

It's Art

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"The University of Maryland recently decided that prayer is not allowed during commencement addresses, but pornographic films are allowed on campus... University officials cited "academic free speech" as the reason to allow the film. Occurring nearly simultaneously, both incidents have garnered extensive media coverage... The University did ban the screening but did not interfere with the students' "academic freedom" when an independent student group took matters into its own hands by securing a lecture hall to show the triple-X film" ("Porn In, Prayer Out", Erin Brown, www.newsbusters.org, April 7, 2009). It is interesting how twisted our culture has become in interpretation of various kinds of art forms. There are several disturbing trends that have become apparent since the Renaissance Period and the birth of amorality in art:

- There is no longer a moral qualification to the human body. It is just a thing, like a rock, mountain, stream, or horse. Humanity's innate spiritual side has been relegated to theory, and the soul has been replaced with the flesh. Paintings, sculptures, photographs, and films throughout the centuries have reflected this attitude. We simply ignore the problem by saying, "It's just art."
- Freedom of speech is the master of all modern thought. Nothing trumps it or surpasses its superiority. Everything else bows before its might. Interestingly, man has always had freedom of speech, because even in the beginning Adam and Eve were allowed by God to do as they pleased. Yet, our moral free will is not God's carte blanche approval of everything we do.
- (Conservative) religious expression is banned because it supposedly impedes the freedoms of others. Yet we are expected to be silent in the face of expressions of immorality even though it impedes those who are morally bound.
- Unfortunately, all sin leads to destruction (alcoholism to abuse and death, lust to adultery and addiction, anger to murder and strife), but this is protected by the First Amendment. Christianity builds up mankind (Acts 17:22-31) and it is strictly limited. College students can have access to a lecture hall to watch pornography, but they must meet for a prayer group off campus.

Although "art" receives a lot of the press, this subject actually has much deeper implications. It delves into the very core of human moral expression, free will, and social responsibility. *"Ethically, beauty can be deceptive and downright evil. There are various works of art which are decadent and at the same time beautiful (the lust of the eyes); there are those which are corrupt and seductively appealing" (The Christian, The Arts, And Truth, Gaebelien, p. 47).*

The Artist And Accountability

Many passages remind us that everyone, even the most talented and creative, will equally stand before God in judgment. *"And I saw the great and the small standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds" (Revelation 20:12).* Also consider 2 Corinthians 5:10. At times, however, it seems that our culture excuses certain "great" men and women because of

their talents, whether it is art, music, athletics, or politics. We put their product into a special category which is protected from judgment or censorship, and boldly dismiss objections. Especially in the last hundred years, these forms of articulation have increasingly gotten away with more and more debauchery, lewdness, and frank blasphemy. Artists depict Jesus in immoral fashions through songs, plays, and paintings. The concept of Christianity is lambasted in movies and novels. Homosexuality and promiscuity are the hallmarks of “great” art and storytelling (consider that many Academy Award-winning movies are R-rated and rife with sex, drugs, foul language, and the homosexual agenda). And through all of it, we call directors, writers, artists, and musicians visionaries. *“Of recent years the public sense of propriety has been chipped away under the ceaseless impact of literature, entertainment, and advertising that have gone further and further”* (Gaebelein, p. 110). A good question for all of us, then, is what have we dismissed lately? Do our morals apply not just to our own actions, but to the kind of music we hear, movies we watch, and company we keep? Sin cannot be dismissed simply because it is packaged in an artistic way and passed off as “culture.”