

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

Obscenity: Andres Serrano Controversy (1989)

Education: National Endowment for the Arts
and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996)

6-13-1989

Obscenity: Andres Serrano Controversy (1989): Correspondence 05

Bob Carr

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_60

Recommended Citation

Carr, Bob, "Obscenity: Andres Serrano Controversy (1989): Correspondence 05" (1989). *Obscenity: Andres Serrano Controversy (1989)*. Paper 1.

https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_60/1

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Obscenity: Andres Serrano Controversy (1989) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu.

Executive Board

Bob Carr
Chairman
James Jeffords
Vice-Chairman
Jim Leach
Secretary
Tony Coelho
Treasurer
Pete Wilson
Membership Liaison/Senate
Robert Matsui
Membership Liaison/House

Gary Ackerman
Daniel Akaka
Beryl Anthony
Jim Bates
Max Baucus
Anthony Beilenson
Helen Delich Bentley
Howard Berman
Tom Bevill
Ben Blaz
David Bonior
Dan Burton
Ben Nighthorse Campbell
E. Thomas Coleman
Cardiss Collins
George Crockett, Jr.
George Darden
John Dingell
Julian Dixon
Thomas Downey
David Durenberger
Ben Ertreich
Vic Fazio
Hamilton Fish, Jr.
Tom Foley
Wycbe Fowler
Barney Frank
Robert Garcia
Benjamin Gann
Bart Gordon
William Gray III
Bill Green
Frank Guarini
Ralph Hall
Charles Hatcher
Dennis Hertel
Frank Horton
Steny Hoyer
James Inhofe
Andy Ireland
Barbara Kennelly
John LaFalce
Martin Lancaster
Patrick Leahy
Richard Lehman
William Lehman
Mickey Leland
Carl Levin
Mel Levine
Jerry Lewis
Thomas Manton
Dave McCurdy
Raymond McGrath
Kweisi Mfume
Daniel Patrick Moynihan
Robert Mrazek
Dave Nagle
Stephen L. Neal
Bill Nelson
Wayne Owens
Ron Packard
Donald Payne
Nancy Pelosi
Nick Rahall
Charles Rangel
Bill Richardson
Matthew J. Rinaldo
Robert Roe
J. Roy Rowland
Thomas Sawyer
James Scheuer
E. Clay Shaw, Jr.
Gerry Sikorski
Louise Slaughter
Larry Smith
Charles W. Stenholm
Ted Stevens
Ed Towns
Bruce Vento
Henry Waxman
Ted Weiss
Pat Williams
Jim Wright



Congress of the United States
Congressional Arts Caucus
Washington, D.C. 20515

June 13, 1989

345 House Annex #2
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 226-2456

Rhoda Glickman
Executive Director

Suzanne F. Farmer
Legislative Counsel

Dear Arts Caucus Colleague:

Some of you may have heard recently from your constituents about an artwork by Andrea Serrano which many of them find offensive. The artist allegedly received grant money from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for creating this controversial piece.

Enclosed is a fact sheet explaining the problem and the course of action by the NEA.

I hope this information is useful to you. If you need further information, please call Rose DiNapoli, Congressional Liaison at the NEA, at 682-5434.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Carr".

BOB CARR
Member of Congress

Enclosure

FACT SHEET

PROBLEM: Complaints about federal spending on artwork by Andrea Serrano entitled "Piss Christ" deemed to be offensive by some.

BACKGROUND: In 1987, Mr. Serrano received a fellowship from the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, as part of its "Awards in the Visual Arts Program 7" (AVA 7). The Arts Endowment, together with the Equitable and Rockefeller Foundations, has supported this program since 1981. The Endowment's 1987 decision to award a grant to the Center was based on a peer panel review of the Center's past work; the panel did not evaluate the work of the artists who eventually were selected (e.g. - Mr. Serrano) by the Center. Rather, the selection of those artists was made by a jury convened by the Center after it received the Endowment's grant.

Each year the Southeastern Center receives nominations of as many as 500 artists from a national network of approximately 100 professionals in American art. Of these nominees, ten artists are selected by a five member jury of distinguished artists and curators to receive fellowships in the amount of \$15,000. In addition, each artist's work is subsequently featured in a catalog and travelling exhibition organized by the Southeastern Center. In 1987, Mr. Serrano, along with nine other artists, was selected by the jury which judged him and other awardees on the basis of slides of past work submitted by each artist. Mr. Serrano's work was never reviewed by the Endowment. The decision to include the work in question in the AVA 7 catalog and exhibition was made by the Center, working with the artist. The AVA 7 exhibition appeared at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, at the Carnegie-Mellon University Art Gallery in Pittsburgh and at the Virginia Museum of Fine Art in Richmond, where it closed on January 29, 1989.

ACTION TAKEN: In response to the concerns of the Congress and the public, the NEA is discussing this issue with its National Council, and other concerned groups and individuals. The NEA has been in touch with its Congressional oversight committees on this matter and has agreed that together, they will review the process to ensure that Endowment processes are effective and maintain the highest artistic integrity and quality.