



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 14, 2011

More Offensive Art at Taxpayer's Expense

American taxpayers are funding an art exhibit in the Marquette, Michigan, city art gallery that equates Republican governors with Nazis. Naturally, the artwork has prompted a number of complaints, but despite opposition, will remain on display.

The Blaze [reports](#):

Titled "The Faces of American Fascism," the poster has pictures of Ohio Gov. John Kasich, Wis. Gov. Scott Walker, Mich. Gov. Rick Snyder and Fla. Gov. Rick Scott under the national insignia of Nazi Germany. The symbol of the Republican Party is encircled in the wreath under the eagle instead of a swastika.



Written in the middle of the poster are the words, "Anti union," "anti worker," "anti woman," "anti elderly" and "anti poor." At the bottom, it charges viewers to "Rise up! Demand a recall" next to an image of a closed fist.

"The Faces of American Fascism" is part of the July "What's in a Name?" exhibit at the City of Marquette Arts and Culture Center in the lower level of the city public library. It's scheduled to last through July 29.

The display features a disclaimer that indicates that the beliefs reflected in the artwork is not necessarily representative of the beliefs of the city of Marquette.

According to Nikke Nason, the arts administration director, the center is funded through the city's general fund. Likewise, the website for the center indicates, "Exhibitions are curated with consideration for quality of the exhibit, what will be of interest to the community locally, regionally or nationally and suitability of subject matter.... All displays that the art gallery exhibits are suitable for all ages and will not promote discrimination against any person or group."

The artists behind the exhibit, Joe Sobel and Sean Michael Stimac, are locals and have had other work displayed in the area. Stimac has garnered a reputation for placing political messages in his art displays.

Karl Zueger, Marquette Assistant City Manager, admitted that the piece was controversial but defends its placement by asserting that it does not violate city standards of obscenity, sexual explicitness, or racial and violent elements.

"We didn't see that it met any one of those tenets," said Zueger, who met with the chair of the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs to get a legal opinion before ultimately deciding to place it on display.

"This is a First Amendment right, freedom of expression. From those we've consulted from an artistic



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standpoint they deem it an artistic expression,” said Zueger. “Art is not without controversy.”

Members of the Marquette County Republican Party have raised issues with the display. Zueger explains, “It’s their belief that it is offensive, they’ve requested we take the piece down.”

He explains, “Everyone’s entitled to their opinion. When you have an art gallery there are times that the artist may illustrate a perspective, whether it be political or social and there’s always that possibility of it being offensive. We intend to keep it up until the exhibit closes.”

Marquette County Republican Party Chair Dan Adamini asserts, however, that the issue is not so much the political message, but that the political message is government-sponsored.

“Freedom of speech says the government won’t punish you for anything you say. It doesn’t guarantee a government-sponsored audience,” said Adamini.

He adds, “I’m calling into question the judgment of the people [who approved the work]. This is clearly not art, this is hate speech and a call to political action.”

Nason claims that she has received “six or seven” complaints from patrons to the exhibit, and contends that those who made the complaints did not tie themselves to the Republican Party.

The controversial exhibit at the Marquette Arts and Culture Center is just one of many examples of offensive taxpayer funded displays.

In Loveland, Colorado, for example, an art museum [featured](#) a piece that depicted Jesus Christ in a variety of pornographic poses. Titled “The Legend of Bud Shark and His Indelible Ink,” the display include homoerotic depictions featuring the divine figure held sacred by Christians as the Son of God. Protesters demanded that the city council de-fund the exhibit, but the city asserted the image did “not meet the criteria of public obscenity.”

Over ten years ago, New York City’s second largest art museum, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, was [engulfed](#) in controversy over its offensive displays. Then Mayor Rudy Giuliani threatened to cut off the city’s \$7.2 million a year funding to the Brooklyn museum unless the director “[came] to his senses.”

Giuliani said at the time, “The idea of, in the name of art, having a subsidized building have so-called works of art in which people are throwing elephant dung at a picture of the Virgin Mary — that’s sick. It is an outrageous thing to do.”

Another provocative display featured at the Brooklyn Museum of Art around the same time included a sliced-open pig suspended in formaldehyde, which required a disclaimer that read “may cause shock, vomiting, confusion, panic, euphoria and anxiety.”

Overall, the controversies over displays of distasteful artwork call into question the public funding of art, and whether it should continue.



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