

Satanwatch by Suzanne Klebe

'Fine arts' purvey evil themes

Controversy erupts in Congress over funding of decadent, and sometimes overtly Satanic spectacles.

This past May, Senators Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) condemned a photograph that was part of an exhibit of "work" by Andres Serrano then touring the country. The exhibit was made possible through an award to Serrano given by the Southeast Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. This Southeast Center in turn had been given funding for its fellowship program from the government's National Endowment for the Arts (NEA); the bulk of its money is evidently from the Rockefeller Foundation and Equitable Life Insurance.

The photograph, condemned from the floor of the Senate, and described in the *Washington Post* as one "that many find offensive to the Christian faith," is a 3½ x 5-foot photograph with a yellow tint, of a crucifix in a bottle of urine entitled "Pisschrist." Serrano has other photos entitled "Pisspope," "Pissgod," "Pissmary," etc. The condemnation of the picture resulted in 25 Democratic and Republican senators' signing a letter calling for a reevaluation of NEA funding procedures. Since then, about 50 senators and 150 congressmen have contacted the NEA over the Serrano photograph.

The latest development in the controversy is the cancellation of an exhibit scheduled at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington of "photographer" Robert Mapplethorpe. The cancellation is evidently from fear of jeopardizing government funding for the NEA—which will undergo a review this year—by having another "offensive" exhibit, this time in the govern-

ment's backyard, again funded by government money. This exhibit was put together via a \$30,000 grant to the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art. The photographs, described as including "a number of homo-erotic and sado-masochistic images, along with nudes of children," more specifically includes the following choice subjects: photographs of genitalia, one entitled "Mr. 10½"; a photograph of two children, a boy and girl—the photograph shows under the girl's dress where she is unclothed, and is entitled "Honey." Mapplethorpe recently died of AIDS.

These are the tip of the iceberg of such decadent and in some cases specifically Satanic subject matter flooding all levels of cultural life of the country. The Serrano exhibit, for instance, was recently in Richmond, Virginia. It also includes a photograph of a dead German shepherd shown bloody and strangled by a noose. That photo is entitled "Scream"—and perhaps should be investigated for connections to the Satanic Process Church which has a particular fascination for murdering German shepherds.

The Serrano exhibit caused a slight controversy in Richmond, which has seen a noticeable change in the quality of exhibits at its museum since director Paul Perrot arrived five years ago. The next exhibit due there is of works by New York-based Lucas Sumerse. Evidently, his work is sculpture, and includes statues of Christ in questionable poses.

Similarly in Baltimore, recipients of the Baltimore Opera Company's brochure for the year's concerts were

surprised to see violent depictions of upcoming operas. *Faust* had a garishly colored and morbid Satanic scene; *Otello* had a similarly garish photo of a black male brutally strangling a white woman—the emphasis was on the pressure on her neck of his hands.

The Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore is now sponsoring an exhibit of the Egyptian Coptic Church, with an exceptional emphasis on black magic. Their invitation to members caused some controversy because it was actually a curse sent via the mails. The article on the exhibit in the museum newsletter is entitled "Magic for Good . . . Magic for Evil," with the following description: "In antiquity miscarriages and infant mortality were commonplace and much feared. And so this is the focus of quite a different sort of amulet—one in stone, which shows King Solomon atop a horse, impaling with a lance the body of a nude female. This woman is Alabastria (Lilith, among the Jews), antiquity's primal she-demon who was believed responsible, among other things, for suffocating infants in the crib. But even more potent than this amulet's image was its very medium, hematite, for in Greek this means bloodstone, and it is so named because, as black iron oxide, it turns blood-red when powdered." The brochure continues, "But in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious society there was also magic for evil."

Why this fascination with the occult, with child and other pornography, and with Satanic themes in supposedly "refined" art circles? The parents who decide to protect their child from rock music lyrics, from violent and sadistic comic books, and from slasher movies, now has to be wary of the supposed repositories of higher art. Who can doubt that this is cultural warfare?