

BANNED, CENSORED, CHALLENGED: BANNED IN THE U.S.A.

VERMONT SQUARE BRANCH LIBRARY

Los Angeles, California 1993-1996

Commissioner: City of Los Angeles, Cultural Affairs Department

Budget: \$ 20,000

Award: Design Excellence Award for Architecture and Public Art



Reference desk detail



Library card catalog

glass, steel, magnifying glass, library card catalog

In *Banned, Censored, Challenged*, a glass topped table functioned as a reference desk next to the library check out counter. Sandblasted text on glass listed titles of 141 books that have been banned, censored and challenged at American public libraries and schools between 1895 and 1994.

A magnifying glass with a fig leaf sandblasted on its surface was placed at the center of the table. The fig leaf has long been a symbol for "concealed" knowledge: Adam and Eve each wore a fig leaf apron to cover their nakedness in what may be western history's first act of censorship.

Placed on the check out counter was another provocative research aid - a reference guide to book censorship in the form of an old-fashioned library card catalog drawer. The drawer contained the aforementioned 141 titles in alphabetic order.



Installation view

IMAGINATION

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Installation view

oak wood

The concept and context of this artwork, installed at the oldest branch library in Los Angeles, emphasizes a library's function as a social gathering place for reading, learning, and discovering. The artist designed eleven oak stools whose shapes form letters that together spell out the word IMAGINATION. The stools were then sited in the children's learning section. Imagination is one of the original sub-divisions of the Dewey decimal system.