



VETERANS PROTEST FLAG EXHIBIT



Robert Mapplethorpe, "American Flag", photograph, 1977.

Veterans protest flag exhibit

Associated Press

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PHOENIX -- An art exhibit that includes an American flag draped in a toilet and another lying on the floor is drawing daily protests from veterans, who consider the show disrespectful.

Officials at the Phoenix Art Museum, however, said they had no intention of canceling "Old Glory: the American Flag in Contemporary Art."

Some 300 demonstrators, many of them veterans, rallied outside the museum Sunday to demand that the 80-piece exhibit be removed.

The show, which opened March 16, has drawn criticism particularly because of two items: New York feminist author Kate Millett's commode piece titled "The American Dream Goes to Pot" and New York artist Dread Scott's "What is the Proper Way to Display a U.S. Flag?" in which museum-goers are encouraged to stand on a flag and write in a comment book nailed to a shelf.

"It's only cloth after all," read one visitor's comment. Another said: "Why is standing on something a bad thing? I buy Persian rugs and stand on them."

The demonstration prompted about 150 calls of support Monday to the American Legion of Arizona's office in Phoenix, said Bob Reinhardt, a group official.

"Millions of people have died for the rights of that flag," said Reinhardt, a Vietnam veteran. "The flag is to be honored and respected."

He said volunteers will stand outside the museum every day in protest until the exhibit is removed.

But museum director Jim Ballinger defended the exhibit and said its controversial pieces will remain on display as scheduled, until June 16.

"What this exhibit celebrates is freedom in America," he said. "We have a story to tell and we're not going to take away a crucial part of the story."



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