

National
Coalition
Against
Censorship

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NCAC PARTICIPATING
ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association
American Association of
School Administrators
American Association of
University Professors
American Association of
University Women
American Booksellers Foundation
for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Television
& Radio Artists
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
American Library Association
American Literary Translators
Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists
& Authors
Americans United for Separation of
Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
The Dramatists Guild of America
First Amendment Lawyers Association
International Reading Association
Lambda Legal
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National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of the Churches
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National Education Association
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United Church of Christ
PEN American Center
People for the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation
of America
Screen Actors Guild
Sexuality Information & Education
Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers
& Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Methodist Communications,
United Methodist Church
Women's American ORT
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

Zahavah Levine, General Counsel & Vice President of Business Affairs
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February 22, 2010

Dear Ms. Levine:

On behalf of the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC), an alliance of over 50 national non-profit organizations united in defense of free expression, and the Electronic Frontier Foundation, we write to express concern over YouTube's removal of the work of internationally recognized video artist Amy Greenfield from its site. We urge you to reconsider this decision and allow the videos to be posted as soon as possible. We also encourage you to make sure YouTube's community guidelines are applied judiciously and that a viable appeals process is put in place so that material of clear artistic, political or educational merit is not excluded from the site in the future.

Recently, Amy Greenfield received notice from YouTube that her works, *Element* and *Tides*, were counter to YouTube's "community standards," and that if she put one more video up that runs afoul of "community standards" her account would be terminated. (Though both works were removed from the artist's account, *Element* is still available through the play list of Creative Thriftshop, Ms. Greenfield's gallery: clearly there is no agreement between YouTube employees as to what constitutes impermissible content.) Soon thereafter the artist noticed that excerpts from two other works, *Light Of The Body* and *Wildfire*, were also removed. Ms. Greenfield contacted us because the removal of the videos interfered with her ability to share her work with the public through the Internet. She was also disturbed and angry that her work was treated as if it were obscene and that there was no possibility of contacting a YouTube employee to appeal the decision.

We were surprised to hear of the incident as, though we understand YouTube's interest in not being overrun by commercial porn, we are dealing, in this case, with an internationally recognized artist. Noted scholars have called Ms. Greenfield "...today's most important practitioner of experimental film-dance." Her work has been presented to acclaim at The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, and other leading art centers. She is the recipient of numerous prestigious grants. In short, she is a well-regarded artist whose work deserves to be seen by the wide public YouTube reaches.

Not everyone can make it to a gallery or a museum – and that is why YouTube performs such a valuable service by making video available to worldwide audiences. It would be regrettable if this unprecedented access to information falls victim to unreasonably censorious policies

that are subjectively and arbitrarily applied. YouTube's own community guidelines allow nudity in site postings if it is not "sexually explicit" and if it has "some educational, documentary and scientific content, but only if that is the sole purpose of the video and it is not gratuitously graphic." We note that artistic depictions go unmentioned in the guidelines, yet images of nudes are integral to the history of art. Does YouTube intend, in its zeal to protect its "community," that the world's artistic heritage be banned from view? Few institutions are more public; few have equal reach. You control a primary source of information, and we strongly urge you to weigh the profound implications of this responsibility.

We hope that YouTube adheres more closely to Google's own standards of free circulation of information. Censorship of art will inevitably damage YouTube and Google's reputation and your own legacy.

With all of the above in mind, we urge you to take the necessary steps to ensure that Ms. Greenfield's work is displayed without restriction. If you seek help in determining a clear policy by which to move forward, we will be pleased to help you in its articulation.

Sincerely,

Svetlana Mintcheva
Director of Programs
National Coalition Against Censorship

Cindy A. Cohn
Legal Director
Electronic Frontier Foundation