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## Artist's vision jars avenue's shoppers

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Window-shoppers strolling along Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown recently have been confronted with a jarring sight.

In a storefront facing the street, a life-size statue of a woman huddles on the ground in the aftermath of a rape, her clothes torn and strewn about her. Above her, the splotted

naked white figures of two men hang suspended from the ceiling by ropes tied around their genitals.

The startling scene in the window of the vacant building at 1525 Wisconsin Ave. is the creation of Los Angeles artist Ed Massey, who titled the display "Morality/Mortality." The exhibit — which is also being displayed in similar buildings in Santa Monica, Miami, Chicago

and New York City — will remain on view through May 29.

Massey, who said his work focuses on "social criticism," decided to create this display to foster discussion about the horrors of rape and other crimes against women.

"After being around women who have been afraid of sexual attacks, I decided to do something about it," he said.

Massey said he chose

Washington as a location because he thought the political climate of the city would result in a lively debate about his display. He concentrated his search for a storefront site in Georgetown and Dupont Circle — neighborhoods that he chose because of their heavy pedestrian and vehicle traffic — and signed the monthlong lease for the building two weeks before

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## ARTIST

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the display was unveiled May 2.

Viewers are meant to decide for themselves the exact scenario the display depicts, Massey said. However, he added that it could be seen as a revenge fantasy in the woman figure's mind or as a way for the public to discuss what should be done with what he termed "sexual predators."

"The men are phantasms," he said. "They could represent anyone."

Massey said the display was largely funded by a grant from Peg Yorkin, a Los Angeles feminist activist who made headlines in 1991

when she donated \$10 million to the Feminist Majority Foundation. Yorkin and Massey declined to say how much the display cost.

"It's a subject that needs a lot of dialogue," Yorkin said. "I would be surprised if people weren't upset about the display. Public art is supposed to foment discourse, and that's what it's doing."

A group of residents in the neighborhood in Santa Monica had a demonstration May 12 in front of the display asking the city government to remove it, Massey said, but so far he said he had been struck by the lack of similar response in Washington.

"We thought Washington would be the first one to protest," he said. "The city hasn't always been open

to public displays of art."

But though there have been no organized demonstrations, not all residents are pleased with the creation in their neighborhood.

Advisory neighborhood commission chair Westy McDermid said she had received several calls from residents who were upset about the display and who thought it was inappropriate for a public street.

Some residents had also expressed concern about the proximity of the display to a residential area with a day-care center, school

and park nearby.

"I had my child in the stroller when I saw it, and I was just horrified," said Melissa Overmyer, who lives near the exhibit. "My husband and I were both shocked that it could be on display for everyone. There should be a choice for adults if they want to see it or not."

Massey, however, said he tried to pick a site where children wouldn't frequently pass the display. Even so, he said: "Parents have been bringing their children to see it and discussing it with them."