



COVENTRY

November 1999

VILLAGE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF COVENTRY VILLAGE NEIGHBORS INC.

From the President's Pen

Once again we find ourselves in a world where art is apparently threatening to overthrow the government, turn all little girls into whore, all little boy into criminals and all righteous citizens into heathens waiting at the gates of hell. The only apparent solution as we bit our fingernails on the edge of the apocalypse is to pull all public funding for art.

Yikes! Am I the only one getting tired of this often played hand? Creative people will endlessly push boundaries. Attempting to reign them in and forcing them to fit within the constraints of some previously defined parameters is virtually impossible. People that push boundaries are eventually going to "push buttons."

Performance artist Karen Findley, the Robert Mapplethorpe exhibit in Cincinnati, the Cleveland State People's Art Show and now "Sensation" in Brooklyn, New York. In one way or another, all publicly funded. Each presenting work that by the standards of most is difficult to understand. The fact that it could be construed to be controversial opens the door for many to abuse.

Politicians, displaying outrage against art perceived to be amoral or sacrilegious can join the crowd of "stone-throwers" aimed at the few pennies of funding given to the arts, thereby sounding like money conscious officials. Controversy can be substituted as an issue to keep their constituency blind to their ineptitude on real and serious issues. Columnists, without a basic knowledge of art, the artist or the concept can wax poetic about something culturally significant to balance against their usual diatribe on politics and "why there aren't Milkmen any longer." TV news can put something not generally approved by censors on screen in the guise of news, in an effort to increase ratings. Each and everyone ignore the realities of the work and rapes it for their own benefit.

Like most everything, art is difficult to understand and it is growing more challenging. Most of us can grasp the concept of still life paintings. An artist does a reproductive study of a canvas full of "things." The crisper, cleaner the realism, the better we think it is. Religious art, as the glorification of a deity is immediately understandable. Most everyone believes in some sort of higher being; worship of that entity is immediately understood. When artist started to slip into Impressionism, the number of viewers naturally diminished. Some people could not (and can

not) understand the reason for the blurry images and disjointed views. Picasso, along with the post-impressionist crowd moved further away from photo-realistic art and lost still more everyday onlookers. Both groups started applying artistic theories to their work. It was no longer a painting of a woman, but instead a painting attempting to express the inner emotions of the woman. This required something from the viewer, heretofore unnecessary. It asked the viewer to do a little work. It required participation. Instead of just looking at a plate of fruit, we now needed to contemplate the reason the left side of the table holding the fruit is higher than the right. As artist started to experiment further, we laymen were expected to understand what the professional artist already knew. Artists, stretching their intellect and expanding their concept of art have far outpaced our ability to understand completely what they are attempting to express. If we truly want to participate in the appreciation of the work, we need to study almost as hard as the artist does.

The rest of the arts are similarly stacked against the viewer. Everyone understands the simplistic humor of TV's "Three's Company". Double-entendres and cheap jokes are easy and attract multitudes of viewers. Entertainment that taxes the viewer with challenging issues are almost universally more difficult for us to embrace. "I'll Fly Away" a television show about racial issues in the South during the sixties never found an audience. The two seasons of shows forced everyone to think and participate in the emotional turmoil of the characters and the time. This was not "bubblegum for the eyes" as Fred Allen once suggested. This was work for writers and viewers alike.

Classical music (and to a lesser extent, Jazz music) demands attentive patience from the listener. This is not the three-minute pop-tunes that are absorbed and discarded. You need to work to fully understand the construction of the piece. The new breed of classical composers such as Steven Reich and John Adams are trying to explore even deeper and challenge themselves with work that is not a recapitulation of what has gone on before.

There is some progress. As a society matures, art becomes a larger part of everyone's day. More leisure time allows some people to spend more time on the cultural amenities of life. As available time increases, so does understanding and then acceptance. Contemporary art is becoming more prevalent. Art films are finding their way into the cine-plexes of Middle America. Frasier, a television show with witty, intelligent writing is near the

top of the rating. While you're unlikely to hear someone humming Ives' Unanswered Question tomorrow in the elevator, the piece has moved up from the obscurity it experienced when written, to performances by the Cleveland Orchestra at least twice in the past few years. Still not "hummable", but growth.

We need to learn more. Creative people will continually "raise the bar". Unless we want to remain in the cultural and enlightened dark ages, we owe ourselves exposure to the arts. Part of that exposure MUST be things that force us to step outside of our comfort zone. We need to see a puzzling piece of Performance Art. We must regularly experience "uncomfortable" music. We should force ourselves to see an obscure play, all so that we do not remain stale in our comfortable world. Perhaps these adventures will even lend understanding to our world and the place we hold in it.

The work might not be good. It may never last outside of our generation. "Piss Christ" and "The Holy Virgin Mary" may never enjoy the type of retrospective show that the Cleveland Art Museum recently presented on the Bugatti family. This work may only be remembered for its controversy instead of the style, form, color and lines most art claims as lineage. Interestingly, there is nothing wrong with that. As any parent will tell you, even negative experiences fertilize the mind and help to bring to fruition all aspect of a life. Because the artwork is being created now, it may not conform to the standards previous artist used. That is OK also. Some art may only be meant for one generation. It immediacy might only be properly expressed by one artist for one audience. Art can have a finite lifecycle and still be of value.

I want my tax dollars to support art. I want my tax dollars to support artists that are in the midst of a quest. I want to see the struggles as well as the triumphs. The artistic struggle should be our struggle as well. The artist lays bare his work for our observation. This exhibitionism is to our benefit. Likewise, I expect some to be failures and I want to know the reasons for those failures. They are equally important.

Last month, a group of Coventry PEACE volunteers turned the most unsightly portion of our neighborhood into a beautifully landscaped garden and walkway. Simultaneously, the public art committee of Coventry PEACE was narrowing the selection of artists for the public art proposal. Soon a fund-raising art show will appear at the Coventry Library. Art is popping-up all over our neighborhood.

Some of it is and will be good. Others will be less successful. They will all, however teach us something about our world, our neighborhood and ourselves. You just need to pay attention to the lesson.

Jeffrey R. Dross
President, Coventry Neighbors



To the Editor:

I was distressed to learn that Edward Lentz; an attorney candidate for Cleveland Heights Municipal Court is the son of our Chief of Police, Martin Lentz. Since Chief Lentz is felt by some to have too much power over city council, I would dread having a Lentz family dynasty controlling both the court and police department.

Cleveland Heights Prosecutor says there is no conflict of interest. I don't agree. How would we ever know what the two Lentz's discuss in private?

This is not a party matter. It is nepotism and would not be good for our community.

June C. Wortman



**COVENTRY P.E.A.C.E.
PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE**

The Coventry P.E.A.C.E. Public Art Committee was formed to include public art in the redevelopment of the southeast corner of Euclid Heights Boulevard and Coventry Road in Cleveland Heights. After reviewing slides of regional artists, they have invited five to discuss their art and their approaches to public art projects with the community. At the end of the series, they will commission three artists to build models of their ideas for our site. All meetings will be held at the Coventry branch of the CH-UH Library (1925 Coventry). Since the library will not be open these evenings for library services, please use the Heights Youth Center entrance on Coventry Road.

Wednesday, Oct. 27, 1999

7:00 p.m. **BARRY GUNDERSON** and
8:00 p.m. **JOANDAMANKOS**

Wednesday, Nov. 3, 1999

7:30 p.m. **IRINA KOUKNANOVA**

Wednesday, Nov. 10, 1999

7:00 p.m. **ANGELICA POZO** and
8:00 p.m. **ROB BLISS**

Questions? Peggy Spaeth 932-5392
e-mail: spaethcoburn@juno.com

CANDIDATES' NIGHT HAS ONLY ONE FLAW

There was only one thing wrong with the last Candidates' Night held by Coventry Neighbors. There was fresh coffee brewed and ready. There were homemade cookies and other snacks waiting. The candidates arrived early, eager to tell everyone about themselves and their vision of the future. The chairs were arranged in a semi circle. Water waited on the dais table to quench the parched throat of talkative politicians.

Christine Sumner, candidate for school board talked about the reasons the upcoming levy success was so important. She explained why she felt some of the opposition points were wrong and highlighted some of the achievements she is most proud of during her tenure.

Member of council, **Phyllis Evans** talked about her work with the safety forces in Cleveland Heights. The city's safety rating has improved during her current term and she wanted everyone to know about what that benefit meant to everyone.

Councilman **Ken Montlack** talked about the hard working, professional staff that serves the city in most every department. He also pointed-out why he felt the current council is among the best with which he's worked. Specific to us, Montlack explained that over the years he has always supported the Coventry area.

ADVICE FROM THE JUDGE

During one Candidates' Night discussion, the Judge outlined ways to help the court when dealing with problem neighborhood properties.

- Write a letter to the city prosecutor about the errant property.
- Send photographs to the city prosecutor featuring aspects of the property that you feel best represent your displeasure with its state of repair.
- Attend the judicial proceedings. You can call the court to learn about court dates and agreed-upon continuances.
- DO NOT send information or concerns about the case to the Judge. This might actually be a disadvantage to the outcome.
- A little pro-active involvement might be exactly what the judicial process needs to solve the problem.
- The Cleveland Heights Prosecutor is Mr. Kim Segebarth and he can be reached at Cleveland Heights City Hall.

Information on pending court actions can be found by calling 291-4901. If a case has gotten to the court, it will be tried in the Criminal Court division. You will need to have the name of the person sited for trial information. If you do not know the name, you can get that information from the Housing Department at city hall.

Lately, however he has been trying to favor other areas in the same way so that they can also achieve what Coventry currently experiences.

Council hopeful, **Dennis Wilcox** outlined his background as a lawyer and member of the Board of Zoning Appeal. He spoke of the direction he'd like to head, including maximization of commercial and retail areas, improved dialog between the city and the school and ways to create incentives for home improvement.

Sitting Judge, **Lynn Toler** explained the improvements she has made on the operation of the "busiest court in the state." She has improved security and developed ways to help the average person succeed in court, without a lawyer, all while doubling the income the court produces. Toler also talked about her extracurricular work with youngsters in the nearby schools. She feels that by introducing young people to the judiciary system at an early age, society will ultimately benefit.

The only thing missing was you, the voter. About six residents came to listen and participate. Because of the small amount of guests, we began the evening with a roundtable discussion on a variety of topics. What can be done to maintain our housing stock? How do we deal with errant neighbors? Police? These spirited comments probably could not have taken place if the room was packed, but that was never the point. Meeting your elected representatives was.

This is the second time Coventry Neighbors held a candidate's night. This is the second time we faced embarrassingly low attendance. Apparently, this is of no value to the residents of the Coventry neighborhood. As we struggle to find reasons for existence, we have learned that electoral education is not of primary concern. If it looks like a duck, and sounds like a duck and walks like a duck we don't need to be told to alert Elmer Fudd.

CH-UH School Board candidate, Kari Sharpe expressed her regrets and was unable to attend. Judicial candidate, Edward Lentz was notified very late of the meeting due to a mailing address "mix-up". He expressed regret that he could not rearrange his schedule to attend.

ART SHOW

The Coventry PEACE Public Art Committee is sponsoring a Birdhouse Art Show. Work will be displayed for previewing at Coventry Village Library and Coventry businesses from November 5-15.

Opening Night: Friday, November 19, 7:30-9:00 p.m. at Coventry Village Library. Sale continues through Sunday, Nov. 21st. Hours: Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday: 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

All birdhouses will be for sale to benefit the Coventry PEACE Public Art Project.

For more information call Debbie at 216-371-5321 or April at 216-371-8845.

Coventry Village News is published by Coventry Neighbors, Inc. The newsletter is distributed free throughout Coventry Village. Mailed subscriptions are available. Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 7:40 p.m. at the Coventry Village Library, Euclid Heights Boulevard. & Coventry Road.

When you join Coventry Neighbors, Inc. you can be sure of having a voice in shaping your neighborhood's future. Membership includes a subscription to the Coventry Village News.

Editor: Bruce Biddle

Editorial Board: Jeff Dross, Elsa Johnson, Bob Klemenc

How to reach us: You may contact us by mail at:

Coventry Neighbors Inc. or Coventry Village News

[Redacted contact information]

Individual \$7.50 Family \$10 Senior Citizen \$5

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

ZIP CODE _____ PHONE _____

CNI needs street representatives to communicate with the local neighborhoods and assist with the delivery of the newsletter.

YES! I would like to assist CNI by becoming a CNI representative for my street.

Please return this form with your check to:

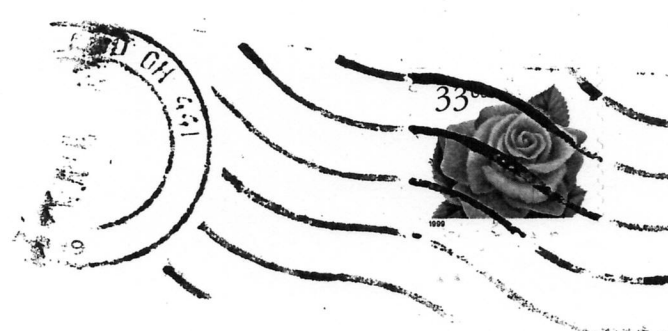
COVENTRY NEIGHBORS, INC.

[Redacted address]

COVENTRY Village News

c/o Bruce Biddle, Editor

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