

THE ARTS

January

Panel discussions were held in several American cities and in Europe discussing the 2010 decision of the Smithsonian to remove a vile video from the National Portrait Gallery that the Catholic League had objected to; we did not call for it to be removed, but we did ask the Congress to reconsider funding the Smithsonian given the museum's sponsorship of hate speech directed at Christians. At none of these panels did anyone even mention why Christians were offended by David Wojnarowicz's video, "A Fire in My Belly."



At a Los Angeles town hall meeting, Smithsonian Secretary Wayne Clough also declined to address the concerns of Christians. Instead he defended the video as a "work of art."

At the end of January, Smithsonian officials met and discussed the fallout over the video. "Culturally sensitive exhibitions should be previewed from a diverse set of perspectives," said the Regents Advisory Panel. In response, we pointedly asked, "If a swastika is painted on a synagogue, should those who find it endearing be consulted?"

The Smithsonian's John W. McCarter Jr. defended the hate speech, saying of the artist, "I believe, in his mind, that [the video] was not sacrilegious." McCarter also asked us to consider the possibility that the video "might have been very deeply religious."

But McCarter's subjectivism was wholly unwarranted. Wojnarowicz once branded the Catholic Church a "house of walking swastikas," so there is no doubt about the artist's intentions: his work was meant to offend.

January 13

New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) proudly acquired the Wojnarowicz video, "A Fire in My Belly." While there were a number of smaller museums and galleries that featured the vile video since it appeared at the Smithsonian in 2010, none was as prominent as MoMA.

February 26 – May 29

Oakland, CA – The Oakland Museum of Art featured an exhibit called "Contemporary Coda" that explored the Spanish conquest of California. The piece by artist Alma Lopez, "Our Lady," showed a woman dressed in a floral bikini in the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Her creation was standing on a black crescent moon held up by a bare breasted female butterfly angel.

Lopez first displayed "Our Lady" in February 2001, and came under fire at the time from the Catholic League and Archbishop Michael Sheehan of Santa Fe when it was shown at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

March 17 – April 17

Pawtucket, RI – The play "Paul," based on the life of St. Paul, ran at the Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre. The play called into question the origins of Christianity and suggested that it was founded on a myth. The writer of the play, Howard Brenton, described it as "flawed but provocative." It was certainly flawed.

March 25

We issued a press release based highlighting the critics' reviews of the Broadway musical, "The Book of Mormon." The musical was written by "South Park" creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone. Below is a sampling of the critics' adoration of the musical:

- The *New York Daily News* and the *New York Post* both liked the part where "a giant middle finger to God" appeared.
- The *Los Angeles Times* chuckled over a scene featuring

genital mutilation of African women, boasting the musical had “good intentions.”

- The Associated Press called the show a “pro-religion musical” and loved the “running joke” about a man who has “maggots in his scrotum.”
- Andrew Sullivan got a kick out of the part where they twisted a Mormon teaching to read, “F**k You God in The C**t” and praised the musical for its “humaneness.” He also justified the Mormon bashing by saying we should judge “Mormonism by Mormons.”
- *Newsday* wrote that the show “seems smitten” to “do good.”
- Ben Brantley of the *New York Times* was hot over the scene where there were a “few choice words for the God who let them [AIDS victims] wind up this way.”

April 1-2

Torrance, CA – The Annie Hendy play “The Catholic Girl’s Guide to Losing Your Virginity” was performed at the Torrance Cultural Arts Center, a publicly-funded establishment. The play is about a 24-year-old Catholic woman who is determined to lose her virginity by her 25th birthday after she finds out her priest is having better sex than she is.

April 21

When “Sister Act” opened on Broadway, Charles Isherwood of the *New York Times* took a gratuitous shot at Catholicism, noting that “this sentimental story of a bad girl showing the good sisters how to get down has all the depth of a communion wafer, and possibly a little less bite.” This demonstrates that even when a play about nuns does not offend—we have never registered a complaint about “Sister Act”—there is no guarantee that some critics won’t find an opportunity to bash us.

April 28

New York, NY – A play at La MaMa Experimental Theater hosted the play “Holy Crap!” The play, which had been banned in Madrid, was about a man who was trying to explore “religious indoctrination, sexuality, mysticism, and pedophilia in the Church.”

May 27

Memphis, TN – Artist Jason Miller displayed his exhibit, “Corporatism: The New Religion,” at Playhouse on the Square. His work hijacked Catholic imagery, including the compositional structure of the altar and steeple. Most offensive, he misappropriated the Eucharist to make a political statement.

June 17– July 10

San Antonio, TX – The Terrence McNally play, “Corpus Christi,” which depicts Christ having sex with the apostles, was performed at the San Pedro Playhouse, a publicly-funded establishment.

On February 22, Bill Donohue wrote to Julián Castro, mayor of San Antonio, about the play, but never heard back; he also sent a copy to Felix Padron, executive director of the Office of Cultural Affairs for the City of San Antonio, and to Ricardo Briones, chairman of the City’s Cultural Arts Board.

Donohue provided these three public officials with information about the play, including a reference of Christ as the “King of the Queers”; it also portrays Jesus saying to the apostles, “F*** your mother, F*** your father, F*** God”; and it shows Philip asking Jesus to perform oral sex on him. Moreover, the script is replete with sexual and scatological comments.

July 9

Orange County, CA – The anti-Catholic play, “Jerry Springer: The Opera,” was played at the Chance Theater. The play mocks the crucifixion, trashes the Eucharist and presents the Blessed Virgin as a woman who was “raped by an angel.”

November

Brooklyn, NY – The Brooklyn Museum of Art began hosting the exhibit “Hide/Seek” that included the anti-Christian video “A Fire in My Belly.”

The anti-Catholic exhibit was sponsored by the most anti-Catholic foundation in the United States, the Ford Foundation, and was being shown in New York’s most anti-Catholic museum.

The Brooklyn Museum of Art was home to the “Sensation” exhibit in 1999 that featured elephant dung and pictures of female genitalia inserted on a portrait of Our Blessed Mother; at that time we led a demonstration in front of the Museum.

For two reasons, we did not stage a demonstration outside the Museum this time: a) we won the big prize in 2010 when Smithsonian officials voluntarily bowed to public pressure and withdrew the vile video, and b) the video has been shown many times since at other venues across the nation (we do not chase dog and pony shows).

For his part Museum director Arnold Lehman attempted to spin the “Ants on the Crucifix” video. He said he found nothing anti-Catholic in the “Sensation” exhibition, and that “A Fire in My Belly” was actually a statement about “human suffering and death.”

Better yet was John Tamagni, the chairman of the Museum’s board. In response to a letter by Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, who properly asked for the video to be pulled, Tamagni said, “nothing in the exhibition was meant to be offensive.” This would include such spectacular fare as full frontal male nudity; scenes of naked men kissing; sado-masochistic images; and photos of AIDS-ravaged corpses.