

Apple rejects book with homoerotic imagery

'It's a living archive of gay and lesbian life,' publisher says

CENSORSHIP SHAUNA LEWIS

Sex-positive advocates and anti-censorship activists say freedom of queer artistic expression is under attack, responding to news that Apple Inc has refused to produce an online version of a book containing homoerotic images.

The book's Vancouver publisher, Arsenal Pulp Press, was informed earlier this month that Apple would not produce an online version of the text for sale through its store. The publisher was told that the book violated company criteria due to its "explicit or objectionable content."

Lust Unearthed, written by Thomas Waugh, contains more than 200 vintage drawings of penises, bondage, mutual masturbation and men engaged in various sex acts. The sketches were executed by famous and unknown artists of the 1930s through the 1970s and were part of a private collection belonging to American gay designer Ambrose DuBek.

Arsenal says the book, which has sold 8,000 copies since it was published in 2004, is testimony to the pre-Stonewall era when these kinds of images were

illegal. They say Apple's decision to censor the images undermines the cultural message that the book provides.

"I roll my eyes and I think, 'How silly.' It's about a living archive of gay and lesbian life and gay and queer imagery and what was secretive," says publisher Robert Ballantyne. "It's a testimony to the perseverance of erotic art and queer networks in the face of state censorship in an era when gay sex itself was a crime," he says. "It's ironic for this to happen with a company like Apple, who parade themselves as being creative, groovy and progressive."

During the approval process, Apple reviews applications to ensure they fit criteria and are free of "offensive material." But two weeks ago, Apple sent an unsigned letter to Arsenal's digital distributor, Constellation, rejecting the book for online retail for reasons pertaining to "exceptionally objectionable or crude content, which includes but is not limited to: depiction [photo or drawing] of a child in a sexual situation, even without contact. Photographs of penetrative sex, oral/genital contact or genitals, textural encouragement to commit a

crime [books supporting, encouraging or defending rape, pedophilia, incest or bestiality], photographic content for the sole purpose of sexual arousal and excessively objectionable or crude content."

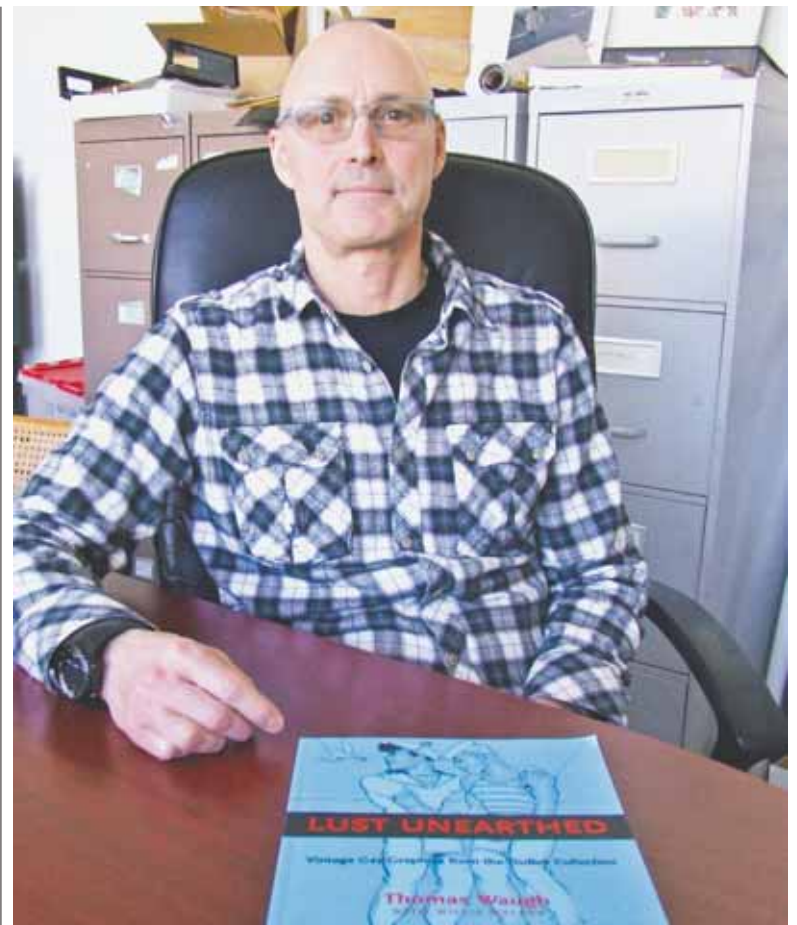
Ballantyne says he suspects that a few images depicting young boys engaged in mutual masturbation with older men might be why Apple rejected the book.

But Ballantyne also says Arsenal censored those images, blocking out the genitals and sex act, before sending the book to Apple. "We censored our own material, a couple of images," he says. "That's what responsible publishing does. I mean, we don't just turn out anything. We look at it really carefully."

"The book is about context," he notes. "It isn't about a bunch of pedophiles." He says it's about people who understand that there were relations between the generations in history, and there was imagery about it and some people collected it.

He says he attempted to contact Apple, but no one has returned his call. *Xtra's* efforts to contact Apple were also unsuccessful at press time.

Meanwhile, Apple has given Arsenal



Arsenal Pulp Press's Robert Ballantyne says *Lust Unearthed* is a testimony to "the perseverance of erotic art and queer networks." SHAUNA LEWIS

the option to further edit and resubmit the book for possible distribution, but the company has refused. "I told them, 'Sorry, we've already edited this book, and we're not going to fix it to fit your crazy standards.'" Ballantyne says *Lust*

Unearthed has been available from digital distributors Kobo and Barnes & Noble Nook without issue.

For more on this story, visit xtra.ca.

School asked to remove anti-gay document

Homosexuality described as 'intrinsically disordered'

EDUCATION NATHANIEL CHRISTOPHER

Yukon's education minister has asked a Roman Catholic school in Whitehorse to remove a religious document from its website that describes "homosexual orientation" as "intrinsically disordered" and "homosexual acts" as "acts of grave depravity."

Education Minister Scott Kent met with Bishop Gary Gordon of Whitehorse March 5 after parents raised concerns about the document's language. Gordon, who is responsible for education policy at Catholic schools in Yukon, agreed to remove the document from Vanier Catholic Secondary's website.

"Both [Kent] and the bishop could agree immediately that the most important thing was that students felt safe, welcome and protected in school," cabinet communications director

Matthew Grant says. "The minister requested that an actual policy be developed around the particular issue in question, something developed on the grassroots level with students, parents and members of the school council."

The document titled "Living with Hope, Ministering by Love, Teaching in Truth" was developed by Gordon as a resource for Catholic schools and pastoral staff. It calls upon educators to help queer youth avoid involvement in a "gay culture opposed to the Church's teaching, with its often aggressive and immoral lifestyle."

The document is still available on Vanier's website at press time. Grant says it will likely be removed at the earliest possible opportunity, noting that schools are on spring break.

He says work needs to be done to bridge the gap between the religious document and the Department of Edu-

cation's policy on gender identity and sexual orientation. That policy, adopted in September 2012, requires schools to provide a safe and supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, queer and questioning people.

Grant confirms that the policy applies to all publicly funded schools, including the Catholic schools.

Yukon's 28 public schools, which include three separate Catholic schools, are administered by the territorial government with the assistance of elected school councils that advise the minister. A gay student at Vanier who says that school administrators have thwarted his attempts to start a gay-straight alliance (GSA) hopes that any policy developed for his school will



Student Liam Finnegan.

be consistent with the sexual orientation and gender identity policy and will direct teachers and administrators to be more supportive of queer students.

"We were not allowed to have a GSA because the principal and bishop did not want us to be able to use the words 'GLBT' on school property," says Grade 11 student Liam Finnegan. "The school itself is a very loving and friendly community because it's very small. It has 300 to 400 students and we are all there for everyone, and we all know each other and try to be nice to each other. I hope that any new policy would encourage this and support those who are struggling, or gay and out, because I know how that feels and have friends who know how that feels."

Finnegan notes that the bishop and the school council did offer to create a group, called One Heart, that would teach about homosexuality from the perspective of the church.

Finnegan says that acceptance of gay

issues has "gone downhill" at Vanier ever since Shara Layne, who was a Grade 11 student there, had her locker vandalized with homophobic graffiti.

"I went to the principal of the school and told him that someone carved 'faggot' on my locker," says Layne, who has since withdrawn from the school, citing a lack of support from teachers and administrators. "He laughed at first and asked, 'Why does this matter?' I told him, 'I'm a lesbian,' and then he said, 'I'll talk to the janitor, but I'm not going to do anything about it,'" she says. "There was no investigation or anything into what happened."

Layne says that prior to this school year, most of the teachers were either supportive or tolerant of her decision to come out and did not enforce the bishop's teachings on homosexuality. *Xtra's* attempts to reach Gordon were unsuccessful by press time. *Xtra* also emailed and called Vanier Secondary but was referred to the Department of Education. X

For more on this story, visit xtra.ca.