

WHITNEY MUSEUM—MODEL OF HYPOCRISY

On March 23, New York's Whitney Museum hosted "Sanitation" by Hans Haacke. The German-born artist was provided with a platform to denounce Mayor Rudolph Giuliani for criticizing the "Sensation" exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art last fall. In the exhibition, Nazi-style script is used to highlight critical comments made by Giuliani and others; they are juxtaposed with the words of the First Amendment.

The Catholic League wasted no time going public with a response:

"'In 1993, *New York Times* writer Holland Cotter chastised those who seriously equated grant refusals by the National Endowment for the Arts with censorship in Nazi Germany. They 'should be off somewhere doing the most basic historical research,' he wrote. Cotter was referring to the controversy over the Whitney display 'Abject Art,' an exhibition that featured depictions of excrement, a film showing one man pushing his head into another man's rectum, a photo of an artist with a bullwhip in his rectum, etc. The same disability is now at work again.

"The surest way for fascism to win is to destroy the moral bedrock of a democratic society. That is why Haacke is disingenuous: not only is he wrong in painting Giuliani a fascist—he had the guts to challenge the bigots—Haacke's work is seed for the very ideology he claims to deplore.

"Haacke is a phony. In the early 1990s, he blasted art patron Charles Saatchi for doing business in South Africa, but now he lays off Charlie Hustle for sponsoring 'Sensation,' even though Saatchi pimped his way into the museum. That's because Haacke's tolerance for Catholic bashing is infinitely greater

than his tolerance for racial segregation.

“The Whitney is also a phony. Two years ago it was charged with censorship for canceling ‘The Great American Nude,’ and now it takes great umbrage at those who criticize blasphemy and pornography.”

The Whitney was properly criticized for trivializing the Holocaust experience; the ADL was particularly offended. Also, Mrs. Marylou Whitney, the widow of Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney, withdrew her financial support of the museum and resigned from its fund-raising council. She said that her mother-in-law, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, “would roll over in her grave” if she knew how debased the museum had become.

This example shows the extent to which left politics is engulfed in the artistic community. It also goes to show once again that the term art has been emptied of significance.