

MORE ART QUA HATE SPEECH ON CAMPUS

A lot of artists, for some reason, hate the Catholic Church. Why artists hate the Church more than, say, milkmen, is hard to say, but there is little doubt that they do. Maybe it's because they fancy themselves as being creative. Maybe it has something to do with their fixation on abstract thinking. But chances are neither explanation is adequate: patients in mental hospitals often think they're creative and it is their wont to engage in abstract thought. Yet few are bigots.

Whatever the reason, they've struck again, and both times on the west coast. To be specific, the problems occurred on the campuses of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and Clackamas Community College in Oregon City, Oregon. As is almost always the case with bigoted artists, they used sex as a weapon to target the Church.

At the Fisher Gallery on the campus of USC, there was an exhibition entitled "Crossing Boundaries." In a display called "The Source, Virgins and Crosses," 30 crosses are juxtaposed with a blank outline of the Virgin of Guadalupe. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "the actual Virgin has been removed, leaving just the aura that surrounds her, resembling a vaginal orifice." This was supposed to be understood in Marxian terms: "If religion is the opium of the masses, the brothers say, then the Virgin is man's entry into paradise—spiritually and physically." Another offensive piece of art, "El Nino's Wake," depicts Baby Jesus naked at a wake.

The Pauling Center at Clackamas Community College featured "Two Popes Boinking." It showed two men wearing papal tiaras having sex. State representative Bill Witt was understandably upset with this, as were league members in the area.

We wrote to Dr. Steven Sample, president of USC, stating our objections.. We made the point that in 1994 the president of San Francisco State University was faced with a similar problem. When he discovered anti-Semitic art on his campus, he said it contributed to a “hostile campus environment” and ordered the offending mural removed. We asked Dr. Sample if he thought he had a duty to do the same with the bigoted art on his campus.

In response, we heard from Lloyd Armstrong, provost and senior vice president for academic affairs. He said he would look into the matter and get back with us. We are awaiting his response.

We put similar pressure on the president of Clackamas Community College, Dr. John Keyser. We are happy to report that upon receipt of our letter, faculty at the college met and decided to remove the artwork from the gallery; it was transferred temporarily to a spot near faculty offices and then sent on its way with the rest of the exhibition. A panel discussion on this controversy was scheduled that included a representative of the Archdiocese of Portland. The league was invited to participate but we were unable to do so given other commitments.

The Marxian statement about religion being the opiate of the masses probably gets at the root cause of this problem more than anything. In their arrogance, artists—to say nothing of their intellectual comrades in the academy—sincerely believe that religion is a drug that stupefies the masses, draining them of revolutionary fervor. The truth of the matter is that it is the learned ones who’ve been doped. Raymond Aron, the late French sociologist, had a more accurate understanding of what was at work when he wrote his book, *Marxism: Opiate of the Intellectuals*.

In any event, art *qua* hate speech remains hate speech. Almost any dope should be able to figure this one out.