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Paint Censors Georgetown Sculpture

Storefront Window in Front of Controversial Art Work Sprayed

By Wendy Melillo
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The artist's intention—to display graphically the subject of rape in an empty Georgetown storefront—has sparked more than just controversy. The store's window has been defaced with white spray paint, partially obscuring the sculpture, which depicts two naked men hung by their genitals over the near-naked figure of a woman.

D.C. police said an officer from the 2nd Police District noticed yesterday that the sculpture had been obscured.

The spray paint covers up only the figures of the two men, leaving the figure of the woman, who is depicted crawling toward the window, her suit and attache case flung to one side. The two notices posted on the door of the shop, which provided information about the exhibit, also are covered with paint.

The "Morality/Mortality" exhibit, created by Los Angeles-based artist Ed Massey, has provoked strong re-

actions from pedestrians since it opened in early May. But last night many who strolled by the storefront at 1525 Wisconsin Ave. NW were more offended by the fact that it had been vandalized.

"It is interesting that they left the victimization of the woman exposed," said Kirsten Swisher, 25, a Georgetown University law student. "This is my first time seeing it and I am disappointed. Regardless of the message, the artist should be able to express what he wanted to say."

Jessica Leonard said she was surprised to find the exhibit still up, considering the strong emotions it has elicited.

"A lot of people were pretty upset about it," said Leonard, who lives in the Palisades section of Northwest Washington.

Artist Ed Massey, reached last night at his studio in Los Angeles, said he was appalled. "This is disgusting because the intention of the piece is to generate discourse of what the woman endured during a

rape," he said. "The message is being censored."

Massey also said he was surprised to hear that the incident happened in Washington. "There has been no destruction in any of the five cities the piece is being shown in," he said. The exhibit is also displayed in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Miami. "I expected Washington to be the most civilized of all the cities involved."

Massey said he plans to file a complaint with D.C. police.

The artist's brother, Bernie Massey, said that the exhibit was scheduled to be removed this weekend. "We almost made it," he said yesterday when informed of the vandalism.

Daniel Freire, a lawyer who lives two blocks from where the exhibit is displayed, said he thought the vandalism was not designed to block people from viewing the exhibit because it is still possible to see the work if one looks around the paint.

"It was designed to send a message," he said. "Little kids can still look in and see it."