



## **Lawyer says students will sue city over closed New York exhibit**

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Tensions over a Brooklyn College art show that parks officials deemed too racy for a public war memorial escalated as the school dismantled the exhibit and a lawyer for the artists said they planned to sue the city on freedom of expression rights.

The exhibit, which included representations of male genitalia, watercolor paintings of gay sex and a live rat, was housed in the city-owned Brooklyn War Memorial until the Department of Parks & Recreation shut it down the day after it opened last week.

The World War II memorial is used as gallery space by the college, which is part of the City University of New York system. The parks department said an agreement with the school stipulated that art exhibits at the memorial be "appropriate for families."

Brooklyn College moved the artwork on Monday and planned to keep it on campus until it could be installed in retail space donated by a real estate developer, school spokeswoman Colleen Roche said in an e-mail.

The 18-student show, a graduation requirement, is the thesis for the masters of fine arts degree and had been scheduled to run through May 25.

Civil rights attorney Norman Siegel, a 1965 graduate of Brooklyn College, said he was representing the students in a freedom of expression lawsuit he planned to file in federal court in Brooklyn.

"A clear message must be sent to the Bloomberg administration that government is not the appropriate body to judge the value of art and government should not, as it is trying to do here, impose a cultural and artistic orthodoxy in the city of New York," Siegel said.

He said that the students would pursue the real estate developer's offer to see how the space compared to the War Memorial but that they planned to move forward with the lawsuit regardless of whether the exhibit is reinstalled at the new space.

Roche said the college would not comment on a "hypothetical" lawsuit. She said the school's provost told the head of the art department and the students about the developer's offer to donate space but she didn't know what their response had been.

Siegel said he was disappointed in the school's actions.

"The college today aided and abetted censorship," he said.

An e-mail sent to a spokeswoman for the city's law department was not immediately returned.

The granite and limestone Brooklyn War Memorial, in Cadman Plaza, is dedicated to Americans who served in World War II. It has a hall with an honor roll listing the names of those who died. It also features larger-than-life statues symbolizing victory and family: a male warrior on the left and a female with a child on the right.