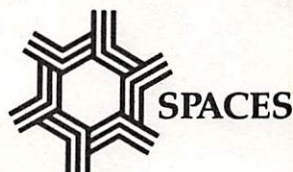Saving and Preserving Arts and Cultural Environments
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SPACES

9 March 1988

Jerry Samuelson, Dean
School of the Arts
Cal State Fullerton
Fullerton, CA 92634

Dear Dean Samuelson:

I am very sorry to hear that the University turned down the possible 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 Morman stories.

The piece of the two men fighting (Peg Leg Smith and the Indian) tells 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 mourned the senseless deaths since the two families eventually shared the meat of the cow.

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.

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 Morman myths and saw the pictures of the site in my book. The family verified that these myths inspired John's work.

I am sorry that these works of art representing universal and moral stories against prejudice & war were found unacceptable by the university.

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

Sincerely,

Seymour Rosen
Director