

morality mortality

There is nothing subtle about "Morality/Mortality."

In sculptor Ed Massey's installation, two cadaverous plaster men dangle from the ceiling from ropes tied around their penises. Their bodies twist gently when the air conditioning is on, casting eerie shadows on the wall behind them. Beneath them, a plaster woman lies with her head in her hands, her hose and panties around one ankle.

The piece is usually displayed in shop windows, sparking extensive debate over public art and violence against women, among other issues.

"Here in Los Angeles, there was a protest against the project by religious groups, and groups of rape victims came and plastered notes (on the window) telling their own experiences and how important it was for them to see it, and for people to understand what they had gone through," Massey said in a telephone interview.

He created four "Morality/Mortality" installations. Two years ago, they were displayed simultaneously in Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami and New York City. One was donated to the Bridge Center for Contemporary Art, which will display it through Saturday.

"Where I think it's especially effective is that it doesn't exploit violence, and it de-sexualizes the act of rape. I don't think anybody could find that (the woman crawling away) a provocative pose," said

Richard Baron, director of the Bridge Center for Contemporary Art.

The Bridge is showing the piece inside. There isn't much pedestrian traffic past the gallery, Baron said, and it's hard to see inside the gallery from the street. He said he didn't see much point in confronting the neighborhood with the work.

"Morality/Mortality" was donated to the Bridge with the stipulation that a public forum be conducted in conjunction with its exhibition. The forum will take place Tuesday instead of a reception.

"We wanted to put it in the context of the issue it addresses and not just display it without an explanation," Baron said.

He asked Donna Snyder, a lawyer and human-rights activist, to arrange the forum. She said the forum will concern violence against women, the subject of "Morality/Mortality," but it will also explore people's reactions to art that is critical of society.

"Is it accepted, banned, censored, ignored, useless, offensive? That's what we'll look at," Snyder said. "What I have in mind is a multimedia

Sculpture invokes emotion with rape awareness

By Deborah Martin

Herald-Post arts and entertainment editor



Richard Baron, director of the Bridge Center for Contemporary Art, stands next to two of the figures from the work "Morality/Mortality" by Ed Massey