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## Nude art photographs displayed in Union

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*University of Maine*

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# Maine Campus

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## *Nude art photographs displayed in Union*

by Tim Rice  
Staff Writer

Nudity in art is not uncommon, but this month's exhibit in the Memorial Union of the work of Maine Photographer C.C. Church has raised some questions, and a few eyebrows.

"One student told me she thought the photos are demeaning of women," said Dean Rand, director of the Memorial Union, "but I haven't received any serious complaints yet. The display is one of the programs to increase art awareness on campus, and was administered to the university by Professor Vincent Hartgen. If I had received any serious complaints I would notify him, but so far there haven't been any that would warrant a call. I try to be sensitive to that kind of thing," he said.

"What bothers me is that when people see nudity in Playboy or Penthouse, they say it's trash, but when it's in a gallery, that makes it art," said Ruth Miles, a junior business major.

C.C. Church is one of the state's most renowned photographers, and has sold his work to such diverse publications as *The New York Times*, *People magazine*, *The Enterprising Woman*, and *The Maine Sunday Telegram*. In 1970 he was the first photographer to exhibit in the prestigious Walker Art Museum at

Bowdoin College, and in 1972 became the first photographer to be shown in Maine's leading art gallery, the Frost Fuller Gallery.

"If people are worried about nudes they're still in the last century," said Professor Vincent Hartgen, curator of UMO's art collection. Part of his responsibility is to choose the exhibits shown on campus, as well as invite artists to the university.

"If the pictures were lewd, dirty, pornographic, or erotic, I'd be the first not to put them up....but they're beautiful. When we invite an artist or sculptor to the school we do so because of their quality as a professional. I have no right to censor his work—I'd have to send the whole thing back. If complaints from prudish people ever start affecting policies on this campus, that's when we have to worry. There isn't a photo in the show that isn't beautiful. The man (Church) knows quality when he sees it. He's a master of his medium.

"You'd have no books, movies, or anything if you had to constantly be worried about satisfying the whims of certain individuals. You'd be editing yourself out of existence. When we invite an artist we don't say 'bring everything but nudes.' Some people might not want to see polar bears or outhouses. There will always be

complaints."

In the late 1940's Hartgen was criticized for exhibiting Japanese prints. Some people thought it was glorifying the country America had just defeated. He was also ridiculed for displaying a picture of a black person, he said.

"How long and hard did we fight in this country to get this kind of freedom? Are we going to be like Russia, and other countries, where everything is dictated from above? If



The artist [Wallace photo].

some people don't like our freedom, let them live in those countries. If we set up an examining board we'd soon be walking around in the same little suits like zombies, Hartgen said.

Hartgen reached for a large volume on the works of Rembrandt, and another on the history of art, and pointed out nudes in artwork throughout history. One picture showed a small stone sculpture of a nude woman, the Venus of Willendorf, which was dated 25,000 B.C.

"I'm wondering if these people who worry about nudes are going to the Boston Art Museum and remove all the nudes there. You have to watch these people who would like to dictate what is and isn't holy. They're the dangerous ones.

"What it boils down to is this fact. We are an intellectual institution. Since prehistory the human figure has always been a thing to be admired by man. Who are we to say we shouldn't show nudity in art. If we can't handle this intellectually, there's something wrong with us.

"When you start editing, you don't give students what they've paid for. They won't see the whole picture, and will graduate under a guise of being educated.

"And after all, what more beautiful thing does man have to admire than the human body," Hartgen said.