

FIRESTORM OF PROTEST GREET'S BEASTLY ART EXHIBIT

A beastly art exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art drew a strong response from the Catholic League and quickly attracted international attention. A British art exhibit, "Sensation," not only displayed dead animals and sexually mutilated bodies, it featured a painting, "The Holy Virgin Mary," that was laced with elephant dung and spotted with pictures of vaginas and anuses.

In mid-September, when a reporter for the *New York Daily News* notified the Catholic League of the impending exhibit, we immediately secured a copy of the "Sensation" catalog. On September 16, we issued our first news release on the subject and shortly thereafter New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani labeled the exhibit "Catholic bashing" and threatened to close the museum; he succeeded in stopping all checks to the museum.

The league's first response was to call for a boycott of the Brooklyn Museum of Art. In the pages of the *Tablet*, the newspaper of the Brooklyn diocese, we placed an ad asking all Catholic teachers not to take their students to any exhibit at the museum over the course of the current academic year. We also wrote to every member of the City Council requesting that the museum be defunded.

"DOGMA" FINALLY OPENS

After months of controversy, "Dogma" opens November 12. It was featured at the New York Film Festival on October 4-5; a protest rally greeted the movie outside Lincoln Center. The

entertainment media, in particular, continue to seek the Catholic League's voice on the film.

John Podhoretz of the *New York Post* branded the movie "virulently, even obsessively anti-Catholic." Even John Pierson, a friend and collaborator of Smith's, said the Catholic League's attacks "are accurate on a surface level."

More important, Smith hasn't hidden his true feelings on "Dogma." When Howard Stern said to him, "...and it's got some Jesus Christ thing in it so all the religious folks are already hating it," Smith replied, "Then we must be doing something right."

When the Catholic League was protesting the Brooklyn Museum of Art exhibit, "Sensation," Smith joked that "I'm really glad we kept the scene with the elephant-dung Madonna."

There is little doubt that the Catholic League protest has unnerved Smith. He has used obscenities when speaking of the league and has admitted that since we began our protest, life has been "horrible" for him.

Movies that generate this much controversy usually do well initially. But the true test comes in the weeks following the debut. No matter how the movie does at the box office, the resistance we've provided is the most important tally of all.

WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING

October 4: Les Kinsolving of WCBM radio, Baltimore, in the Briefing Room of the White House, presents White House Press Secretary Joe Lockhart with a Catholic League "Vomit Bag": "Bill Donohue of the Catholic League distributed vomit bags at

the museum on Saturday and I know he'd like you to have one..." Lockhart accepted the bag and offered to give Kinsolving a plane ticket home.

MYTHS COLOR "SENSATION" EXHIBIT

William A. Donohue

Myth: In an unprecedented move, the Catholic League sought to censor an art exhibit.

Fact: The Catholic League never sought to censor anything and its protest of an art exhibit was hardly unprecedented. We made it clear that Charles Saatchi, the collector of the paintings, could always find some "fat cat bigot" to foot the bill in the private sector (as our communications director, Pat Scully, put it, "do it on your own dime"). What we objected to was public funding of hate speech.

It is worth recalling that in 1988, six months after Chicago mayor Harold Washington died, an artist portrayed him in women's underwear and hung his masterpiece in the Art Institute of Chicago. The City Council immediately voted to defund the museum and a cop literally snatched the painting off the wall. Yet no one in the artistic community screamed "censorship." And what did the museum do? It took out full-page ads in two newspapers apologizing for what it did.

So why the radically different reaction now? Because Harold Washington was African American and so were the aldermen who protested the painting. Indeed, the museum capitulated so much that it even promised to launch an affirmative action plan to

hire more blacks. Fat chance Catholics will ever be extended like treatment.

Myth: “The Holy Virgin Mary” is the work of an African artist, Chris Ofili, who is “a devout Catholic”; we should respect his culture.

Fact: Ofili is not African—he is British (his parents were born in Nigeria). Moreover, it never fails that when a Catholic trashes his religion, the media dub him to be “devout.” From reading what Ofili has said about his religion, it would be more accurate to describe him as a “self-hating Catholic.” And it is he who brought his art to our culture, therefore he needs to be more respectful of our cultural traditions.

Myth: Elephant dung in Africa has a positive connotation (it means “regeneration”) and that is why Ofili chose to use it; he also placed dung on portraits of black celebrities such as Miles Davis, Diana Ross and Cassius Clay.

Fact: This is a racist argument. The African Catholics that I have taught (as recently as last summer) have never indicated that they show their love for Our Blessed Mother by throwing a lump of feces on her portrait. Only some multicultural white freak in this country would believe such bull.

Is it also an African tradition to put pictures of vaginas and anuses on pictures of revered persons? If so, Ofili needs to explain why he didn’t surround his black heroes with porn pictures.

Myth: The Catholic League is mistaking artistic expression for bigotry.

Fact: This falsely assumes there is no such genre as bigoted art. The mistake is in thinking that some who defend “Sensation” aren’t bigots. To take one example, *New York* magazine chastised Ofili for not coming up “with

something better than elephant dung for a desecration. Wouldn't bat droppings or goat semen be preferable?" Anyone who sees this as something other than anti-Catholic is nuts.

Myth: The answer to bad speech is good speech: therefore the public expression of art that denigrates religion can be answered by the public expression of art that reveres religion.

Fact: Thanks to conflicting decisions reached by the U.S. Supreme Court, this is no longer a certainty, as witnessed by the surviving families of the Columbine High School massacre. They were invited by the Jefferson County School District to make a statement on ceramic tile that would be placed in the new school building. Some crafted such religious themes as crosses and biblical verses, only to have the school district reject them as a violation of church and state. The art was rejected while the Brooklyn Museum of Art controversy was raging, leaving the Catholic League to issue a news release entitled, "Columbine Religious Art Nixed Due to Lack of Dung."

Myth: New Yorkers, including Catholics, sided with the museum, and not with Mayor Giuliani and the Catholic League.

Fact: The evidence dovetails with the nature of the question: when the public was asked if Giuliani had the right to cut off funds for art he found offensive, most said no. But when asked if controversial art should be publicly funded, most also said no.

Myth: There was little religious or political support for the Catholic League position.

Fact: We not only got support from John Cardinal O'Connor and Bishop Thomas Daily of Brooklyn, we secured the backing of the New York Hispanic Clergy Organization (a Pentecostal group), the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, Agudath Israel, the Islamic Center of Long Island, et al.

DONOHUE ON “CROSSFIRE”

9-28-99

Following a video clip of Hillary Clinton explaining why she is against defunding the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Donohue commented:

“...it’s appropriate that we are talking about elephant dung, because this lady certainly stepped in it when she made that remark.”

DONOHUE ON THE “TODAY SHOW”

9-27-99

“Our Blessed Mother is very important to Catholics. It’s more important, I think, to Catholics than maybe Martin Luther King might even be to the African-American community. And when you throw elephant dung and have pictures of vaginas and anuses surrounding her in this- this kind of invidious fashion, my answer is go show your filth down the street. Find a fat cat bigot. There are alot of fat cat bigots who don’t like Catholics in this country; let them sponsor it. But if the government cannot sponsor my religion, and it shouldn’t, it shouldn’t be in the business of allowing people to bash my religion. What this is is pure, unadulterated hate speech. And the government should not be involved in hate speech against my religion or anybody else’s.”

DONOHUE ON NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO

10-2-99

"You want to shock people? Why don't you take your own mother and wipe crap over her? But don't you dare take our spiritual mother, the spiritual mother of people worldwide and millions of people in the New York City area, and desecrate her."

DONOHUE AT RALLY AGAINST THE MUSEUM

10-2-99

"People have told me that there are multiple interpretations to this. Only people who have been drunk on the ideas of modern art would believe this. If somebody puts a swastika on a synagogue, there's only one answer—and everyone knows what it is. When you throw elephant dung with pornographic pictures on Our Blessed Mother, there's only one meaning."

"People are saying that Africans and African-Americans approve of putting dung on sacred pictures. That's a racist statement. I have worked in the African-American community. I've taught in Spanish Harlem. I don't know one African-American family that when it comes to celebrating Kwanza, they send a pile of excrement to their friends."

DONOHUE ON RADIO AND TV

10-1-99

"Now that art has been reduced to dung and puke, there is no better time to cut public funding of the arts."

“DOGMA” PETITIONS SENT TO DISNEY

The Catholic League petition requesting Disney to drop Miramax garnered approximately 300,000 signatures. They were mailed to Disney chief Michael Eisner; the media were notified of the mailing.

The decision to put pressure on Disney stems from the Disney-Miramax relationship (the former owns the latter) and the anti-Catholic movies that the Miramax co-chairman, Bob and Harvey Weinstein, like to distribute and produce. In 1995, the Catholic-bashing film “Priest” was distributed by Miramax and now the Weinsteins are poised to produce “Dogma.”

The Catholic League is delighted that Disney told Miramax to dump “Dogma” (it was judged “inappropriate for all our labels” by Disney officials). Because the Weinsteins persisted with the movie by putting up their own money (some \$14 million), it indicated to us that the time had come to push Disney to dump Miramax altogether. The great response that our petition got suggests that the timing couldn’t be better for Michael Eisner to tell the Weinsteins to take a walk.

EXTRAORDINARY PRESS CONFERENCE

The New York *Daily News* dubbed it “an extraordinary joint appearance” and *Newsday* labeled it “an unlikely alliance.” The two dailies were referring to the joint press conference called by Norman Siegel of the New York Civil Liberties Union

and Bill Donohue of the Catholic League.

On October 4, Siegel and Donohue hosted the media at the New York Catholic Center to denounce the anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism surrounding the Brooklyn Museum of Art controversy. Both men had clashed several times on radio and TV over the "Sensation" exhibit, but this time it was different: the legal and aesthetic merits of the display were intentionally ignored so that each could address the bigotry that was accompanying the debate.

Siegel and Donohue, though ideological adversaries, are friends, and both deplore the anti-Semitic calls aimed at Siegel and the anti-Catholic messages targeted at Donohue. At a previous panel discussion, Siegel had come to Donohue's defense when an audience participant grew intolerant of Donohue; for his part, Donohue had interrupted the protest rally outside the Brooklyn Museum of Art to denounce an anti-Semite in the crowd, urging everyone to yell, "Go home."

"The eyes of the nation are watching what we do here and how we handle this controversy," said Siegel. "Let's not get into the religious gutter," he added. Donohue said of Siegel, "Disagree with Norm? I do. Respect him? I also do."

CONDÉ NAST HAS A PROBLEM WITH CATHOLICISM

The following full page ad appeared in the Tuesday, October 26, 1999 edition of The New York Times

At the beginning of the decade, Condé Nast's *Vanity Fair* sought to discredit John Cardinal O'Connor

At the mid-point of the decade, *Vanity Fair* sought to discredit Mother Teresa

Now at the end of the decade, *Vanity Fair* seeks to discredit Pope Pius XII

In 1990, *Vanity Fair* painted John Cardinal O'Connor as an authoritarian "dinosaur." Labeled the "Holy Terror," the portrait that emerged was that of a priest who was indifferent to suffering, even to children with AIDS.

In 1995, *Vanity Fair* painted Mother Teresa as a lap dog to dictators all over the world. Labeled a "Tough-Minded Ideologue," the portrait that emerged was that of a hypocritical cynic who curried favor with fat cats and tyrants.

In 1999, *Vanity Fair* painted Pope Pius XII as an anti-Semite who helped Hitler come to power. Labeled "Hitler's Pope," the portrait that emerged was that of a war criminal who did nothing to help Jews during the Holocaust.

THOSE WHO DON'T SEEK TO PROMOTE BOGUS HISTORY, KNOW BETTER

The record shows that Cardinal O'Connor has done more to improve Catholic-Jewish relations than any American ever has.

In 1984, soon after he became the New York Archbishop, he announced that the New York Archdiocese would care for, free of charge, any woman pregnant and in need who wished to take her baby to term. His Eminence presides over the largest private provider of care for AIDS patients and has steadfastly supported universal health care and organized labor.

The record shows that Mother Teresa was loved the world over for her indefatigable service to the poorest of the poor. Several times voted the "Most Admired Woman in the World," she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, and was honored by both the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government for her work. In the 1980s, she sought to have all convicts with

AIDS released to her hospice where they could die with dignity. She also established the first hospice in Greenwich Village for those suffering with AIDS.

The record shows that Pope Pius XII did more to save Jews during the Holocaust than anyone else. Indeed, according to the Israeli scholar, Pinchas Lapide, Pius XII was responsible for "saving the lives of 860,000 Jews." In 1963, when the attacks against Pius XII first surfaced, an official at the ADL, Joseph L. Lichten, came to his defense, noting that Pius XII "did everything humanly possible to save lives and alleviate suffering among the Jews." This is why the head of the World Jewish Congress in 1945 gave Pius XII a gift that today would be worth more than a million dollars.

**THERE IS NO DOUBT CONDÉ NAST HAS A PROBLEM WITH CATHOLICISM,
IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF**

VANITY FAIR EXPLAINED WHY

VATICAN PROVES CORNWELL'S DECEIT

The Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, has published a rebuke of John Cornwell's work, *Hitler's Pope*. Printed below is the statement released by the Catholic news agency, Zenit, on the subject:

"Mr. Cornwell states that he has been the first and only person to have access to this archive. This statement is completely false. In fact, numerous persons have had access to this archive, even before Mr. Cornwell consulted it. It must

be stressed that Mr. Cornwell's research was limited to two series of documents: Bavaria (1918-1921) and Austria (Serbia, Belgrade: 1913-1915). Obviously, neither the author of the book nor others have ever had access to documents referring to the period which is not yet open to the public (1922 to the present)."

"Mr. Cornwell stated that he worked for 'months on end,' in said archive. This statement does not correspond absolutely to truth, either. In fact, in that archive precise annotations are made about the purpose of the day, and the period of time (hours and minutes) that each person employs to carry out his consultation. From these data, it is deduced that Mr. Cornwell was admitted to the archive from May 12 to June 2 of 1997, therefore, not for 'months on end,' but for a period of close to three weeks. Moreover, in this very limited time, Mr. Cornwell did not come every day; and on the days he did come, often his stay was for very brief periods of time."

"Moreover, in open contrast to the truth, Mr. Cornwell stated that the documents he found had been kept strictly secret until he made his research. In this context, he refers specifically to a letter, sent on April 18, 1919, by the then Nuncio in Bavaria, Archbishop Pacelli, to the Secretariat of State. In connection with this document, he said this letter had remained secret in the Vatican Archive 'like a time-bomb.' But, in fact, said letter (of which Cornwell only quotes some limited phrases...), had already been published in 1992; in other words, seven years before the publication of Cornwell's book. The full text of this document appeared in E. Fattorini's book, 'Germany and the Holy See: The Pacelli Nunciature between the Great War and the Weimar Republic,' Il Mulino, Bologna, 1992, pp. 322-325."

"It was important to point out the above facts to put readers on guard, who might otherwise be surprised by what is said in Mr. Cornwell's publication about the materials kept in the Archive in question."

WHAT'S WITH THOSE BRITS?

Did you know that Pope John Paul II was “a mass murderer”? Did you know that he should be indicted “for crimes against humanity”? That’s because you don’t read the *Guardian*, one of London’s top newspapers. Exactly those charges were made in the October 7 edition of the paper.

According to the *Guardian*, the pope deserves this beating because he is opposed to condoms. And because of that, children are dying of AIDS. To which William Donohue commented, “Blaming the pope for AIDS because he opposes condoms is on the order of blaming libertarians for car fatalities because they oppose seat belts.” Donohue also opined, “I understand that the Catholic population in England has doubled in recent years. Perhaps that is the source of your anxiety.”” His letter was printed on October 14.

Turning to the *Sunday Times* of London, we learn how unhappy Andrew Sullivan is with William Donohue. In a lengthy diatribe against the Catholic League president, Sullivan branded Donohue “a fiery Irish-Catholic” who “patrols the culture to see what he can be offended by.” To which Donohue pleaded not guilty: “This is patently untrue: all I have to do is read papers like the *Sunday Times* of London to uncover instances of anti-Catholic bigotry.”