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## Censorship:

Artist says wor  
SIUC official sa

By Victoria Pierce  
The Southern Illinoisan

Part of a student's exhibit at the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale Student Center has been covered by black paper. Some call it censorship; others say it's simply enforcing the rules.

Jay Thomson, an art student at SIUC, put up his exhibit Oct. 8 in one of the bays of Art Alley, a hallway where students' work is exhibited.

The next day he found black paper covering the part of the exhibit along the back wall. Thomson said he fears the exhibit was censored because of its subject — homosexuality.

The exhibit, entitled "Labels: One Fag Bashes Back," contains 21 Polaroid pictures taken during a performance piece Thomson did Oct. 6. In the performance, a taped gay-bashing message that was left on the answering machine of the Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Friends organization played while Thomson painted the slurs on his body. Another person took the Polaroid pictures, two of which contain frontal nudity. In the exhibit, the printed words of the phone message are under the photos.

"My first reaction was they were

censoring the words and pictures because they dealt with gay issues. I still think that's the real reason," Thomson said.

But Don Castle, adviser to the Student Programming Council which oversees Art Alley exhibits, said the pictures and words were covered because they had not been approved by the council.

"The exhibit in question went up unapproved," Castle said. "I don't consider this censorship. Everything that goes into Art Alley is censored in some way, it has to be approved."

When Thomson first proposed his exhibit six months ago, he planned on having three sculptures or "portable altars" expressing his views on commercialism, self-image and religion.

Thomson said he also showed the committee some of his other work and told them that he would like to include some of the work that would be finished closer to the time his exhibit was planned.

Thomson said Ted Smith, the chair of the SPC fine arts committee, said he didn't have a problem with that.

No one ever told him he would have to come back and have any new additions approved before the exhibit went up, Thomson said.

"I was not trying to make controversial art," he added. "Throughout this whole ordeal I have not had any representation. I haven't been able to defend my work."

Castle said it isn't unusual for artists not to have works entirely completed six months before it is to be exhibited. In that case, the artists usually outline what they are working on and what they are planning to have appear in the space.

"Nowhere did this artist represent this," Castle said. The four sculptures, however, represent what Thomson had discussed with the committee.

The SPC's executive committee, made up of the students who chair the organizations committees, voted 5-4 Friday evening to give Thomson the option of either taking down the entire exhibit, leaving the sculptures up, or leaving the exhibit as it is with the black paper covering the text and photos.

The council is taking a stand and saying the rules have to be followed, Castle said.

"The content is controversial, but no one is saying this isn't appropriate for art alley," Castle said. Other artists have addressed issues of sexuality before, he said.

Thomson said he has not yet decided what he will do.

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Work censored because of homosexual theme;  
Exhibit did not have council's approval



**Art Alley:** A couple checks out an exhibit in the SIUC Student Center Sunday. Jay Thomson, the art student who put together the exhibit, says his work is being censored because of its homosexual content. Black paper covers the text and photos. A university official said the work is covered because its installation was not properly approved.

Southern Illinoisan photo by CEASAR MARAGNI