

By Dan Craft

ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

What if you threw an anti-war exhibit and everybody came?

For an informed answer, just ask Barry Blinderman, director of Illinois State University's University Galleries.

The veteran boat-rocker whose ISU shows have made tidal waves several times in the past is now being swamped by his own idea: an impromptu show in which a call was sent out a month ago to artists around the world.

Requested in the call were new or existing works in which the artists addressed their feelings on war.

The sentiments could be focused on something as specific as America's impending invasion of Iraq or something as general as the various wars on terrorism, drugs, civil liberties or reproductive rights.

Guess which topic produced the greatest number of responses?

Because it is a non-juried show, Blinderman has wound up accepting every piece of art submitted, bar none.

So not only is he swamped by his idea, he's nearly drowning in it.

But gladly.

Creating the tsunami in the University Galleries II (the smaller space off the northwest end of the main Gallery I) is the densely packed exhibit, dubbed "Ready For War" and showcasing an estimated 200 works of art by nearly 140 artists from both here and around the world.

All in less than a month's time.

There's never been anything quite like it, at least on such short notice and with such an intensity of response.

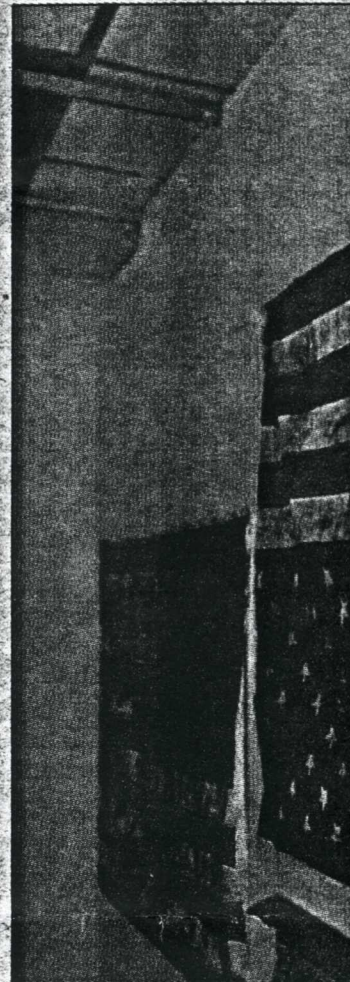
The works have been pouring in both locally and from such far-flung global corners as Greece, Mexico, England, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

The names range from the unknown (numerous art students from the area) to the very well-known (Martha Rosler, Mike Cockerill, Joseph Nechvatal, Joy Garnett and a posthumous "guest appearance" by the University Galleries' old friend, the late David Wojnarowicz, who was making his own tidal waves at ISU 13 years ago this month).

The one thing they all share: not one artist or one piece of art submitted has a good thing to say, or to depict, about the topic — be it directly, in the most in-your-face way imaginable, or indirectly, via the subtlest of metaphor and the most enigmatic of symbol.

Representative of the former is, for example, Sari Kadison-Shapiro's "Empty Warheads," a digital print depicting President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and Secre-

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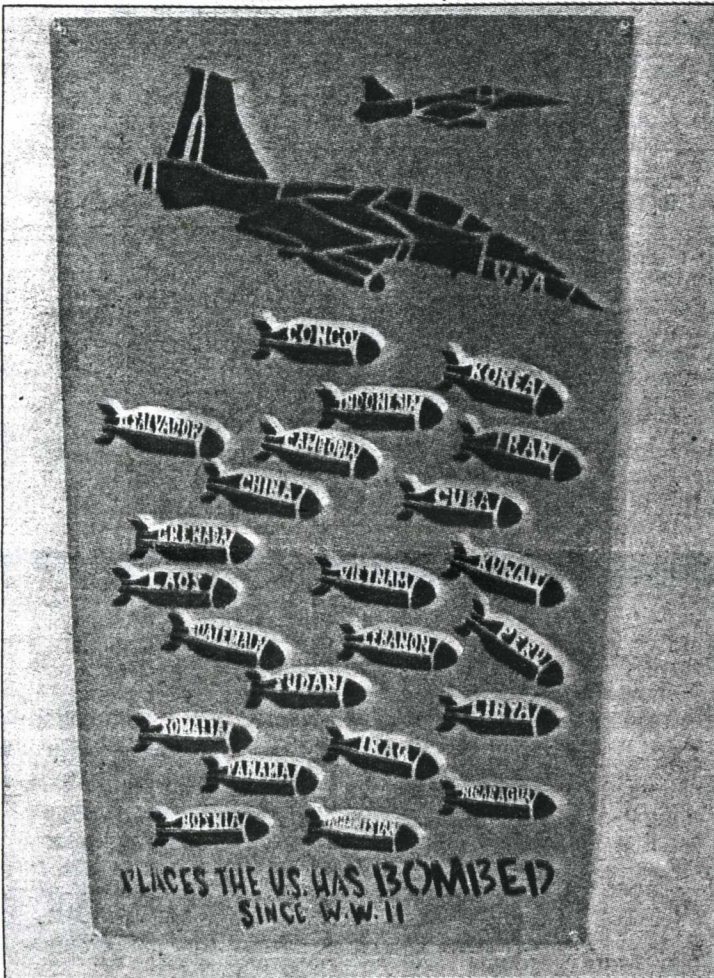
"Forever in Peace May it Wave"

showing Victor Cortez's DVD of Francis Coppola's "Apocalypse Now Redux," with all of the violence removed and a collage of serene landscape shots remaining.

There are more than a hundred more where those came from: paintings, as mixed-media installations, as photographs, as video sculptures, as stamps, as G.I. walkie-talkies, as Web sites, as name-it.

Regardless of the legion of approaches taken by the artists, one who comes into the show expecting to be given the urge to up arms is in for a rude, and peaceful, awakening.

How did this collective outcry against our government's pres-



"Bombed" is the title of this spray paint-on-paper creation by John MacPhee.

