

Iowa City woman plans to brand herself

UI grad drawing attention to 'horrific' ways animals are treated

Jan. 18, 2013 10:22 PM, | Comments



A A

Most Popular Most Commented More Headlines



Iowa City's Old Capitol, the first capitol of Iowa, on Wednesday, January 2, 2012. Benjamin Roberts / Iowa City Press-Citizen / Benjamin Roberts / Iowa City Press-Citizen

Written by Tara Bannow Iowa City Press-Citizen

FILED UNDER

News Local News Act

When Emily Moran Barwick creates a piece of art, she said it's an attempt to get people to think more deeply about a certain subject.

When the 28-year-old Iowa City resident took a job as a stripper in 2010 and gave her earnings to other artists, the idea was to get people to think about where money comes from.

When she fashioned a gallery of penis sculptures in fall 2011, the idea was to get people to consider how bodies act as commodities.

"We just don't like to really think about what goes on behind the scenes in various aspects of our lives," she said this week.

And now, as she organizes an event planned for next weekend at which she'll be publicly branded with a cattle iron heated to 500 degrees, Barwick — a vegan — said she hopes it will force people to consider the "horrific" ways animals are treated to enable meat consumption.

Barwick, who received her Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Iowa in December, said she expects people to react to her upcoming public display with disgust. Branding, though, is merely the tip of the iceberg in terms of what humans do to animals, she said.

"That kind of outrage, that kind of worry is what I feel for every single creature that has to go through that, every other sentient being," she said. "I don't see a divide between me and them."

Over the years, Barwick's unconventional art has kept UI administrators on their toes. When the penis exhibit opened in 2011, warning signs were hung at the room's entrances and administrators mandated that the doors remain closed to avoid unintentional exposure.

But after learning of her plans to be branded Jan. 27 on the

- 1 Iowa City woman plans to brand herself
- 2 Sara Dickinson
- 3 Building boom
- 4 Police: Man punched, threatened woman
- 5 Little Hawk junior earns perfect ACT score

Most Viewed



Pentacrest lawn, they said she had crossed the line.

Initially, Associate Provost for Faculty Tom Rice said UI planned to allow the performance because Barwick explained that she merely would be "marked."

But after an inquiry from the Press-Citizen, Rice said he called Barwick and told her the performance would violate university policy.

"We do not allow that kind of violent activity on our campus," Rice said. "In her view, it is art and in other people's views, it might be art. But it is also something else. It is also violent behavior."

Further, Rice said the university's general counsel's office thinks the act would constitute criminal assault and disorderly conduct, but that's for local law enforcement to decide.

Iowa City Police Sgt. Vicki Lalla said Friday she wasn't sure whether the act would be on par with someone getting a body piercing or a tattoo, or whether it would fall into a criminal category. Either way, to carry out the performance in a public place, Barwick would need to get a permit through the city manager's office, Lalla said.

"If she's denied the permit, it sort of becomes moot," she said.

Barwick, who now is seeking another location for her performance, saw irony in the university's reaction.

"You don't want bodily harm to happen to someone on campus, yet the cafeteria serves meat," she said.

Rice said he plans to call Barwick to discuss an alternative means for expressing her art. He said he's worked with Barwick through his role as an administrator and is proud to have her as a graduate of the university.

"She is somebody who likes to be out there and do art that draws public attention, and that's fine," he said.

The idea behind the branding is to show solidarity with the 269 movement, which originated Oct. 2, 2012, in Tel Aviv, Israel. That day, three animal rights activists were branded with a hot steel brand in the same fashion animals are branded. The brand was the number 269, which was the number on a calf born on an Israeli dairy farm.

"We hope to be able to raise awareness and empathy towards those whose cries of terror and pain are only heard by steel bars and the blood-stained walls of the slaughterhouses," according to a portion of the group's manifesto.

It's important that the event happen Jan. 27 because that's International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Barwick said. The idea, she said, is to draw connections between the meat industry and the Holocaust. She's reading the book "Eternal Treblinka," by Charles



Patterson, in which Holocaust survivors talk about how their experience turned them into vegetarian activists.

"There's a lot of comparisons," she said. "It's interesting because I wouldn't feel comfortable making that comparison if I hadn't first heard it from Holocaust survivors themselves."

David Dunlap, UI associate professor of drawing and painting, advised Barwick on her thesis project, the LapDance Scholarship, and said she's a savvy artist.

"I know it's going to be quite powerful because we're bodies looking at a body and we're going to empathize with the pain," he said. "It's hard for me to imagine being branded."

Using the body in an artist's work has long been a tradition in the visual arts, Dunlap said.

"I see her in that beautiful, long tradition," he said. "It's something that's available and she understands the power of this thing."

The petite redhead's arms and chest already are decorated with colorful tattoos. Barwick also has a tiny tattoo of the number 269 inside her left ear. Many activists have shown solidarity with the movement through getting 269 tattoos. Only a handful have been branded.

As part of the performance, for which Barwick has enlisted the help of about eight friends, she'll be chained down and will have her head shaven before the branding to illustrate the loss of identity animals experience.

The cattle iron, the same one used in the original branding in Tel Aviv, will be heated and pressed into her "flank," Barwick said.

Asked whether she's afraid of the pain she'll undoubtedly experience, Barwick said it doesn't phase her.

"While the pain is going to be very unpleasant," she said, "I don't see it as anything close to what all of the animals are going through."

Reach Tara Bannow at tbannow@press-citizen.com or 887-5418.

[View Comments \(\)](#) | [Share your thoughts »](#)



ARCHIVES

View the last seven days

- Yesterday, Jan. 18
- Thursday, Jan. 17
- Wednesday, Jan. 16
- Tuesday, Jan. 15
- Monday, Jan. 14
- Sunday, Jan. 13
- Saturday, Jan. 12

See our paid archives for news older than a week.

HELP

- Subscribe Now
- Contact Us
- Job Openings
- P-C History
- Pay Bill
- Apply
- NIE
- Gannett Foundation

REAL DEALS



Flip, shop and save on specials from your favorite retailers in Iowa City, IA 52245

[GET DEALS NOW](#)

TOP VIDEO PICKS

[MORE VIDEO](#)



[Gospel Explosion](#)
(1m15s)



[Isiserettes at President Obama's 2009 inaugural...](#)
(1m15s)

[Site Map](#) | [Back to Top](#)

NEWS

- Local
- Photos
- Salaries
- Weather
- Nation/World
- Archives
- Video
- DATA
- Salaries
- Arrests
- Divorces
- Crime statistics
- ITBS scores

HAWK CENTRAL

- Football
- Photos
- Recruiting
- Men's basketball
- Women's basketball
- Wrestling
- OPINION
- Editorials
- Guest Opinion
- Letters to the Editor
- Endorsement Letters
- Writers Group
- Iowa Cityscapes
- Poetic License

PREP SPORTS

- Photos
- Recruiting
- LIFE
- Cooking Class
- Table Wine
- Green Thumb
- Calendar
- Movies
- Life Events
- Sudoku
- Religious services
- Dating

OBITUARIES

HELP

- Contact us
- About the Press-Citizen
- Subscriber Services
- P-C FAQ
- NIE
- Submit announcement

FOLLOW US

- Twitter
- Facebook
- Mobile
- RSS
- E-mail Alerts

[News](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars for Sale](#) | [Homes for Sale](#) | [Apartments for Rent](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Shopping](#)

GANNETT

Copyright © 2013 www.press-citizen.com. All rights reserved.
Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Notice/Your California Privacy Rights](#), and [Ad Choices](#)

