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## 'Corporate Ladder' Irks Some on Their Way Up Sculpture in Md. Building to Be Dismantled

By Claudia Levy  
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The boss is aiming a kick at the head of his power-seeking No. 2 man, whose briefcase is being rifled by an upwardly mobile, dressed-for-success female executive.

It's just another day on "The Corporate Ladder," a sly sculpture by New York artist Ed Massey depicting life in the entrepreneurial fast lane. Commissioned for the back lobby of the Lakeview II office building in Columbia and installed this month, the painted plaster and aluminum assemblage has made instant art critics out of nearly all who pass it.

"Garbage," muttered one man to his companion Monday as they strolled past Massey's 18-foot-tall work. Other comments have ranged from "bold and dramatic" and "reality-based" to "sexist and offensive" and a "slap in the face to business."

Massey, 26, describes his piece as "a microcosm of the intense intra-office competition in the work place" that combines "humor and pathos."

But Massey's five corporate climbers have struck such a nerve with some of the 35 tenant that the building's new owner, Principal Financial Group, announced yesterday that "The Corporate Ladder" will be dismantled.

The work is to be relocated from the building on Broken Land Park-

way, possibly to Principal Financial Group's art-strewn corporate headquarters in Des Moines, spokeswoman Michelle Warnke said. Nobody involved would say how much the piece cost.

Travel agent Betsy Faulkner, one of several Lakeview business owners whose rents have gone up in recent months, said she wouldn't be surprised if the cost of art were included in the increase. Warnke said art is considered an investment, not a cost passed on to renters. But if this art didn't move, several tenants grumbled to each other, they would.

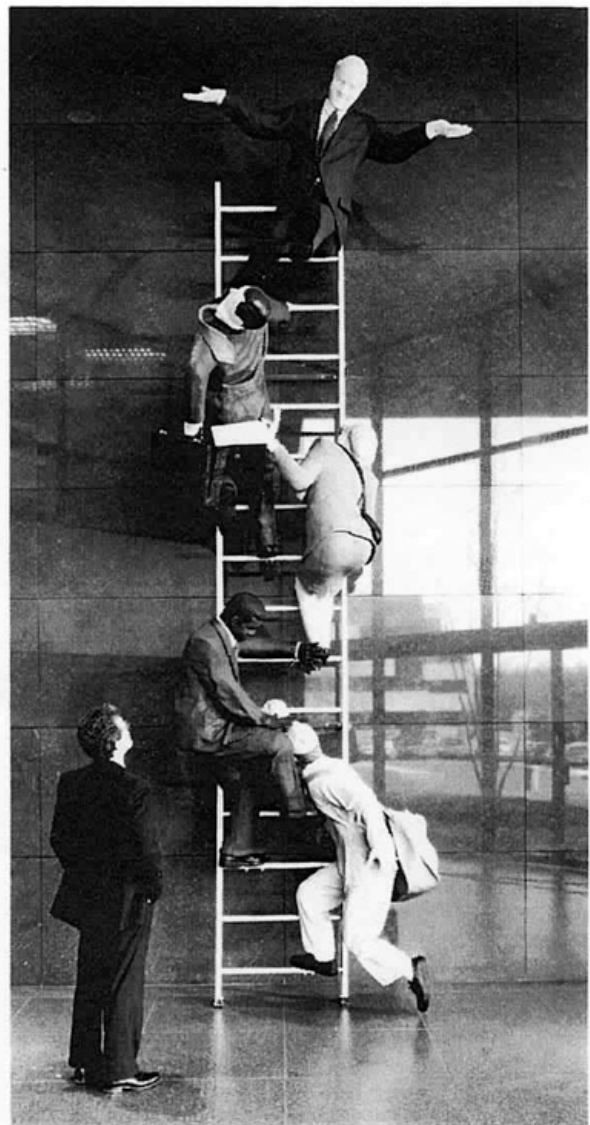
Bill Miner, regional manager for a large U.S. defense contractor, began posting protest signs identifying the ladder sculpture as an alternative to the building's malfunctioning elevator. Miner said his own taste in art tends to pastoral scenes, ships and space shuttles.

"We're not trying to suppress art," Warnke said yesterday. "This is a case where it's a bottom-line decision . . . Enough of [the tenants] were alarmed or bothered by the artwork that we decided to go along with their interests."

"How would you like to see this every day?" said Paul Hash, an accountant with the Columbia Association, gesturing toward the plaster figures.

"I like it," said his fellow worker, Roy Roddey, a data processing supervisor.

"That," said Hash, "is because he's halfway up the ladder."



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"The Corporate Ladder," a sculpture by artist Ed Massey.