

ART AS SEEN BY THE NEW YORKER AND NEW YORK

In the October 11 editions of *The New Yorker* and *New York*, contrasting perspectives on the Brooklyn Museum of Art controversy are offered. Peter Schjeldahl in *The New Yorker* sees the dung-stained and pornographic-studded "The Holy Virgin Mary" as "gorgeous, sweet, and respectful of its subject"; he is taken by its alleged artistic merit and does not believe that the artist, Chris Ofili, meant his work to be sacrilegious. But Mark Stevens in *New York* sees it differently: he chastises Ofili for not coming up "with something better than elephant dung for a desecration." Stevens suggests, "Wouldn't bat droppings or goat semen be preferable?"

Catholic League president William Donohue made his thoughts known on the two commentaries today:

"If I had been asked a month ago where to find someone who thought it a reverential tribute to throw feces on a religious painting and surround it with pictures of vaginas and anuses, I would have directed him to an asylum. Now I would offer him the option of visiting the offices of *The New Yorker*.

"But if *The New Yorker's* take on 'The Holy Virgin Mary' is bizarre, the position of *New York* is certifiably bigoted. When it is said that Our Blessed Mother is 'every good boy's dream,' no one can understand that without calling it anti-Catholic.

"The comment that 'bat droppings' and 'goat semen' would be 'preferable' to elephant dung on 'The Holy Virgin Mary' proves how deep-seated is *New York's* hatred of Catholicism. That *New York* admits that this painting constitutes 'desecration' shows that it is more in touch with reality than *The New Yorker*, but it also shows that *New York* has bigots on its payroll.

"The New Yorker's capacity for self-deception cannot be underrated, but it is still preferable to *New York's* sponsorship of hate speech."