5-14-1989

Obscenity: News Articles (1989): News Article 08

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Italians, Dr. Magherini said, are not likely to be overwhelmed because they are at home, and another notable group of travelers, the Japanese, usually move in large groups and prepare carefully for whatever lies ahead.

Previous Trouble Noted

One more detail: More than half of those hospitalized in her study had previous contact with a psychiatrist or psychologist. And that comes as no surprise to skeptics.

Dr. Elliot Wineburg, a specialist in stress-related disorders at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, said that while he had not yet read the Florence study, he suspected that some victims suffered from common physical rigors of travel. As for hallucinations, "they would have come out sooner or later," he said in a telephone interview. "They could only occur not just with sensitive people, but sick people."

But another psychiatrist, Dr. Reed Moskowitz of the New York University Medical Center, said the study made sense to him. "These are people who have a great appreciation of beauty, and you're putting them in the Mecca of art," he said.

Meanwhile, Dr. Magherini reports that new cases keep turning up.

But she says patients recover after a few days of rest, noting that one obvious way to head off trouble is to avoid squeezing too much art into a short period of time.

The Richmond News Leader
Sunday, May 14, 1989

Exhibit doesn't deserve subsidies, Parris says

By Peter Hardin
News Leader Washington correspondent

WASHINGTON — Rep. Stanford E. Parris, a Northern Virginia Republican running for governor, has blasted the use of federal subsidies for an exhibit displayed in Richmond that included a work depicting a crucified Jesus Christ submerged in urine.

"This picture meets the same standards of art as a swastika painted on the wall of a synagogue by a skinhead," Parris wrote in a letter yesterday to the National Endowment for the Arts.

"In my opinion, neither exhibit can be defined as art and neither deserves federal subsidies," he said.

The work by artist Andres Serrano was part of an exhibit displayed at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond from Dec. 13 to Jan. 29.

It was part of a travelling exhibit prepared by the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, N.C. The National Endowment for the Arts has for seven years provided money for the Southeastern Center, as has the Rockefeller Foundation and the Equitable Life Foundation.

While the National Endowment for the Arts had not responded to Parris by midday, acting Chairman Hup Hup Southern has replied to earlier controversy about the exhibit.

Southern, in an earlier statement had said the endowment is forbidden by law from "interfering with the artistic choices made by its grantees."

"The National Endowment for the Arts supports the right of grantee organizations to select, on artistic criteria, their artist-recipients and present their work, even though sometimes the work may be deemed controversial and offensive to some individuals," he said.

"We at the endowment do, nonetheless, deeply regret any offense to any individual."

Parris, who represents Virginia's 8th District, is one of three Republicans seeking the GOP gubernatorial nomination.

He asked Southern for a "report of disciplinary and corrective action you intend to take."

The National Endowment for the Arts gave $75,000 to the Southeastern Center for its most recent funding year.