

After 39 years, 'Last Supper' leaves Art League for new home

By TOM LONG 8-5-90
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SANTA CRUZ — One of this area's oldest tourist attractions became a moveable feast Friday.

"The Last Supper," a life-sized wax and papier-mache sculpture exhibit of Leonardo DaVinci's masterpiece that has drawn millions of people to the Santa Cruz Art League since 1951, was dismantled.

The apostles were gently beheaded, as was Jesus. Their hands were unscrewed and placed in wooden boxes, each pointing or clutching or reaching out in its own way.

Their wax heads were placed in individual boxes, labeled "Judas" and "Thomas" and "James."

The elaborate piece is being moved to Santa Cruz Memorial Park, on Graham Hill Road, where it will continue to be open to the public for free.

"There goes John," said Dory Boden-

heimer, president of the Art League, as two men carried the robed, papier-mache body out the door to a waiting van.

It was the end of an era for the Art League, and for Santa Cruz. After almost 40 years, "The Last Supper" had simply outlived its timeliness, according to League directors.

The walls of the gallery are now lined with paintings that range from the ultra-modern to traditional still lifes. But Christian, religious reproductions are nowhere to be found.

Where more than 20,000 people turned out to see the unveiling of the exhibit nearly four decades ago, only about a dozen a day have been stopping to see the re-creation in recent years. And the Art League is such a successful enterprise these days it needs the room that the exhibit has claimed for 39 years.

"The Last Supper" was created by the mother-daughter team of Katherine and Katherine Stubergh, Scandinavians who had moved to Los Angeles, for local ce-

ramic artist Harry Liston. Initially housed in a barn, the exhibit became the focus of a major community campaign to purchase it for \$20,000 and house it in the Art League Gallery. More than 2 million people have seen the exhibit since it opened.

The Stubergh's Scandinavian heritage is generally acknowledged as the reason that Jesus and most of the apostle's were portrayed with blond or light-brown hair, said Jim Price, the League's historian. Except Judas, of course. His black coiffure and beard seem menacing in context, with his wax hand clutching a bag of money.

But Judas' hand clutched only air Friday afternoon as it lay in a long box with other apostolic hands. Only a piece of tape labeled "Judas" across the wrist differentiated it from the others.

He and John and Doubting Thomas and Simon Peter and Jesus were bound for a new home, where they will carry on the Stuberghs' vision.



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A nearly dismantled 'Last Supper' is prepared for its move.