

Visual arts letter shows spoiled-brat behaviour

Re: The trouble with 'excellence,' March 5.

For centuries, the work of artists has been the mirror of society.

Today, those who claim the title too often see only themselves reflected.

In the recent letter signed by so-called prominent and influential representatives of Canada's art community, the director of the National Gallery of Canada is attacked and the institution accused of not exhibiting work unless it is "excellent." We should all be so insulted.

The signatories hint at racism and dictatorial practices, asking: "who at the National Gallery decides what is excellence?"

I, in turn, ask: who appointed these people representatives of the visual arts community? By whose standards are they "influential" or "prominent" and worthy of my respect?

As a visual artist I was not asked if I accepted to be associated with acid remarks and spoiled-brat behaviour. Regardless, the protesters purportedly represent me.

It is hardly fair to say the National Gallery or its staff is racist or arbitrary for its pursuit of excellence in art. The role of the Gallery is to highlight both Canadian and foreign masterworks.

With increased tax dollars, I am sure more world masterpieces could be acquired. But all art institutions recognize that that is easier said than done.

From the letter's slant, the artists seemingly want to be considered on par with the masters.

Sorry, people. That status is reserved for those who have assimilated technical skills beyond the norm and create artworks which have that rarest of qualities: the capacity to touch and move people. Of those who wear the crown before the coronation, I say beware.

If the visual arts community needs representatives to speak to the National Gallery I suggest that those chosen be more professional and collegial rather than tantrum oriented.

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