

COOPER UNION'S IDEA OF GREAT ART

New York's Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art is currently hosting an exhibition of student art; it began May 27 and ends June 10. Not all student contributions, however, are being shown. The school's website says, "The School of Art faculty have selected major pieces by students representing 'the best of' each discipline ranging from sculpture, graphic design and painting to video installations."

One of the selections is a series of paintings by Felipe Baeza. In one of the them, he shows a man with his pants pulled down with a crucifix extended from his rectum. Under the painting it says, "el dia que me converti catolico," or "The day I became a Catholic." There is a similar piece which substitutes a Rosary for the crucifix; another shows a man with his pants down and an angel holding two Rosaries with a penis attached to each of them; there is also a halo hovering over a naked man with an erection.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue offered his comments today:

"Surely there is a difference between art, traditionally understood as conveying beauty, and junk. Admittedly there is so much junk that passes as art these days that the public can be forgiven if it is no longer capable of making critical distinctions. But we should expect more from the art faculty at a distinguished institution of higher education.

"That the works of this student should be deemed 'major,' representing the 'best' of the student contributions does not speak well for Cooper Union. On the other hand, I have the sneaking suspicion that these paintings made the cut precisely

because they were an assault on Catholic sensibilities. No, I can't prove what the motive was, but I can be deadly certain that if even a reverential portrait of Muhammad had been offered, it would have been rejected. I hasten to add that if a reverential portrait of Jesus had been submitted, it too would have been rejected, but for entirely different reasons."