

Scandinavia

Legal vetting of graduation shows raises spectre of censorship

Swedish students' work comes under scrutiny after a series of controversies

COPENHAGEN. Konstfack, the Stockholm-based University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, has started legal vetting of students' work proposed for graduation exhibitions, following heavy criticism from politicians and the public. So far one student has been banned from presenting a video piece in the current graduating show, which opened last month. Magdalena Nordin was forced to withdraw her work, *Paris Hilton—Nothing in This World (Remix Sextape)*. In the piece, Nordin has mixed one of US celebrity Paris Hilton's music videos with the infamous sex tape, "One Night in Paris". "Our legal expert said that the student did not comply with copyright legislation," Olof Glemme, head of the fine arts department, told *The Art Newspaper*. "We therefore had to prohibit her from showing the work."



Magdalena Nordin's controversial video work featuring Paris Hilton was withdrawn from Konstfack's graduation exhibition

The institution has come under a large degree of scrutiny over the past five months. In January, Konstfack student Anna Odell staged an attempted suicide in an elaborate performance piece. She was taken to

hospital by police, where she received treatment after behaving violently and erratically. The next day she revealed that she had faked the episode in order to get material for her art school project. She has been asked to



pay for the cost of the medical treatment, but has been allowed to show her work at the graduation exhibition. Another student showed a video piece documenting himself spraying graffiti on a train. The film was also shown

at Market, the Stockholm contemporary art fair, in February, where it was seen by the minister of culture, who stated that it should not be considered a work of art. Since then Sweden has been embroiled in an ongoing

debate about freedom of expression, art and public funding.

The university now plans to tighten its ethical guidelines and look more carefully at students' work by establishing an ethical commission. "It is by no means our intention to investigate each student's work, but when in doubt legal expertise shall be sought," said Mr Glemme.

"Many students are concerned that works are now judged by a lawyer," Erik Helsten, a spokesman for the university's student organisation, told *The Art Newspaper*. It is understandable, he said, that a state institution has to be sure that everything is in compliance with the law, but is wary of the danger of heavy-handed censorship. However, Mr Helsten welcomed the plan to establish a commission that will set up clear guidelines for the school. **Clemens Bomsdorf**

Copenhagen

Video installation to replace landmark sculpture as *The Little Mermaid* heads to China

COPENHAGEN. A work by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei will temporarily replace Denmark's biggest tourist attraction on Copenhagen's waterfront. Edvard Eriksen's sculpture *The Little Mermaid*, which was presented to the city of Copenhagen in 1913, will be shown in the Danish Pavilion at Expo 2010 in Shanghai from May to October next year. Ai Weiwei, who was selected over four other Chinese

artists whose names have not been disclosed, is planning a video installation. The work will feature a live image of Eriksen's mermaid in Shanghai, as well as documenting the shipping of the sculpture to China. "We are confident that his work will also become an attraction," Maria Fabricius Hansen, member of the board of the Ny Carlsbergfondet (New Carlsberg Foundation), which commis-

sioned Ai Weiwei's work, told *The Art Newspaper*. "Our idea is to work for Danish-Chinese cultural exchange, and Ai Weiwei's work fits best with that." At the beginning of last month, the Royal Library placed a bronze copy of Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen's 1921 sculpture *Mermaid* on the harbour front in Copenhagen, a location known for centuries as the Mermaid Grounds. **C.B.**

Cultural property

Denmark joins Unidroit as collector case ends

COPENHAGEN. Danish collector Jan Erik Pelle, who is returning 1,000 pre-Columbian works in his possession to five Latin American countries, says he is the victim of art historians and museum experts who wanted Denmark to join the Unidroit Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. A "sensational case" such as his made it "easier to argue for joining", he told *The Art Newspaper*.

Mr Pelle's lawsuit, the

biggest of its kind in Denmark, began in 2006. He was reported to police for the suspected illegal ownership of pre-Columbian works, but was not convicted. However, the countries of Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico and Peru later pressed charges. Mr Pelle said he agreed to a settlement "simply because another several-year-long case would have been too much for me".

The case was closed a week after the government announced its plan to join Unidroit. Per



Voetmann, director of the Danish ministry of culture, denied a direct link, but said "such cases of course fostered the discussion".

Mr Pelle has been compensated for the return of the items by an unnamed Danish foundation for an undisclosed sum. **C.B.**

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