

Kennedy Assassination Mural Shocks, Outrages Bostonians

Abstract Painting in New Federal Building Described by Some as Hideous but Artist Defends It as an Elegy

BOSTON (UPI)—A mural depicting the assassination of President John F. Kennedy has brought cries of shock and outrage from some of his fellow Bostonians.

The abstract painting, titled "New England Elegy," was erected six days ago in the new John F. Kennedy Federal Building.

The late President's brother, Sen. Edward M. (Ted) Kennedy (D-Mass.) said Friday he plans to view the mural to see what all the controversy is about.

However, he flew to Washington Friday. An aide said he will study the painting when he returns to Boston.

Labeled an 'Outrage'
Some who have seen it have labeled the mural "an outrage," "hideous" and "a horror."

But Robert Motherwell, the abstract painter commissioned by the General Services Administration to create the 180-square-foot mural, has defended his work.

"An elegy is a poem or a piece of music or a painting that celebrates someone's assassination. And that's what the painting is," he said.

However, he said the painting is not a picture of the assassination of President Kennedy.

"It is not a picture of his death scene," Motherwell said. "It is an elegy which is an expression of grief for someone dead, like a requiem mass."

"It has nothing to do with the assassination," he said. "It is a representation of an emotion of grief."

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The \$25,000 mural is dominated by black and white tones.

Thomas N. Maytham, assistant curator of paintings at Boston Museum of Fine Arts, said Thursday one shape "may represent the profile of the President's head, a very direct and specific depiction of the most brutal moment of the tragedy when Kennedy was struck by the bullet."

Moment's Brutality

"It emphasizes as powerfully as possible the brutality of the moment."

Harry Nelson, a guard at the building, said many people "can't figure out what the painting is."

Mrs. Veronica Kotilainen called it "an outrage." And another woman added, "The consensus is that we think it's a horror."

"We don't think it's appropriate to the building," Anne Connolly said. "It should show something worthwhile in his life instead of tragedy."

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