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Mag Patridge

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Walker Art Center

June 10 1994

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Dan:

Enclosed are materials about the Ron Athey performance at Walker Art Center. There was significant coverage nationwide, although none of the reporters saw the performance and few called to check facts -- I believe there is a lot of misinformation about this performance.

I'd like to make a few points about how the story unfolded:

- The original news story, written by a former Walker P.R. Director who normally writes exhibition reviews for the Minneapolis Star Tribune, ran a full three weeks after the performance. The Star Tribune ran two commentaries after the original news piece, and it has sparked much discussion on the editorial board.
- It began with one person making an anonymous inquiry to the State Health Department, who, even though they assured him his health was not at risk, shopped the story around town. (A number of reporters did inquire about the performance and talked to the health department before deciding not to cover it.) As full of misleading information as it was, once the Star Tribune story was put on the AP wire, it became very popular.
- The audience consisted of 100 people. About ten people left during the performance, and at least 80% remained for the post-performance discussion. Almost half of those people have contacted us stating that 1) there were no dripping bloody towels -- the news reports misrepresented the actual situation -- nor was there any panic, 2) the audience was well informed of what it was about to see (we believe the performance was sold out based on a direct mail letter describing the performance in some detail), and 3) it was an extremely moving piece of art.

I have enclosed a sample of letters and articles to give you an idea of the response.

Please let me know how I can be of further help.

Mag Patridge
Director of Audience Development
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