

# Oooo! Art Me All Night Long!

So there I was, walking down the street yesterday minding my own business as best I know how, enjoying all the trees and pretty clouds, when it occurred to me that anything taller than it is wide is phallic. Don't ask me why I'd think such a thing. Maybe because I'm as sexually repressed as the next office shredder—or as much as you, for that matter—so I guess that's our answer right there.

But I couldn't get it out of my head. A moment ago, the trees were swaying hap-

pily like something from a Disney cartoon, but

## THE SHREDDER



now they took on a decidedly lascivious nature—fact is, those trees were downright *nasty*. You ever noticed how long and hard they are and how they thrust upwards into those soft clouds undulating across the warmly sensuous sky? Sure you have. They do it every day. *All day.*

I was shocked at such behavior. So I went right home and took a cold shower and wondered how that lovely, bucolic landscape could morph so suddenly into a Traci Lords porno flick, when just a minute ago it was safe enough to bring the kids outside to beat up Barney.

You probably know where I'm going with all this. Right over to the County Government Center's Planning Department, that's where, since it has been making big news these days by find-

ing dirty pictures in—of all places—the Planning Department.

Last week, a painting by local artist **Dorothy Riggs** stirred up carnal complaints from county employees. The offending art depicted two peppers sitting next to each other. One was longer than it was wide. One was wide. Uh-oh. Arrest that painting. Spread 'em, buddy. You can't do that in public and get away with it. So it was removed from the department's wall, leaving it (dare I say it?) naked.

Naturally enough, everyone chimed in with their take on this important issue. The questions flew. Should the county government be involved in displaying porno paintings in the first place? But how do we know there's anything lewd on that canvas to begin with? Do peppers have peckers? Are dirty pictures in the eye of the beholder, or is it just the opposite? If so, just what the heck does that mean, anyway? But more importantly, had Bill Clinton ever propositioned Dorothy Riggs during the relevant time period? And when will someone *do* something about all this?

Well as you can imagine, nobody knew the answers other than to take that painting down and let it do its nasty business somewhere else. Like maybe over at **Glen Starkey's** house. He's the guy, you might recall, who got boiled in his own hot water a couple of weeks back when he exhibited his lewd, degenerate art-type stuff over at Linnaea's Cafe in San Luis that got another group of art critics in a tangle over whether sex and violence should be con-

finied to every place but in art. And just what did maestro Starkey think of Riggs' pulsating pepper paintings? Plenty.

Even though he writes for this newspaper, the Telegram-Tribune deigned to allow him space in their letters column on Tuesday to rant the way he does each week here, except here he gets paid for it, lord knows why. He said all the typical stuff you'd expect an offended artist to say about people who get offended by art they think is offensive—that if they'd stop and think about it, anything can start looking kinda dirty. Sort of what I was saying at the beginning of this column, only not as well.

Boy. This art stuff sure was getting people all het up. Meanwhile, back over at the Planning Department, administrative services officer **Patrick Brun** donned his rubber gloves and, handling Dorothy Riggs' hot peppers gingerly on the way out the door, mouthed some blather about respecting the requests of employees whose delicate sensibilities are so easily befuddled. Curiously, he said all the complaints were from women. I'd always heard they were the weaker sex. Now at least I know they have the dirtiest minds.

Then Cambria gallery owner **Jan Petersen** got her shots in at Starkey. You see, waaay back in 1995, Starkey had dumped on Cambria's galleries in some dumb article he'd written when he couldn't think of anything else to write about. Petersen had been quietly pissed off for three years, but now she had Starkey right

where she wanted him. She'd seen Glen's weird paintings at Linnaea's. Ah-*ha!* They stunk up the place! Glen Starkey didn't know squat about art! "Those who can, do," intoned Petersen in a New Times letter to the editor. "Those who can't, teach. And those who can't do or teach, become critics." (To which Starkey responded, "And those who can't do any of those things, open art galleries." Boy, I sure wish he was as good with his paint brushes as he is with his wise-ass comments.)

So what does all this mean? Maybe it means that art is everywhere. Or maybe it's nowhere. Perhaps art is whatever you want it to be, or nothing you don't ever want it not to be. Maybe I'm as confused as you, or maybe we've all learned that art and filth are the interchangeable yin and yang of the cosmos, and that the eye of the beholder is in desperate need of laser surgery.

One thing we do know for certain is that art is tra spelled backwards—and that it should be kept as far away from government bureaucrats as possible, because it'd be nice if at least one thing doesn't get screwed up. And maybe far away from cafes, too. And snippy art gallery owners. And wise-ass, critic-painters who go writing letters for the competition.

All I know is that I'm stuck in here at this computer keyboard because I can't go outside with all those trees still doing the nasty with the cumulonimbus centerfolds. And one other thing. I finally realized that I know absolutely everything about art, but I don't know what I like. Δ