Painting Causes a Royal Fuss
Lion mural changes university mascot’s official look, wasn’t approved

By Jeremy Yoder  Co-Editor-in-chief

Who’d have guessed that the Fitness Center’s weight room would become the center of an artistic debate? Work on a painting of a lion on the weight room wall has been suspended because the image departed from the standardized pictures used on official EMU logos and because it had not been properly approved by the committee that oversees the University Commons building.

It all started this past summer, when Fitness Center coordinator Jason Moore decided to do a little redecorating. “I wanted to spice up the Fitness Center a little bit, get some painting in there, get some personality, because right now it’s just white walls,” said Moore.

So he asked sophomore Adrienne Patterson to paint an original mural of the EMU Royal’s mascot, a lion, on one of the empty walls in the weight room. The painting, a miniature version of which can be seen on one of the bumper weight platforms, depicts the lion in the middle of a roar, showing quite a few teeth.

“I wanted something a bit more edgy,” said Moore, “a little bit more to go along with the attitude of a fitness center… something that gives an attitude of aggressiveness.”

It seems that that departure from the official Royal lion, seen most prominently in the center of the varsity basketball court, was what prompted Vice President for Marketing and Enrollment Shirley Yoder and Director of Marketing Services Paul Souder to ask Moore to stop work on the mural.

“The lion that is being painted on the wall is a beautiful work of art; I think it’s very well done,” said Yoder. “The problem was that it changes a university-owned mascot, and there is actually a University Commons council that has an aesthetics committee that makes decisions about what goes up in that building.”

“It’s setting a look for the athletic program and the lion, a whole different look than had been in some of the official things,” said Souder. “It certainly is in the attack mode, you might say. It’s going in for the kill.”

Moore said he was told he should either have the painting redone along the lines for the official image, or simply paint it over. Given that choice, Moore says he will probably just have the mural painted over.

“I’d rather not have what we have in the middle of our basketball court in here,” he said.

Weight room patrons disagreed vehemently with the decision to remove the painting. One called it “Typically Mennonite.”

“I think what they did looks very nice,” said sophomore Greg Grimms. “It’s a lion, it’s not attacking anybody, it seems very innocent. It brings a nice aspect to the gym.”

Yoder indicated that no final decision had been made regarding the mural: “It happened in the summer between two vice-presidents… and when the university council was not meeting. So I think probably the next step will be that the university council will meet, and the aesthetics committee will meet, and some decisions will be made.”

Meanwhile, Patterson has been gathering signatures for a petition to ask Acting President Beryl Brubaker to let her finish the mural.

“I’m not trying to start a fight or anything with anybody,” Patterson told Weather Vane. “I just want to try to keep it and finish it, because it’s really not that scary to me. I put a lot of hours and hard work into it… I don’t really want it to get painted over.”