

Studio Place Arts Freedom of Expression Policy

1. What is Freedom of Expression?

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution is based upon the belief that in a free and democratic society, individual adults must be free to decide for themselves what to read, write, paint, draw, see and hear. If we are disturbed by images of violence or sex, we can change the channel, turn off the TV, and decline to go to certain movies or museum exhibits.

We can also exercise our *own* free speech rights by voicing our objections to forms of expression that we don't like. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis' advice that the remedy for messages we disagree with or dislike in art, entertainment or politics is "more speech, not enforced silence," is as true today as it was when given in 1927.

The commitment to freedom of imagination and expression is deeply embedded in our national psyche, buttressed by the first Amendment, and supported by a long line of Supreme Court decisions.

2. What is Censorship?

Provocative and controversial art puts our commitment to free speech to the test. A free society is based on the principle that each and every individual has the right to decide what art he or she wants – or does not want – to receive or create. Freedom of expression for ourselves requires freedom of expression for others. It is at the very heart of our democracy.

Censorship, the suppression of words, images, or ideas that are "offensive," happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their personal, political or moral values on others. Censorship can be carried out by the government as well as private pressure groups. Censorship by the government is unconstitutional. In contrast, when private individuals or groups organize boycotts against art exhibits of which they disapprove, their actions are protected by the First Amendment.

3. Our Policy

Studio Place Arts (SPA) is a non-profit visual arts center dedicated to assisting and encouraging artists and craftspeople and increasing the community's access to, and understanding of, contemporary arts and crafts. SPA is committed to the education of people of all ages, to broad community outreach, and to the exhibition and sale of arts and crafts to new audiences and the continued education of collectors and supporters of the arts and crafts are the primary goals of the SPA galleries.

SPA recognizes that all forms of true artistic expression may on occasion shock, offend, or challenge the viewer, and that an artist's work may be controversial. However, SPA fully supports an artist's freedom of artistic expression, and because of this commitment, it cannot engage in or condone any form of censorship. SPA is committed to intellectual freedom and the need for our galleries to represent many different points of view. We believe that individuals are responsible for making their own choices regarding appropriateness of materials, and that parents/guardians are responsible for the choices regarding appropriateness for their children. We ask our patrons to come to our galleries with an open eye, mind and heart ... and we hope each visit will be an adventure of growth and enlightenment.

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