

8 March 1988

Jim Jenkins  
Art Department  
Cal State Fullerton  
Fullerton, CA 92634

Dear Mr. Jenkins:

I am very sorry to hear that the University turned down the gift of the John Ehn sculptures, California State Landmark #939.

I would like to tell you about the particular pieces that the university found disturbing .....both were inspired by Mormon stories.

The piece of the two men fighting (Peg Leg Smith and the Indian) is a story of those individuals fighting over the ownership of a cow. The story has them killing each other. The remaining family members, the white family and the Indian family, moved in together and pined the useless deaths since they eventually shared the meat of the cow that the fight was over.

The kidnap scene is about an oaf of a mountain man who everybody feared. He abducts a girl and takes her to his mountain cabin. A number of months later she is returned, healthy, still virtuous and unharmed - proving to the villagers that he was a caring and safe person. He was then accepted by the people of the village.

The first work says that human beings should talk to each other and share and that killing doesn't accomplish anything but just brings grief. The second piece says we should look beyond the exterior of a person and not make rash judgements about other human beings.

I sorry that works of art telling these universal stories caused such problems to an institute of higher learning.

By the way, I didn't get this information from the Ehn family. I heard it first from a curator of a museum in Montana who knows Mormon myth and saw the pictures in my book. The family verified this was John's inspiration.

I think it proper for the University to reconsider the Ehn families generous and valuable offer.

Sincerely,

Seymour Rosen  
Director