

# The Fools faithfully display outlaw art

*Copy shop exhibits S.F. State students' artistic reactions to censorship*

BY ED BOWERS

**C**ENSORSHIP is lethal to human evolution. It hides behind good intentions, but the result is always to kill facts, suppress information, and control people into being other than themselves. Its purpose is to obfuscate awareness so that we live in the Land of the Blind controlled by those who themselves cannot see.

At San Francisco State, art student Fiamma C. Giger presented a work of art called "Camouflage," on lined, recycled paper from her notebooks that were communications between herself and a friend who joined the R.O.T.C. program for financial benefits.

The work is a portrait of her dressed in an R.O.T.C. uniform blown up to life-size proportions and showing her surrounded by words from her communications to her friend, some of which had verbs and nouns considered by many people to be "inappropriate."

This work was entered at an art show at the state Capitol in Sacramento, where it was deemed inappropriate for display because of the language of the text surrounding her image. So it was then placed in a private office at the Capitol, with the door closed and the stipulation that if someone requested to see it, they could.

In other words, Giger was treated with the same respect as a pornographer in the Fifties selling shots of topless burlesque queens to high school students on a street corner in a small town.

Richard Kamler, her art instructor, backed her up by gathering together 18 other student artists to collaborate on creating a number of works of art based on the theme "Artists As Citizens Respond To Censorship."

This exhibit was recently on display at the Faithful Fools at 234 Hyde St., and it's one of the best exhibitions of art I have seen of late.

Most art sickens me. I don't even know anymore why I'm doing an art column. But the pieces on display in the copy shop of the Faithful Fools have integrity, humor and guts. That's rare in the art world, which by now is mostly about interior decorating, wine and cheese.

One piece shows a fat Uncle Sam, pockets full of dollar bills, turds coming out of him, urine as well.

Another depicts the skyscrapers of the Financial District covered with money — not exactly subtle, but enthusiastically executed.

Giger's piece was ostensibly censored for certain forbidden words, but was actually 86'd from the Capitol art competition for being anti-war.

That's my opinion of course. I have no way to prove it. But I wasn't born yesterday. If obscene words were forbidden at the state Capitol, every employee there would now be behind bars.

There was a piece at the Fools' exhibit about self-censorship: the sculpture of a black man smiling and pretending to be happy to entertain his oppressors. That's not just a black thing anymore; it is pretty much across the board, especially in regards to service personnel in San Francisco.

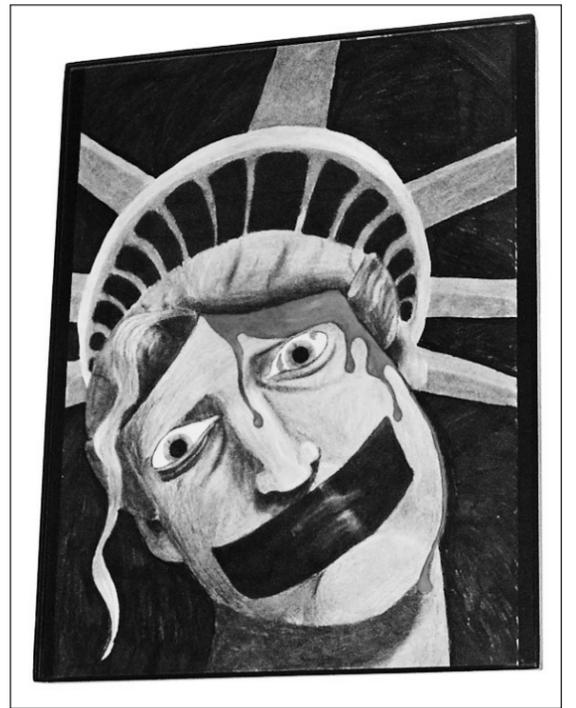
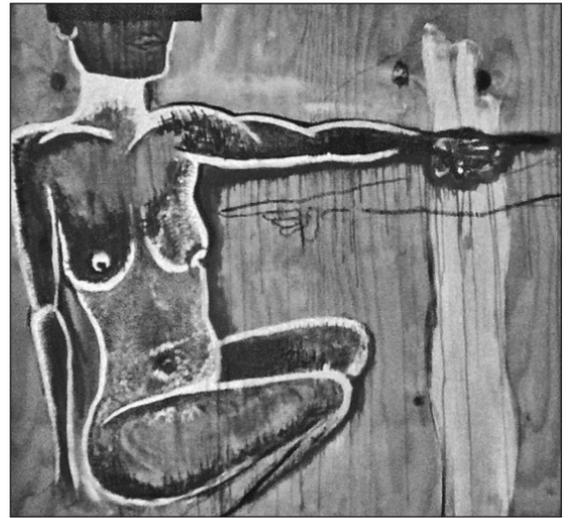
The fact that this kind of censorship is happening today indicates a metastasizing totalitarian fascism is slowly taking over the country. That this exhibit found a home in the Tenderloin is ironic given the fact that this neighborhood is where people are confined when their politically or culturally incorrect lives and problems have been effectively censored from ordinary human consciousness.

If this neighborhood was a work of art, it would be concealed behind closed doors.

There was a reception for this event at the Faithful Fools. A number of people were there, warriors against totalitarianism. A lot of words were said; I hope they have some effect in the future.

But the real heroes of this event were Fiamma C. Giger, and her instructor, Richard Kamler, who backed her up when she needed support. Giger is a sincere and extremely talented young woman. She was rather self-effacing at the reception, as opposed to many artists in San Francisco who talk a lot about themselves and do very little.

The state Capitol in Sacramento is not in favor of freedom of speech. That's obvious. They are afraid



**This work, "Camouflage" by Fiamma C. Giger, was deemed inappropriate for display in an art show at the state Capitol. The offending words are not legible here. But it and 18 other works by artists at S.F. State, created in reaction to the censorship of "Camouflage," were exhibited at the Faithful Fools copy shop.**

of a picture of a young woman in an R.O.T.C. uniform surrounded by words.

I dare them to live in my neighborhood for more than a week. Maybe then they'd have something real to fear.

Honors should go to the Faithful Fools for facil-

itating this dangerous exhibit which was on display through May 18.

I hope you checked it out. Maybe you were offended, or amused, or learned something new.

I hope so. That's what great art is for.

At any rate, I know you weren't bored. ■

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