

# CHRISTIE'S AND CATTELAN SEEK ANOTHER "SENSATION"

On May 17, Christie's will auction one of two versions of "The Ninth Hour" by Maurizio Cattelan. The installation depicts Pope John Paul II being crushed by a meteorite while clutching his crozier. The Cattelan sculpture has been the source of controversy when shown in parts of Europe. This was especially true when it was featured in Poland where two members of the Parliament tried to destroy the artwork.

Commenting on this subject is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"Cattelan's 'The Ninth Hour' strikes us as being bizarre, but not necessarily anti-Catholic. What interests us is not so much the installation but all the hoopla surrounding it. We are also interested in the extent to which the artwork acts as fodder for anti-Catholics.

"For example, it is well-known that Christie's, which played an integral role sponsoring the anti-Catholic exhibit, 'Sensation,' at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999, has been hyping 'The Ninth Hour' in search of another fast buck. That is why Christie's featured the felled pope on the cover of its spring catalog. As for Cattelan, he admits to being disappointed by the lack of reaction to his work and is now tweaking reporters by saying that 'The Ninth Hour' is a 'little' anti-Catholic.

"To be sure, Cattelan's pope is attracting the crazies. Consider Norman Rosenthal, head honcho of England's Royal Academy. Upon seeing the art, he was moved to blaming the pope for the spread of AIDS. It remains to be seen if the Catholic bashers in New York can top this one.

"In fairness, Christie's has every reason to be ticked off at

the Catholic League. Had we taken their bait and urged Catholics to protest, it might have been a lucrative deal. But now they're stuck with this pile of junk. Finally, we couldn't help but noticing that Cattelan's pope is shown surviving the meteorite. Talk about a bummer for the Christie's crowd!"