



Newsday Photo / Ken Sawchuk

Muralist Deborah Masters says she simply forgot to paint a loincloth on her depiction of Jesus on the cross.

# Missing Cloth's No Cover-Up

By Pete Bowles

STAFF WRITER

Deborah Masters, whose depiction of a nude, crucified Christ caused a brief controversy at Kennedy Airport, said yesterday that she had accidentally left off the figure's loincloth.

"My original intention was to have it covered," said Masters, who quickly added the loincloth on learning of her mistake. "I didn't know I had left off the covering, and it kind of shocked me. I went in the next morning and painted it over."

Masters said her correction had nothing to do with Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's criticisms of exhibits at the Brooklyn Museum of Art and his creation of a decency panel.

"There is a chilling effect on artists in the city now," she said. "But not in this instance."

Masters added the loincloth after learning that a construction worker who installed the panels had complained about the nude Christ. "He is religious and so am I," she said.

Masters said the 18-inch-tall figure of Christ is only a small part of a massive, 28-panel mural to be unveiled on May 24 at the official opening of a new \$1.4 billion international arrivals terminal at Kennedy.

"I have been working on this for four years," she said of the privately funded project. "The crucifix was on the fifth panel I made. After each panel was painted, it was wrapped and stored. I hadn't seen it since it was stored."

The 320-foot-long mural is made up of street scenes Masters observed around the city and includes religious items such as a statue of Mary, candles and the crucifix.

"I just reproduced what I saw," Masters said. "[Christ on] the crucifix is always covered, and that wasn't a problem to me."