

Artwork's rude, lewd slogans irritate Etobicoke aldermen

By Bob Mitchell Toronto Star

Visitors to Etobicoke city hall are being told to "pick your nose" and "spank your baby" by a piece of mirrored electronic art hanging in the Civic Centre Gallery hall.

The artwork is one of 64 pieces in the sixth annual Arts Etobicoke Juried Show, which opens tomorrow night at 8 and runs until Oct. 31.

Another controversial painting, entitled "Breakfast of Champions," has what appears to be a five-centimetre (two-inch) cockroach and a lizard flicking its tongue at another cockroach sitting on a baby's head.

But the moving billboard, created by an artist using the pseudonym D. Nile, is raising the most reaction so far from local politicians, who got a preview yesterday.

'Drop your pants'

"I certainly wouldn't want to have it hanging on my wall," said Alderman Julie Lyons. "And I'm not sure that it needs to be hanging at city hall either."

"Artists often try to use shock as a way of expressing themselves, and this certainly does that, although it's not up to my taste."

Entitled "Image Conscious," the piece consists of a mirror with a moving message on top. A total of 39 messages flash across the screen, including "drop your pants," "hide your lust," "zip your fly" and "chisel your love."

Other less controversial messages include "pay your debts," "make your bed," "lock your door" and "pig your lips."

'Controversial piece'

Valued by the artist at \$2,000, the work is one of 266 pieces submitted by 145 Etobicoke artists, and vying for tomorrow night's selection of eight awards.

"Everybody who attends the opening will be given a ballot, and they can vote on the piece they like the best," said Arts Etobicoke program director Tracey Capes. "I kind of like the piece; it's thought provoking and certainly makes you think."

"But it was a pretty controversial piece. Some people wanted it



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Simon says: Joanne Gardiner of Etobicoke contemplates "Image Conscious," one of 266 works by local artists on public display at Etobicoke city hall until Oct. 31.

in the show and others didn't."

Controller Dick O'Brien doesn't think it should be hanging at city hall.

"I don't think you should be promoting negative things like that," O'Brien said. "It would be much better if the messages said something positive like 'Be enthusiastic' or 'Today is the first day of your life,' but not what it is saying."

Alderman Karen Herrell said

she didn't think it was art. "It does nothing for me," Herrell said. "It's not funny. It's not anything."

Alderman David Lacey added: "It's not appropriate, and the major question is whether it's art. It doesn't do a thing for me."

The exhibition is free and open to the public week days from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m., and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. weekends.