

Some of these people think this is too painful for public display. Well, they should remember that rape is a painful crime.

— Stacy Shelton



RICHARD N. LEVINE/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Christi Peterson of Santa Monica, center, engages in a debate with Stacy Shelton of San Francisco in front of the exhibit.

Demonstrators converge on SM anti-rape artwork

By Tom Jennings
STAFF WRITER

About 60 people demonstrated Thursday evening in front of a controversial anti-rape art project, some to protest the public display of the graphic exhibit, some to celebrate its existence and others just to stop and stare.

"It detests me," said Santa Monica resident Louis Kugler. "The man who did this has the

mentality of a concentration camp guard. It's vile."

"Morality Mortality" was unveiled a week and a half ago in the glass-encased corner of the vacant Wilshire Medical Building at 15th Street and Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica.

The work shows the sculpted figure of a woman sprawled on the floor, her purse and

ARTWORK/A4



Dee Treacy discusses her objections to the public anti-rape exhibit in Santa Monica with the artist, Ed Massey.

Artwork

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briefcase thrown to the side, her panties and nylons ripped down around her ankles, her head hanging low in anguish.

Above her, two nude male figures are suspended from the ceiling by ropes wrapped tightly around their genitals. The men's facial features are indistinguishable, except for their mouths which hang open as if in a silent scream.

About half of the people at the planned protest wanted the display taken down. They carried pickets including those that read: "Not for My Eyes" and "Pass Obscenity Laws."

Dozens of others came to support the art work, saying it is a needed statement against violence against women — a topic supporters say has been put on the back burner of public debate.

Some drivers stopped their cars and caused momentary traffic jams to gawk at the crowd and the television cameras filming the event.

West Los Angeles artist Ed Massey put together the exhibit as a protest against sexual assault on women. Massey was at Thursday's protest.

"It's important for people to be here, even if they don't agree with the work," said Massey, 31, who has a studio in Venice. "The only alternative to having a display like this is to put it in a museum or a gallery where it would be out of the public view. The impact would be minimal."

Other cities

The exhibit is also on display in Chicago, New York, Miami and Washington, D.C. Massey said there has been some con-

troversy in other cities, but no protests like the one in Santa Monica.

Stacy Shelton came from San Francisco for the protest. She had seen the art exhibit in New York, and a friend had told her a demonstration was planned for the site in Santa Monica.

"Some of these people think this is too painful for public display," said Shelton, after heated debate with a man protesting the art. "Well, they should remember that rape is a painful crime."

Inappropriateness cited

But Rabbi Jeff Marx of Sha'arei Am: The Santa Monica Synagogue said the exhibit message is one that needs to be told, but not on a public street.

"Schindler's List" was a terrific movie but I wouldn't take a 5-year-old to go see it," Marx said.

"There is a modesty that needs to be maintained. In the Jewish religion, for example certain matters are not to be casually exposed. They are sexual issues, sexual violence and violence. This is sexual violence. It belongs in an appropriate setting, not here."

Lee Walker of Santa Monica said she thinks the exhibit is fine right where it is.

"A woman gets raped in this country every four minutes, she said. "The male genitalia gets mutilated once a millennium. This is making a statement to men, showing them the pain inflicted by rape."

The display is scheduled to be in the window for another two weeks.