



MEG RYAN PHOTOS

San Diego State University, Callexico Campus, art gallery director Sheila Dollente discusses the college's controversial art show.

## University unveils sexy photo exhibit

By John Scheibe  
Staff Writer

CALEXICO — Pictures may say a thousand words. Some also raise as many eyebrows.

A series of photographs on exhibit at San Diego State University, Callexico Campus, has raised eyebrows and sparked debate over what should be exhibited in the community. But they also brought in droves of spectators.

Entitled "All Dressed Up and

Someplace to Go," the exhibit includes a number of sexually explicit photographs, including a nude man and woman and phallic symbols.

"One of the themes I'm trying to explore is not only sexuality, but the role of men and women in our society," said Kaucyila Brooke when reached by telephone Saturday at her Los Angeles home. Brooke is one of three women photographers whose work will be on display through March 1.

Brooke and the others say the



This work by feminist photographer Mary Beth Heffernan is printed on a rabbit pelt instead of the traditional paper.

works are examples of feminist photography, in which women not only take a more active role behind the camera, but in front of it as well.

For too long, Brooke said, women have played a passive role in the arts, so their ideas and desires have been ignored in

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# Exhibit

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favor of men's.

Brooke's photographs are the least explicit in the display. They show a woman working in a garden and include text explaining her thinking, which includes sexual themes.

Liss Platt's photographs focus on phalluses.

"No, I'm not upset that my photographs have caused controversy there," she said Saturday from her home in New York City. "If anything, I'm delighted. One of the more important roles of art in society is to get people to think."

Pete Padilla, a Calexico resident, who has been a professional photographer for about 40 years, is very critical of the exhibit, especially of Platt's photographs.

"These pictures were taken by frustrated feminists who wish they had been born men," he said reached at home after having viewed the exhibit last week.

He branded several of the photographs simply pornography.

Padilla said he complained to David Ballesteros, dean of the Calexico Campus, about the exhibit.

"He told me that the photos probably could not be taken down because of the everyone's right to free speech," Padilla said.

Padilla said he told Ballesteros if he were to go out nude in public he would be arrested within minutes, free speech or no free speech.

Some did not even need to see the exhibit to get angry. Padilla's sister, Margarita De Necoechea said, "One of the things that upsets me about all of this is that we have many fine artists here in the Valley whose work we should be showing more."

De Necoechea is the head librarian at Calexico High School and also sits on the SDSU



MEG RYAN PHOTO

United Methodist pastor John Fanestil (right) and Calexico resident Jennifer Leich discuss feminist photo exhibit at San Diego State in Calexico.

Advisory Council, which makes recommendations to the university's administration. She said she would like to see a committee select what art is exhibited on campus in the future.

Sheila Dollente, who heads the art gallery at the campus, chooses which works will be exhibited.

Dollente said she has tried to put such a committee together, but has had a difficult time finding enough qualified and interested people to participate.

Still, she said she is not sorry she chose the photographs being exhibited at the gallery.

She said she thought it would be refreshing to bring in the work

of artists from out of the area and she wanted an exhibit that would

be thought provoking.

More than 200 people have come in to see the exhibit, nearly triple what exhibits usually draw, Dollente said.

"If I had to choose all over again, I would have chosen the same photographs," she said.

The Rev. John Fanestil, of Calexico United Methodist Church, the church Dollente attends, happened to be passing through the gallery when Dollente was interviewed for this story.

While saying he could understand why the photographs have caused controversy here, he said he personally did not find the exhibit objectionable.

But, he said he wouldn't be surprised if the exhibit sparks

debate in his church.

Unfortunately, more than controversy has surrounded the exhibit.

Last week, one of the photographs was stolen from the gallery. Because it is valued between \$500 to \$600, the theft is being investigated as a felony, said Dollente.

"I'm quite angry about the theft," said Mary Beth Hefernan, whose work was stolen.

"I think there's a certain honor system and level of trust between those who view works of art and the artists, one of which was broken by this theft," she said when contacted Saturday at her Los Angeles residence.