

UB makes interim art policy

Student artwork outside CFA must be identified as such



Black Student Union members protest President Satish Tripathi's State of the University Address in October, demanding a university policy on art in public spaces. UB announced an interim policy on Thursday, which states that student artwork outside the Center for the Arts must be labeled as such.

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After months of student leaders calling for a university policy regarding artwork in public spaces and a College of Arts and Sciences committee working to create such a policy, UB has created an interim plan in the meantime.

The policy will require that art projects outside the Center for the Arts have some kind of note or explanation to identify it as a work of art. University policy already stated that art projects in common areas on campus be reviewed by the Environment, Health and Safety Department, which only reviews for physical safety and security issues, not content. President Satish Tripathi announced the interim policy in an open letter to students Thursday.

Tripathi said with an official policy regarding art in public spaces, "it is imperative that we strike the appropriate balance between academic freedom and inclusivity."

The announcement comes nearly three months after the controversial "White Only" art project that has caused students and administrators to discuss the boundaries of artistic freedom, as well as diversity on campus. Ashley Powell, a graduate fine arts student, posted signs reading "White

Only" and "Black Only" around campus bathrooms, water fountains and benches in September for a class project.

Students, particularly the Black Student Union, have called for Tripathi and UB to create a policy defining the boundary between art and cultural trauma, as the signs caused fear amongst students who believed they were a hate crime. BSU has held an open forum about the signs, staged a walkout of Tripathi's annual State of the University address and met with UB officials like Tripathi several times.

Tripathi's letter also highlighted other work being done by UB in the wake of the controversy, such as meeting with student leaders, creating a student of color advisory committee to University Police and adding curriculum concerning race in the new general education program.

"Together with the collaborative efforts of our student leadership, our faculty, and university administration, I believe that these conversations, procedures, curricular discussions, and policies are allowing us to balance freedom of expression with the need to foster a welcoming and inclusive educational environment that is necessary for learning," Tripathi said in the letter.

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