hence: "Well, we may be supporting terrorism and slaughters — is it really that we're to blame?" It is, of course, impossible to determine whether or not MIT brands them in the eyes of the "outside world" as a real, genuine, guaranteed 100% nerd. And as effective practitioners of "dummy" people believe, it is a good way to escape one's own faults — real or perceived — to attribute them to some other sector. Hence: "Well, we may be supporting terrorism and slaughters — is it really that we're to blame?" It is, of course, impossible to determine whether or not MIT brands them in the eyes of the "outside world" as a real, genuine, guaranteed 100% nerd.

I am responding to Robert E. Malchman's column [Feb. 11] on why MIT students don't cut my hair or raise my tuition. We can characterize this explanation as unfounded claim. For example, I proceed.

First, one should refrain from fabricating scientific evidence. Malchman writes, "Social science research suggests no correlation between exposure to pornography and violent behavior; in-vience and violence toward women." Did you expect to fool everyone? Many studies have been conducted by social psychologists attempting to determine if there is indeed a relationship between exposure to pornography and violence. (Dorsett and Hal- m, 1978; Malamuth, Heim, and Feshback, 1967; White, 1979; Zillmann, et al, 1981). In Social Psychology: Understanding Human Interaction the authors Bar- on and Byrne summarize: "The results of these studies suggest that there is indeed a link between sexual arousal and aggres- sion. Exposure to erotic ma- terials involving sexual violence is consistently rated as more sexually arousing and potentially dangerous — effects" (Bar- on and Byrne, 1981). In fact, a sexual relationship in South American exposure to pornography and violence (violence toward women) is more likely to be one form of vio- lence). This finding is contrary to Malchman's undisguised and unfounded claim.

Second, one should refrain from careening into armchair argu- ments that have nothing to do with the issue. Malchman writes, "I'm sick of bible-thumpers trying to engineer the inter- est of the supposed timeless God of War. Who annotated [sic] them to be Instruments of Divine Will? Anyone has a right to be- lieve he's the reincarnation of Christ, the eighth avatar of Vishnu, or K'naan or Star Trek. I don't care. But don't dare attempt to force your religious beliefs on me. Remember the Crusades, Inquisition, et al?" All this sounds fine, but what does it have to do with showing pornog- raphy at MIT? It sounds to me as though Mr. Malchman is re- sponding to his own prejudices against "bibli-thumpers." And what pur- pose does it serve to mention two historical eras that happened over 700 years ago? Is he trying further to discredit "bibli-thumpers?" Whose origin and whose target are both silly to use ancient history to ar- gues that "bibli-thumpers" should not oppose the showing of pornog- raphy at MIT.

To the Editor:

Feedback

Malchman's argument unsound

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To the Editor:

Ms. Malchman, please research your claims before making them. I keep your prejudices against "bibli-thumpers" and other minority groups to your- self. If you are ignoring the warnings from both religion and science on this, I am quite willing to educate you...