

Aldrich exhibition to celebrate the human body

Cathy-Ann Gobin
 NEWS-TIMES
RIDGEFIELD — The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art is to celebrate the human body and how contemporary artists interpret and present the subject of the nude form in light of the Whitney Museum of American Art canceling a similar show. The museum will be curating our own show. It is not the show the Whitney was going to do," said Aldrich Museum Director Harry Philbrick. "The Whitney, in New York City, canceled earlier this year the exhibition, 'Great America Nude.'" The museum said it wanted to focus efforts and resources on another project. "It's really not going to be a shocking exhibition," Philbrick said. "I think that the show will be a very traditional exhibition. The nude has been a subject matter for hundreds of hundreds of years." Philbrick said there were several reasons for doing this show. "One is that I've been wanting to do a show on the nude for a long time, and there has been a lot of art made on the nude human body." Philbrick also said he disagrees with the court ruling. As a result, he wanted to give Finley a venue

revoked her grant, Congress voted to limit federal arts grants according to "general standards of decency." Finley sued for the grant and a court ruled in 1992 in her favor. The NEA appealed and the 9th Court of Appeals upheld the lower court. This year, the case went before the Supreme Court, which ruled that the government had the right to withhold federal grants from work it disqualifies for being overtly controversial.

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The News-Times/Douglas Healey

Harry Philbrick, director of the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, said he has received positive reaction to the museum's planned show called "Nude in Contemporary Art."

for her show.

Philbrick said he doesn't want the show to be associated with feminism or any other ideology except the appreciation of the nude body and the view modern

artists have of it.

"In many ways it's one of the old-fashioned kinds of exhibits you can do," Philbrick said.

"These are issues and ideas that have been a major part in the his-

tory of art, and as we approach the millennium it is nice to revisit those ideas and see how they are being approached by artists now," Philbrick said.

In the "Nude in Contemporary Art" exhibition, Finley will take over one of the Aldrich galleries as a classroom-studio environment for life drawing classes. The installation "Go Figure" will include actual instructors and nude models, including Finley. Museum visitors will be welcome to view or participate in the class.

Philbrick said he did not expect a huge reaction to the Aldrich carrying the show or the life-drawing classes. In the past week a word has gotten out about the show, he said he has received positive remarks.

"It's been a totally positive reaction," said Philbrick, adding that other area artist groups have life-drawing classes.

"The Ridgefield Guild of Artists has life-drawing classes all the time," Philbrick said. "It's an extremely difficult thing to do, to

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 draw the human form. It's challenging."

Philbrick is hoping local art groups will help collaborate in the effort to offer life-drawing classes at the museum when the show is there.

Patricia Baker, a member of the guild, said she thinks shows like the one the Aldrich is planning, including the life-drawing classes, are encouraging to artists and others.

"Someone who maybe thought about it but never really tried it

or was too timid to attend the class might go to the show and say maybe I'll try that," Baker said.

The guild, which uses professional models, has life-drawing classes year-round on Tuesdays from 7 to 10 p.m., Baker said. Thursday classes from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. will resume in September.

High school students interested in participating in the classes must have a waiver signed by a parent.