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MEDIA RELEASE

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Henson's Art Deserves Better.

Censorship of the work of respected Australian artist Bill Henson was deplored today by the National Association for the Visual Arts (NAVA). NAVA is the peak body representing the professional interests of the Australian visual arts, craft and design sector.

“Like all the best art, Bill Henson’s work challenges us to think about important issues. But let’s have an informed and intelligent public debate, not knee-jerk populist position taking,” commented Tamara Winikoff, Executive Director of NAVA, who deplored blanket condemnation by some media commentators and the politicisation of the debate.

“One of the intentions of art is to ask us to critically examine our certainties and to test the boundaries of public tolerance. Public anxiety about child sex abuse or exploitation may be warping our judgement in this case. Very few people who are making comment have actually seen the work itself. Judgements are being made on the basis of innuendo and supposition,” said Winikoff.

“People seem to be conflating beauty and nudity with ‘sexualization’. Surely in the 21st century we can agree that there is nothing offensive per se about the naked human body. It has been the subject of accepted artistic representation for hundreds of years”, said Winikoff.

“Meaning is in the mind of the beholder. Anyone is entitled to have an opinion. However, just because some people are offended, does not in itself constitute a reason for artwork not to be publicly seen, nor for the artist to be condemned as breaking the law”, Winikoff continued.

“The key factors in deciding whether a work is obscene must be the intention of those who create and display the image, the context both time and place in which the work is created and seen, and in the end, the judgement of a court,” said Winikoff.

NAVA is calling for the artworks to be restored to the Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery for exhibition, and no charges to be laid against the artist or the gallery.

For comment contact Tamara Winikoff ph: (02) 9368 1900 or m: 0411162156