

Rice, Andrew

From: Sadowsky, Steve
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 1:53 PM
To: lcummins@ausrtincollege.edu; Rice, Andrew
Subject: Re: The

Thank you, Dr. Cummins. We will add your letter to the file.

From: Light T. Cummins <apache@austintexas.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2017 11:33:58 AM
To: Sadowsky, Steve
Cc: lcummins@ausrtincollege.edu
Subject: The

This message is from Light T. Cummins. [lcummins@ausrtincollege.edu]
Dear Mr. Sadowsky and Members of the Commission:

If you owned the Mona Lisa, could you draw a mustache on her face?

If you owned the Flintoff portrait of Stephen F. Austin, could you paint a pair of eyeglasses on him?

If you owned a Monet painting, could you take it out of its mounting and throw it away because you wanted to put a black velvet portrait of Elvis Presley in its frame?

The answer to all of these questions is yes. The legal owner of real property has the right to do whatever they want with it.

The owner of any of the above items, however, would be rebuked with eternal condemnation by everyone who treasures historically important art if they damaged those paintings.

Such would be the case because ownership of historic properties carries with it a moral, fiduciary obligation to hold those items in trust for future generations. That is true whether property is a work of art or a historical building. Indeed, many owners of historically significant structures are willing to spend money and other resources to insure the continued stability of such properties.

A number of Texans who value the Tobin house in Austin as an important part of our architectural and urban history are speaking out on this very issue. They are raising valid points about its historicity.

There is an important moral imperative at work here which transcends the desire for an owner to make a financial profit in the execution of a real estate transaction.

If the owner of the Tobin house is not willing to honor such an imperative, that is fine and their perfect right not to do so.

If such is the case, however, it is my hope a strategy will be found to place the Tobin house in the hands of an owner who is willing to preserve it if the current owner is not willing to hold this important property in trust for future generations of Texans.

Sincerely,

Light T. Cummins
Bryan Professor of History
Austin College
Former State Historian of Texas