

The Arts

Winter



Hawaii – The off-Broadway show *Tony and Tina's Wedding* ventured to Hawaii to tell the tale of an Italian American wedding that features a pregnant bride on drugs and foul language. The wedding ceremony is a mock rendition that includes a crude characterization of nuns and priests. It also defames Catholicism.

January-February

Louisville, KY – “Sacred Hearts III” was a show which used Catholic symbols as part of its critique of the culture. As described in a positive review in the *Courier-Journal*, one of the works, “Peg O’ My Heart,” features a cross piercing an anatomically-correct heart. It then “bleeds” into a wine glass. Another one of artist Iris Adler’s works is a “Heart”: it is shaped like a candy box and features thorns and a crown of candelabra lights.

February 19 – March 29

New York, NY – *Gunnin’ for Jesus*, a play presented by the St. Bocephus Productions at the John Houseman Studio Theater in New York City, was billed as a “tasteless” show that portrays a gay alcoholic priest, Father Sullivan. He was “banished to a Nashville parish where he must raise money or face excommunication.” The portrayal of Father Sullivan was replete with obscenities.

March 20

Huntington, NY – A *Planned Parenthood* benefit, the International Women’s Film and Video Festival, was held by the Cinema Arts Centre in Huntington, NY. The promotional material for the films established that they were about “the blatant

attempt by a well-financed fanatic Christian Right minority and the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church under the guidance of the Pope in Rome to dictate the rights of American women.”

Spring

New York, NY – French choreographer Angelin Preljocaj brought his ballet “Annunciation,” to New York. It features an erotic lesbian encounter between a female version of St. Gabriel and the Blessed Mother.

Spring

The Tom of Finland Foundation distributed materials promoting Mistress April’s “Archangel Michael” that included pictures of a tree top sculpture which “flaunts his human (large erect penis).”

April 26 – June 7

Buffalo, NY – Big Orbit Gallery featured Jackie Felix’s “Blue Mary” series of paintings. Described by the *Buffalo News* art critic Richard Huntington as a “radical revision of the Annunciation story,” it is in fact patently offensive. The angel Gabriel is “variously tough guy, biker, smooth talker and sexual aggressor,” who in one depiction “pushes his face into that of Mary’s like an overeager date at the high school prom.” Mary, pictured “nude or in a G-string,” is portrayed as unwilling “to relinquish her sexuality” and other life choices, rejecting “with an aggressive gesture” Gabriel’s entreaty that she give birth to the Son of God.

May

Washington, DC – Andres Serrano’s “Piss Christ,” the infamous photo of a crucifix submerged in urine, was featured as part of a “Mythic Image” art show at the David Adamson Gallery.

May

Cranberry, PA – The play “Once a Catholic,” ostensibly about the sexual awkwardness of 1950s Catholic schoolgirls, contained many offensive discussions, covering such topics as anal sex, bestiality, the Pope having sex with prostitutes and with his own daughter, and St. Joseph allegedly stirring his tea with his penis. At the league’s insistence, every offensive part of the script was removed.

May 29 – June 15

Waterbury, CT – Seven Angels Theatre hosted the play “Dare Not Speak Its Name” written by Kelly Masterson of New York. The play is about a priest, a boy and sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. On its cover, the *Hartford Courant* (June 9) quoted two Protestant ministers and a woman, who is a director of Religious Education for a local parish, praising the play as “thoughtful” and “fair.” It was nominated for the Connecticut Critics Circle’s best play of the year, despite record-low turnout for any production at this theater.

June

Chicago, IL – Among her portrayals in “She’s Funny That Way,” running at the Artemisia Gallery in Chicago, actress Lori Nix was dressed in a crimson nun’s habit as she prayerfully clutched a huge black dildo.

July

Baltimore, MD – The Maryland Stage Company, a professional troupe composed of faculty and alumni of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, offered a production of the 17th century French playwright Moliere’s “Tartuffe,” depicting some perverse behavior by the title character, a Catholic monk. In one scene, according to a review in the *Northeast Booster*, Tartuffe “crawls through a cloud of incense wearing a crown of thorns and begging his fellow monks to whip him harder.” The monk “is soon inspecting the cleavage” of his

host's wife, and "caressing her thighs along with his rosary."

August 4 – September 7

Phoenix, AZ – The Sun Cities Museum of Art featured an exhibit by Katherine Wells, an atheist, that took aim at Our Blessed Mother and Our Lady of Guadalupe. Mary, adorned in an American flag, is resting on a cross and clutching a can of Budweiser, surrounded by rays of light cut from the peeled labels of beer bottles. High caliber bullets are used as a border around various religious icons.

September

New York, NY – "Vote Jesus," billed as "Nate Eppler's irreverent look at the dude we know as Jesus, from his first prophet audition to his last supper at the karaoke bar," is performed at Studio Theater.

September

San Francisco – "My Cathedral," an art exhibit by Alex Donis on display at the Galeria de la Raza, featured paintings of revered Catholic figures locked in passionate kisses with persons of the same sex—Pope John Paul II with Mahatma Gandhi, Mary Magdalene with Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Mother Teresa with Madonna. While the artist of course offered some deeper meaning for each painting, the shock value of these offensive portrayals of Catholic figures in homoerotic encounters was surely not lost on Mr. Donis.

September

Chicago, IL – Artist Hulbert Waldroup was so offended by religious intolerance between Jews and Moslems that he just had to vilify...Christianity! Officials of an art show at the James R. Thompson Center, a state government building, removed Waldroup's "The Devil's Palace," described by AP as "a painting of Jesus and the devil sitting at a table laden with

a bowl of eyeballs, a severed leg roast garnished with pineapple and ear kabobs." The painting was inspired, the artist said, when he went to Israel two years ago and was scandalized by the "hatred...violence and bloodshed" he witnessed there, "all in the name of religion."

September – December

Los Angeles, CA – The Museum of Contemporary Art hosted an exhibit by a self-described ex-Catholic gay man which defiled the Virgin Mary. After sculpting our Blessed Mother in clay, Robert Gober "pierced his Virgin Mary with a phallic culvert pipe," according to the promotional literature for the work. This was supposed to evoke the Immaculate Conception as well as the miraculous conception of Christ, while at the same time "depriv(ing) the Virgin Mary of the womb from which Christ was born."

Fall

Santa Maria, CA – The play "Agnes of God," based on the anti-Catholic movie of the same name, was scheduled as part of the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts (PCPA) Winterspring season for 1997-98.

October 9

The Swedish Academy awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature to Dario Fo, the Italian playwright who is most known for his attacks on the Roman Catholic Church. His most famous work, "Mistero Buffo" ("Comic Mystery"), was branded by the Vatican in 1977 as the "most blasphemous show in the history of television."

October 31

New York, NY – Artist Barbara Kruger made an attempt to mimic Andres Serrano by creating a sculpture of Jesus Christ and an inebriated Santa Claus leaning against a large sarcophagus.

While Jesus clutches a cross, Santa holds a dollar sign and a little girl who looks like JonBenet Ramsey. The exhibition was put on display on Halloween at the Mary Boone Gallery. Art critic Hilton Kramer said of Kruger's work, "People no longer have any understanding of what blasphemy means."

December

New York, NY – A painting hanging in the display window of the Art Students League depicted a crucified Santa Claus hanging from a cross. While artist Robert Cenedella contended that the work was intended to protest the commercialization of Christmas, the league objected to the exploitation of a sacred Catholic symbol, the crucifix, to make the artist's point. When the league suggested that he might have made the same point by putting Santa in a noose, Mr. Cenedella noted that that would have been offensive to African Americans, as it would conjure up images of lynching. Yet he had no qualms about offending Catholics! The league asked only that the painting be moved inside the Art Students League, where its meaning could be pondered by serious art patrons without needlessly offending passersby. Joanne Kuebler, executive director of the Art Students League, never responded to the league's request.