Columbia's Institute for Child and Family Policy contributed to an Award-Winning Series by PBS 'Frontline'

BY KRISTIN STERLING

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columbia presented the 2004 duPont-Columbia University Awards, the broadcast equivalent of the Pulitzer Prizes, in a moving ceremony at Low Library's Rotunda on Jan. 21. Prize-winning journalists and documentarians, such as CBS News' David Martin and filmmaker Albert Maysles, spoke about their work. Excerpts from prize-winning programs, including some of the most important news stories of the year, were screened. Bob Simon, correspondent for CBS News' '60 Minutes II,' was the evening's host.

Alan Brinkley, Columbia's provost; Maria Hinojosa, urban affairs correspondent for CNN; Michele Norris, host of All Things Considered; and Martin Smith, an independent producer for PBS' 'Frontline' presented silver batons to the 13 award winners. The winners were ABC News' Nightline and Ted Koppel; CBS News, David Martin, and Mary Woronov; Frontline on PBS (three awards); HBO and Mayes Films Inc.; KBCI-TV, Boise, Idaho; KHOU-TV, Houston; KMCH-TV, Denver; National Public Radio; P.O.V. on PBS, Whitney Dow and Marco Williams; WESH-TV, Orlando, and Dan Bilkow; and WTVF-TV, Nashville.

Columbia's Institute for Child and Family Policy (ICFP) and the Fred Friendly Seminars contributed to PBS' 'Frontline's winning series, Failure to Protect, which examines the state of child welfare in the United States. The series builds on the story of 5-year-old Logan Marr and Maine's Department of Human Services. The Fred Friendly Seminars and the ICFP developed content for the third in the series, "A National Dialogue."

Caroline Ladnuti Above, left to right: Journalism School Dean Nicholas Lemann, Rachel Drezin, Barud Goodman, and Muriel Soenens, who accepted batons for PBS' 'Frontline's winning series, Failure to Protect, and CBS News correspondent Bob Simon.

Bottom, left to right: Lemann, Alan Brinkley and Simon heralded the outstanding examples of broadcast journalism.

Restoration Drama: Professor James Beck Says Less Is More in Cleaning 'David'

BY KRISTIN STERLING

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ne of the most recognizable icons of Western art, Michelangelo's sculpture David approaches his 500th birth-
day this spring, and art historians around the world, including Columbia's art history professor James Beck, have sparred over how best to prepare his image for the occasion.

A breathless over how to clean David began in the fall when the lead restorer, Agnese Parronchi, resigned after reaching an impasse with the Galleria dell'Accademia, the gallery in Florence where David has resided since 1873, over the specific restoration methods. The director of the Accademia preferred an aggressive method using soft brushes, cotton swabs and an eraser.

But Beck, in media interviews, loudly opposed doing any significant restoration work at all. "The fashion for the treatment of art was to clean hard and dirty. All the statue needs is a good dusting." Beck said. "There's surface dust, that's all, no new pigeon dirt. Normal maintenance has been neglected for decades, but all the statue needs is a good dusting.

The reason for this and for most cleanings is aesthetic," Beck countered. "The idea is to make David look 'nicer.' I oppose such interventions because not only does the aesthetic vary from person to person, but also from one historical moment to another. So the aesthetic of the 1980s, when the Sistine Chapel ceiling was restored, is different from that of the 1960s, and will be different again from the aesthetic of the 2000s. I am opposed to the alteration of the image unless it can be proved that the work is in imminent danger. I accept that local officials [who promote the cleaning] is not in danger."

Beck argued that the main motive behind the restoration is money. He estimated that the restoration of David will cost nearly $1 million, but noted that the revenues from the increase in admission tickets and sales of books, videos and toys purchased at the museum store, when combined with the reproduction rights, could range into the billions. In 2003, the Accademia currently has approximately 7,000 visitors a day.

Not one to sit back idly, Beck mobilized ArtWatch, a group that he founded in 1992 to monitor the condition of major works worldwide and evaluate proposals for their renewal. More than 50 specialists from around the world came forward and objected to the more aggressive cleaning methods being recommended.

The intervention was successful. Restoration work on David has recently begun, and Beck, who is currently in Italy working on a new book on Leonardo da Vinci, has observed the restoration for himself. "At the end they decided on a mild treatment, and it is the least omnious of the alterations," he said.

James Beck

Beck, a Columbia professor for four decades and author of 11 books, including works on Michelangelo and Raphael, considered himself an "ordinary art historian" until about 15 years ago. After seeing restorations of Sistine Chapel ceiling and the Basilica of San Petronio in Bologna, he became alarmed and realized that the objects that he loved and had studied for years were changing before his eyes.

"The fashion for the treatment of art was to clean hard and heavy," he said. "As with any facelift, the treatments were changing the look of the original forever, and I objected to it.

Realizing that restoration debates evoke strong emotions and that the voice of a group is more powerful than that of an individual, he founded ArtWatch. ArtWatch is also active in opposing the shipping of art around the world, as it is injurious to the pieces, as well as the commercialization of museums.

ArtWatch itself is the subject of a new documentary by James Aviles Martin, which explores the often contentious world of art restoration and shows how original works are often distorted or altered. The film, titled ArtWatch: The Movie, was recently screened on campus and at the Anthology Film Archives. For more information about ArtWatch, visit www.artwatchinternational.org.