

the **aldrich**
museum of
contemporary
art

The Ridgefield Press

September 24, 1998

It's not nudity; Finley is *obscene*

To the Editors:

Director Philbrick of the Aldrich Museum completely misread my letter to The Ridgefield Press of Sept. 1. If he will re-read it, he will see that I offered not a single word of objection to his forthcoming exhibition of nude art.

My letter's purpose was to question the appropriateness of the Aldrich's invitation to Karen Finley, the well-known "performance artist" who has been invited to appear in conjunction with the exhibit.

My objection is based on her well-documented performances elsewhere, of which vulgarity and blasphemy seem to be the basic ingredients. A few years ago, Mr. Finley found herself at the center of the national debate over taxpayer funding of her "art" through the National Endowment for the Arts. At that time, Ms. Finley was widely reported (in The Wall Street Journal and elsewhere) for her performance in which she appears before the audience nude, smears chocolate over her body and screams "God is dead..."

Ms. Finley is also a painter, and her paintings include blasphemous portrayals of Biblical figures, such as John the Baptist and the Apostles engaging in homosexual acts and Mary, the mother of Christ, proclaiming "The Virgin Mary is pro-choice."

According to the announcement

in The Ridgefield Press, Aug. 27, Ms. Finley will, during her proposed Ridgefield appearance, pose nude while our local citizens are provided with artists' materials and invited to "sketch." I am questioning the intentionality of this, and its legitimacy as a genuine "life" class.

Ms. Finley is apparently referred to as one of the "famous four" performance artists whose indecent presentations provoked the national firestorm over taxpayer funding of lewd and blasphemous "art" through the NEA. I have contacted both the Family Research Council and the American Family Association regarding Ms. Finley, and both organizations reported that Ms. Finley's performances have been so objectionable that complaints about the obscenity involved have been

taken all the way to the United States Supreme Court in cases involving NEA funding. The Supreme Court voted eight-to-one against Ms. Finley and her three colleagues, upholding a recently Congress-imposed decency test for federal arts grants.

As The Ridgefield Press reported, shortly after this Supreme Court decision against Ms. Finley, the Whitney Museum in New York canceled the exhibition which included Ms. Finley's performance.

My question is, why does Ridgefield have to coarsen its community life with this type of presentation? Once again, I ask Director Philbrick of the Aldrich Museum to reconsider his invitation to Karen Finley.

JOHN HOWARD SANDEN
Cain's Hill Road, Sept. 19