

Editorial COMMENTARY

by Tom Starland, Editor and Publisher

The America That Would Never Happen

I don't know if it's because most of the history text books for public schools in America come from Texas or what, but a lot of folks in America have a pretty mixed up view of where Americans came from and who made America. For the most part, people who came here were leaving their birth places to escape prejudice and persecution and to start over in a new land. Some came to capitalize on the opportunities this new world offered - they were already well off, but they wanted more.

When they got here they took land from the Native Americans, the Spanish, the French Canadians, and the Mexicans and called it America. They imported slaves from Africa to do most of the hard work and when the law said they had to pay them they looked to the Irish and Chinese to do their work for low pay. It seemed that every new wave of immigrants were pushed to the bottom of the ladder, moving those first to come over higher and higher up the ladder. That seems to be the American way.

Now we have the America First movement, which translates to White people should always be in charge, at the top of the ladder, no matter if they are the majority or not. They will dictate what's right, what's the law and what's moral in America. Everything else that is not a reflection of them is wrong. They also want to be in charge of our culture and wage cultural wars to distract from everything else.

Hey, if your whole lifestyle was based on taking from others and exploiting others, wouldn't you want to keep them distracted from that? This is the America we live in today, where a few are steering the ship.

So what's got a bug up my Polish, Scottish, Irish butt? Censorship of the arts in South Carolina or anywhere for that matter.

The Arts in Public Places Commission approved plans for Greenville, SC, to join a select group of cities from around the globe that have hosted *Wings of the City*, a collection of nine monumental bronze sculptures by world-renowned Mexican artist Jorge Marín. The sculptures have been installed in Falls Park and on the Peace Center campus in downtown Greenville, and will remain there until the end of September 2021. At least that's what some of us hope. Good people are fighting to make it so and I hope it does.



Sculpture by Jorge Marín, part of "Wings of the City"

Almost from the minute the works were installed someone from a city in SC, not Greenville, complained of the male nudity in a public park. Then a group of people got the Greenville County Council to take funding away from the exhibit and next came the vandalism. Somehow female nudity isn't as obscene as male nudity to most folks. And, this isn't just an Upstate problem, it happens all over South Carolina. Most of the time it's just understood, discussed behind closed doors, but every once in a while something slips through to the public and wham the righteous foot of the moral minority comes down to stamp it out.

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These same people have no problem electing immoral politicians to represent them, have no problem following religious leaders who live by different standards than they preach and no problem worshipping the almighty dollar and unholy profit. They can look the other way when it suits their needs, but they also want to dictate the morality of the rest of us too. And I'm not totally sure some of the problem isn't that it's a Mexican artist who made the sculptures.

I feel billboards are more obscene than a few nude male sculptures in a park for a short period of time and I don't get to say where they can and can't be put and I can't go anywhere without seeing them and they never go away. What about my sensibilities? And what do they put on them - Grandma with an AR-15 shooting at reindeer - oh my!

Children ride in cars and they see those billboards with a Grandma looking person pointing an automatic rifle at reindeer - what are they to think of that? And they say the left is waging a war against Christmas.

Those billboards are home-grown terrorism put up by a SC business, whose mission is to sell everyone freedom in the form of an AR-15.

If I have to live with those (2nd Amendment) billboards, a few prudes should have to live with some art showing a little male nudity (no pun intended). They don't have to go to the park to see them, but I can't avoid billboards driving anywhere.

On Our Cover This Month

Sometimes the best made plans just don't turn out the way you thought they would. A few months ago we were contacted by the Dare County Arts Council in Manteo, NC, about featuring work by a local artist who would be having a major show. They sent some examples, which I liked and the time frame was right so we agreed to feature a work by Russell Howard Yerkes II on our July 2021 cover.

Then as June approached we received an e-mail that Yerkes had suddenly passed away and they wondered if we would still run that cover as the family was willing to go forward with the exhibit. That was fine with us. And, like everything as time moves along, things change and the family wanted more time to plan that exhibit and it was moved to sometime in 2022.

The Dare County Arts Council is still presenting a memorial to Russell Howard Yerkes II, with a special exhibit, *Honoring Russell Howard Yerkes II (May 23, 1955 ~ May 19, 2021)*, on view in the Council's Courtroom Gallery, from July 2 - 31, 2021. The gallery will feature one amazing framed piece of Yerkes' artwork in the back of the room with its own lighting. To the side of the art, they will have a write up with a photo of Yerkes and the rest of the room will be empty. It will be an undeniable, uncluttered memorial to Russell Howard Yerkes II.

We just want to be clear that there will only be that one work on display at this time and a much larger exhibit of Yerkes' works will come later.

We've featured work on our covers before by artists who are no longer living, but this was a first for us and probably won't be the last time it happens, as we at *Carolina Arts* like to keep a spotlight on our senior artists who keep creating art - sometimes right up to their passing.

Some Post Pandemic Reminders

The COVID-19 Pandemic is far from over, but things are returning to where art galleries and art museums are open to people to come see art and hopefully return to buying art where art is for sale. We're hearing from more people about the exhibits they are presenting or are going to present.

During those 15 or so months when things were kind of shut down or running on a limited basis - as some never really stopped creating and offering art for sale

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