Letters (1979): Correspondence 150

Hilda C. Nicolosi

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The Honorable Claiborne Pell
325 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C.

Dear Senator Pell:

The enclosed article is sent to you for your attention. I am making the presumption that the National Endowment for the Arts is a tax-funded organization.

If so, it is appalling to me that our tax dollars are being used for this kind of warped demonstration coming under the heading of "art"! It is a gross insult to the Catholic people of this country.

Are we now picking every reprobate up off the street, handing him a federal grant, and encouraging him to "do your thing"??

Thank you for your consideration of the enclosed material.

Sincerely,

Hilda C. Nicolosi

Hilda C. Nicolosi (Mrs.)

Enclosure
Catholics Protest Anti-Religious Art Exhibit

By CHARLES R. PULVER

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Like the great winter blizzards which annually beset this historic salt city, a heated controversy has swirled for several weeks around an Hispanic art exhibit. Clergy and laymen alike have protested several of the works, using such words as "blasphemy," "sacrilege," "anti-Catholic," "vulgar," "disgusting," among others. While Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Costello termed it "at least in bad taste." Msgr. Eloiquesty Habit served as a reminder to the professed Religious of their solemn commitment to God, and as a non-verbal but eloquent sermon to all of the primacy of God in Christian life.

Emphasizing the themes of Pope John Paul II in his talk to the International Union of Mothers' Union in Rome last Nov. 16th, Cardinal Krol said that the commitment to the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience "cannot be relativized by public opinion"; that "every (Continued on Page 9)

the financial backers of the show are the Xerox Corporation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

San Antonio (RNS) — The American free enterprise system, once beleaguered and friendless on U.S. campuses, has been gaining a respectable place lately in academia.

A National Symposium on the Philosophy of Free Enterprise sponsored by St. Mary's Catholic University, drew the participation of more than 50 students, faculty, and businesspeople from across the nation.

Brother Paul Goez, Society of Mary of St. Mary's University said such a symposium may have been impossible in the late 1960s. "The climate on campuses back then was very anti-business," said. "The war in Vietnam was full swing and student protests were at their zenith." "In the late 1960s most universities would have had troubl

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CATHOLICS PROTEST
ANTI-RELIGIOUS ART EXHIBIT

(Continued from Page 1)

Over 80 percent of the artists are
said to be Catholics.

The controversial exhibit has been
heatedly defended by local
art specialists and devotees.
Everson Museum director
Kuchta cites the see as merely
a clash between cultures. "Images," he
said, "even though they are
stale, still do create emotions
depending on one's cultural
background." "Jewish dislike art
portraying the Nazis," he states.

Indians protest art which shows
their past unfavorably (TV in-
terview of March 3rd). Later he
told reporters that since art is
Mexican household is used dif-
ferently from our conceptions,
"be within that cultural context
is not disrespectful at all" (Syracuse
New Times, March 21st, 1979, p. 9). Nonetheless Kuchta's
office has received several letters
of protest and many daily phone
calls against the exhibit.

Mr. Marc Zuver, principal
curator of the exhibit, and an of-
cer of Fondo del Sol in
Washington, minced no words against
critics of the Hispanic art
show. "That is complete poppy-
cock," he responded. "I have
never in my life heard such non-
sensical words or the concept of
the Syracusans having nothing
to do than sit up at night
dreaming of fantasies then I
really don't know what to tell
them." He suggested that the
protesters were "just plain bored,
wondering around looking for
things to shock them." Only once
did he receive a complaint; it
came, he said, "from one little old
lady in Los Angeles. Every place
else, he said, "has brought rave
reviews." He clearly inferred that
Central New Yorkers knew nothing
about art; he predicted that
Chicago viewers will be
more sophisticated and more
receptive to the exhibit.

THIS IS ART?

The most offensive piece in the
exhibit is Ovnis by Larry
Fuente. It is a very ornate
bowl and tank placed on a dias
and backed up by a full length
reflecting, glittering slab com-
posed of small pieces of broken
mirror glass. Buttons, costumes
pearls, small hex tiles, and several
worn-out shoe heels are worked
into the dias and the toilet bowl.
And - atop the bejeweled toilet
area, flanked by two large white
ceramic swans, is a conspicuous
statue of the "Blessed Virgin." "I
wearing her traditional blue robe,
hers arms slightly lifted on the
miraculous medal. On her head is
affixed a cheap glass ashtray - a
mock crown of sorts. On the other
end of the toilet tank is embedded a
small picture of Christ as the Good
Shepherd iso dear to Protestants
Close by our Lady's image again
suffers, it would seem in an oil
called Virgin on the Charity of Cabe in
which she appears uneasily fat
wearing a low-cut dress and
holding an equally plump Infant in
an ornate robe.

Close behind the anti-God
and Anti-Church themes of these
Hispanic artists there is an equally
persistent anti-United States
theme. Often it is very subtle
and hard to detect; other times it is
quite explicit as in, for example, a
sculpture titled My Grand-
mother's Dresser Top by Louis
Leroy. Here the figure of Christ
wearing His crown of thorns is
overshadowed by what appear to
be the wings of an eagle - the
symbol of U.S. oppression in Latin
America.

As of this writing the exhibit's
offensive pieces remain in place.
The Museum director has made it
a point of honor not to give in
despite the heated protests. He
defends his actions in the name of
"art." The president of the local
Spanish community, Nancy
Vallarreal, backs him up. A former
nun and the product of what she
calls a "conservative and a very
religious family" she has told
outraged Catholics, "You cannot
judge a piece of art on the basis of
its being moral or immoral, dirty
versus clean. Try to judge art as
art itself" (Syracuse Post Stan-
dard, March 7th, 1979).

Syracusans will be happy to see
the exhibit depart; they are
wondering out loud whether Catholics of
San Antonio and Chicago will feel
as they do.
The most offensive piece in the exhibit is the Virgin Guadalupe. It is a very ornate toilet and tank placed on a dias and hooked up by a full length electrical cord. The tank is surrounded by a set of small pieces of broken mirror glass. Buttons, costume, and gold trim, some people have worn out-shoe heels are worked to the dias and the toilet bowl. And atop the bejewelled toilet a small icon life-sized Virgin Mary's head, is that a real cross or a living Mary? It is a replica. The Virgin is depicted as wearing a traditional Guadalupe garment and tank placed on a dias. Her hands are raised in prayer, her face is that of a skull. Her features are skeletal, the cross is surrounded by small spikes and rigged to a string he jumps and dies. She is shown in the exhibit.

Another piece is a sculpture of Dr. Martin Luther King's head, is that a real cross or a living King? It is a replica. The sculpture is depicted as wearing a traditional Guadalupe garment and tank placed on a dias. Her hands are raised in prayer, her face is that of a skull. Her features are skeletal, the cross is surrounded by small spikes and rigged to a string he jumps and dies. She is shown in the exhibit.