

# SCULPTURE

MARCH/APRIL 1990 \$4.50 US

## IN THE NEWS

**LADDER THAN HELL** . . . After sparking outrage and ridicule among several tenants, *Corporate Ladder*, a satirical sculpture by New York artist **Ed Massey**, will be removed from an office building in Columbia, Maryland, where it was installed at the beginning of this year. The piece, which some tenants considered insulting to corporate life, consists of five plaster figures in business attire climbing an 18-foot aluminum ladder. In trying to reach the top of the ladder, the figures grab at each other's limbs and kick at those perched below them.

Several tenants also called the piece racist and sexist because it depicts a black man near the bottom of the ladder and a

woman, apparently pilfering documents from her superior's briefcase, halfway up. The artist, in defense of the sculpture, maintains that the work accurately reflects "the imbalance in the ethnic and gender composition in the great majority of corporations."

Massey also noted that the piece was an adaptation of an earlier smaller-scale piece that The Principal Financial Group, the Des Moines-based firm that owns the building, chose after rejecting Massey's original proposals. "They knew exactly what they had commissioned," said Massey. "They persisted in their decision that *Corporate Ladder* was the piece they wanted—that's the most outrageous part of all this." Walter Walsh, Vice President of Corporate Affairs for The Principal Financial Group, called the removal "a sensible decision, not a backing down. When you have a substantial number of tenants who hate the piece, you have to be fair to them."