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## Wrong Place for This Exhibition

*Anti-rape sculpture in Santa Monica is too public a display*

America in 1994 is a society where many parents feel anxious about letting go of their child's hand in a public place. Children don't know, at first, quite what dangers their parents are on guard against, but they guess that these must be pretty bad. And a hint about one kind of danger comes as early as preschool with their first warnings about inappropriate touch.

From these warnings, be the tone ever so calm, little boys and girls quite properly conclude that bad people are at loose who do hurtful things to other people's genitals. Parents may spare their children the gory details, but the minimum necessary is more than enough to leave a fearful question in a young mind.

Comes now Peg Yorkin to provide what parents leave out: in a ground-level display window at Wilshire Boulevard and 15th Street in Santa Monica, just a block from the Lincoln Middle School playground, a heart-stopping, stomach-turning sculpture of pornographic torture/murder. Featured are two muscular, naked men, their eye sockets empty, their mouths gaping open in death, hanging hideously by their genitals above a disheveled woman.

An adult will guess that the woman has been raped, but what does this installation say to children who do not know what rape is? One mother phoned the school to report that her children were "terrified" at the sight: "It was just

extremely traumatic." The staff member who took the call asks: "Can't we allow children five minutes of innocence?"

We share those concerns. Santa Monica has many art galleries. Had sculptor Edward Massey and Yorkin, his angel, shown this work in one of them, no one would object. Though to some viewers the woman in this installation seems an artistic afterthought, others—among them some in the huge number of rape victims—have found it cathartic. Surely no one can deny that violence against women is a serious social problem. Sadly, however, placed where it is, this would-be defense of women has become an upsetting sight for many children.