

Unpublished letter to the editor of the *Mount Desert Islander* Aug-2006

While I am ever grateful for news coverage of the arts and particularly so for the article about my exhibition at the Shaw Gallery in Northeast Harbor, (Words Inspire Shaw Exhibit 8/3/06) I am troubled by one or two things in your article.

The photograph of my painting "The Times" accompanying the article was cropped or edited by the *Islander* in an unfortunate or at least a questionable manner. The bottom of the painting which was not shown in the *Islander* photograph includes a man looking into an abyss with the silhouettes of several coffins near the darkened New York skyline, and a nondescript but admittedly ominous electronic device near the Star of David and a stained glass window from a protestant church. It seems that the *Islander* could have easily chosen to reduce the size of the overall photograph if space limitations were an issue (as the *Bar Harbor Times* did) vs. making a choice to edit out important content and aspects of the composition. The piece attempts to capture and reflect the socio-political landscape of what it has felt like to live in New York City in the post 9/11 world. The elements edited out of the piece are important to it.

There was another unfortunate omission in the accompanying editorial copy. The press release provided by the Shaw Gallery provided details of the exhibition including a description of another large painting ("Florida, Florida, Florida") which explained that the piece documented the hanging chad aspects of the 2000 presidential election and "includes words documenting the Florida chad debacle..". Oddly, the *Islander* changed the sentence completely in describing the painting to say that it includes "...words documenting the devastation of hurricanes there.." Needless to say, the two descriptions are rather different. The words in the painting are clearly about the 2000 election and the overall painting questions whether divine retribution might have played a role in the unfortunate weather patterns that followed.

In the past couple of years I've discovered that the unconventional subject matter of my work has run into the unfortunate political divide in this country. I've had an exhibition of my work canceled at the last minute "for insurance reasons" when the content appeared to be too political. I've had my paintings removed from the walls of an exhibition by a group that sublet a gallery (with an ongoing exhibition) for a cocktail party because they were "offended by the content". I was briefly detained by the Secret Service in NYC for handing out a flyer on the street (with my artwork) during the Republican National Convention. I've had the Maine State Library block access to my web site from statewide library computers, categorizing it arbitrarily and inaccurately as "pornography" until I appealed their position. It is all entirely disturbing; each party is quick to claim that it isn't censorship at all. I find myself increasingly uneasy about the pattern.

I bring the two problems in the 8/3/06 article to your attention because I wonder if the Islander shouldn't have been a bit more careful when editing both the content of a potentially provocative painting and when incorrectly describing another despite having been given the accurate description. A free and objective press seems to be our last hope for a dependable check and balance in this society at a time when we desperately need one.

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