

National Coalition Against Censorship

Ruth DeYoung Kohler
Director
John Michael Kohler Arts Center
608 New York Avenue
Sheboygan, WI 53081-4507

October 22, 2012

Dear Ms. Kohler,

We are writing to protest the removal of Betsy Schneider's piece, *Januarys 1998-2009*, part of the artist's series "Quotidian", from *the kids are all right* exhibition. We urge you to re-display the piece as soon as possible so as to maintain the Kohler Arts Center's commitment to artistic freedom as well as its integrity as an art institution.

It is our understanding that the work was removed on Thursday, October 11, a little over a week after the show's opening, in response to complaints about nudity. We are appalled by the very idea that a mother's documentation of her growing daughter, which has no sexual content whatsoever, could be considered off-limits for an art exhibition.

Photographs of naked infants and young children are present in many family albums. And Betsy Schneider is not just a mother; she is a recognized artist whose art explores issues of children and childhood. She is also a tenured art professor at Arizona State University and a 2011 Guggenheim Fellow. Her work, just like other work in *the kids are all right*, may raise questions for some viewers, but any discussion of these questions has now been pre-empted by censorship.

There are, as you are aware, nude children in historical paintings as well as in the work of many contemporary photographers, indeed they are featured in many of the works in *the kids are all right*. Censoring Betsy Schneider's work can only contribute to a perception that images of nude children are all potentially "wrong"; it will project and universalize the perverse viewpoint of a pedophile. At the same time, by making the work of an artist and mother photographing her daughter suspect, it will dilute the seriousness of the crime of real child abuse. Censoring Betsy Schneider's work makes the Arts Center complicit in such a process.

Removing the images in response to individual objections will make the Arts Center vulnerable to even more complaints. Different people object to different things. If you remove material to suit everyone's sensitivities, there will be little left. Hosting a public

19 Fulton Street, Suite 407
New York, NY 10038
tel: (212) 807-6222
fax: (212) 807-6245
e-mail: ncac@ncac.org
web: www.ncac.org

Joan E. Bertin
Executive Director

NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association
American Association of
School Administrators
American Association of
University Professors
American Association of
University Women
American Booksellers Foundation
for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Television
& Radio Artists
American Jewish Committee
American Library Association
American Literary Translators
Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists
& Authors
Americans United for Separation of
Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
The Dramatists Guild of America
Educational Book & Media Association
First Amendment Lawyers Association
International Reading Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
The Newspaper Guild/CWA
PEN American Center
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation
of America
Screen Actors Guild
Sexuality Information & Education
Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers
& Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ
Office of Communication
United Methodist Church
United Methodist Communications
Women's American ORT
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

discussion, where everyone can voice their concerns, is a much better way to handle complaints than censorship: such a discussion can reinforce your mission to support “substantive critical explorations” and demonstrate your commitment to “cultivat[ing] connections” between artists and audiences without compromising either.

We urge you to return the work to display as an important step not only in preserving the integrity of your institution but in resisting the alarming cultural tendency to see any representation of a naked child as sexual.

Sincerely,
Svetlana Mintcheva
Director of Programs
National Coalition Against Censorship

Exhibiting artists from *the kids are all right*:

Melonie Bennett
www.meloniebennett.com

Lucas Foglia
www.lucasfoglia.com

Nina Berman
Associated Professor
Columbia University Graduate School of
Journalism
www.ninaberman.com

Steve Giovinco
www.stevegiovinco.com

Justin Kirchoff
www.justinekirchoff.com

Martha Fleming-Ives
www.marthaflemingives.com

Josh Quigley

Tierney Gearon
www.tierneygearon.com

Paul Mpagi Sepuya
www.paulsepuya.com

Catherine Opie

American Booksellers Foundation For Free Expression
Chris Finan
President
www.abffe.org

Feminists for Free Expression
Suzanne Atkinson Delaney
Managing Director
www.ffeusa.org

National Center for Reason and Justice
Judith Levine
Director

www.ncrj.org

Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts
Mariessa Terrell
www.waladc.org

Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance
Ricci Joy Levy, Executive Director
www.woodhullalliance.org

Julie Anand
Associate Professor of Photography
Assistant Director for Recruitment and Retention
School of Art
Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts
Arizona State University

Sama Alshaibi
Associate Professor of Photography
University of Arizona

Robert Atkins
Art Critic
www.robertatkins.net

Jo-Ann Conklin
Director
David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University

Jeff Curto
Professor, Photography
College of DuPage
www.cod.edu/photo

Binh Danh
Assistant Professor, School of Art
The Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts
Arizona State University

Erika Gentry
Associate Professor, Photography Department / Multi Media Studies Program
City College of San Francisco

Eliza Gregory
Artist and MFA Student
www.elizagregory.org

Carol Jacobsen
Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design
University of Michigan

Adriene Jenik
Professor and Director, School of Art
Katherine K. Herberger Endowed Chair in Fine Arts
Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts
Arizona State University

Gordon Knox
Director
ASU Art Museum
Arizona State University
asuartmuseum.asu.edu

Joanne Leonard
Diane M. Kirkpatrick and Griselda Pollock
Distinguished University Professor Emeritus
of the School of Art and Design
and Program in Women's Studies,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Michael Lundgren
Artist
www.michaeldlundgren.com/

Sally Mann
Artist
www.sallymann.com

Shanna Merola
Artist
www.shannamerola.com

Anne Schneider
Mother and Artist

David J. Taylor
Artist
www.dtaylorphoto.com

Nora Annesley Taylor, PhD
Alsdorf Professor of South and Southeast Asian Art
School of the Art Institute of Chicago

William Tolan
Professor
Photographic Technology
Austin Community College

Catherine Wagner
Artist
www.catherinewagner.org

Martha Wilson
Founding Director
Franklin Furnace
www.franklinfurnace.org

Marilyn A. Zimmerman
Associate Professor
Department of Art and Art History
College of Fine, Performing and Communication Arts
Wayne State University