

Based on andres serrano's "piss christ" can art ever push social?

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Iskra Angelova Assignment #3 Dr. Ferrante Writing 140 10/26/2012 Based on Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ" can art ever push social boundaries too far? "Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blasphemes the Name they are to be put to death." (Holy Bible. Leviticus 24: 16) Religion as believe and institution emerged centuries ago and it is a significant segment influencing our lives.

Spiritual faith has impact in many institutions and fields, like politics and the art world. The Lord's Supper has been and still is an inspiration to many artists. There are evidences in the history of the greatest art in the world: Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam"; "Last Supper" by Leonardo Da Vinci and many others. The representation of religious icons has been of significant importance of artists' genius. Art is a powerful machine which is able to shape our belief system and change lives.

It has the power to teleport us to completely new environments where everyone could interpreted in their own personal perspective. The tremendous influence of art in people lives has a bouquet of lovely feelings replacing people reality with some paradise to the moment when believes fall apart. Centuries artists were focusing their talent into representation of religious people, as religion used to have a huge influence in people every day routines. Throughout the years there was a shift in the representation of religious figures.

In the past they were idealized, but today there is controversy surrounding spiritual representations. The new way of picturing holy icons has become a number one topic for critics. Religious art can be highly controversial and <https://assignbuster.com/based-on-andres-serranos-piss-christ-can-art-ever-push-social/>

insulting, and some ask if art is a powerful weapon that can push social boundaries too far. But where exactly does art cross the line between being acceptable and becoming controversial. In the past 25 years, one of the most discussed photographs, which shock society's view of religious figure representation, is Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ", a controversial photograph of a small plastic crucifix submerged in a glass container filled with the artist's urine and highlighted with red light. Some people are very sensitive when artist let their imagination and esthetic views take over the realistically and respectful representation of religious figures. As long as the creation of art does not break any laws in the country of exhibition, then art cannot push social boundaries too far. Without the title Serrano's creation is arresting, but emphasis of the usage of urine for its creation categorizes as blasphemy.

The first exhibition of the work caused bitter disputes because of its offensive context, also was problematic when it won the Visual Arts Award sponsored by the National Endowment for the Art, an independent agency of the United States federal government that finances artistic projects. The general opinion claim that "Piss Christ" is blasphemous, but Serrano's art work indicates the way modern society has begun to treat Christ and Christian values. The artist explains: "The Church is obsessed with the body and blood of Christ.

At the same time, there is the impulse to repress and deny the physical nature of the Church's membership. There is a real ambivalence there. It's one thing to idealize the body and it's another to deal with it realistically... In my work, I attempt to personalize this tension in institutional religion by revising the way in which body fluids are idealized. "(Serrano 25). Serrano's <https://assignbuster.com/based-on-andres-serranos-piss-christ-can-art-ever-push-social/>

intentions are not to disgrace this religion but to show how commercialized the Christian icon has become in contemporary culture. The artist's purpose is to involve people's minds in both a visual and intellectual domain.

Even though this photograph is highly controversial and insulting to religious people, it does not violate any legislation. Religious groups and institutions make comparisons between Serrano's "Piss Christ" and the recent film "Innocence of Muslims". Wave of violence swept over the Arab world in response to provocation from the low-budget film satirizing Prophet Mohammed. Aggressively protesting crowds flood the streets in response to the film, violent acts against the Western civilization and embassies attacks.

But what is it so insulting about the film "Innocence of Muslims"? There are many offensive movies, art works and books which humiliate Christianity and directly disgrace Christ's name, but in consequences of which the Christian world does not respond in such violent way. The examples are numerous, but the interesting fact is that all of the controversial art had been made during modernist movement when Christians extracted themselves from the prejudices and place the freedom of expression over the dogmas.

However, Serrano's "Piss Christ" has been provoking and peeve people since its creation, the tolerance rich its pick on Palm Sunday, 2011 in France when it was attacked with hammer and destroyed by Catholic protestants, but it does not cross the limit and push the social boundaries too far. In contrast the anti-Muslim film, it could be consider as art which goes beyond the borders of acceptance because it is in contrast with what the Koran says about Mohammad representations and it causes people death. More than

two decades Serrano's photograph generates negative oppositions to politics, social and religious world.

That contributes to the artist intention to make people engaged with his work not only visually but intellectually too. Twenty five years from its creation and it is still highly provocative. Faith people are bombarding President Obama with their requests to forbid "Piss Christ" exhibition at the Edward Tyler Nahem Gallery in New York City. Serrano's photograph is various things including shocking, scandalous, beautiful and compelling, but there are much more important things which this art addresses and who could dispute its seriousness, originality and power?

It is showing how limited is the human mind and how low educated are some people in sense of understanding art work. The artist is twisting the meaning and placing religious symbols into new contexts. He is displaying the commercialized side of the religion. People are arguing that this great creation is blasphemy, but the Bible says do not make any idols and do not worship them. In that sense of thinking isn't it a wooden or plastic object made from human hand representing Jesus's suffer against the Holy book laws?

Bill Donohue, who is president of the Catholic League, believes that the President of The United States should defend American's values. Obama ignores this request and does not prohibit the display of Serrano's photograph but even support it and refused to stand against an art made 25 years ago. Artist's supporters point out that "Piss Christ" is an expression of artistic liberty and freedom of speech. Since its creation, this art work has generated a lot of negative comments.

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The work was a centennial focus of the Cultural War in the 1990's on which was questioned its artistic value. Throughout his career, Serrano has created a different visual language that raises the question about religion, humanity, sex and social values. The abstract beauty of his photographs could be termed as spiritual quest. It is a fight of good and immoral, the urine is a symbol of the realism and the holy icon is the idealism. His photographs are emblematic for contrasting elements from life: beauty, disgust, provocation etc.

Renowned for a passionate body of work that challenges artistic and social boundaries, Andres Serrano has exhibited since the 1980s. His art is categorized as inappropriate, blasphemous and even there are claims that it is not an art. With turbulent negative verbal and physical attacks against the "Piss Christ", Serrano cleverly navigates human attention in the direction of questioning our values and beliefs. This photograph is provocative art work, which is displaying a perfect balance between realism and idealism.

Although its controversial idea and strongly offensive meaning, this great art creation could not be considered as an object which pushes social boundaries too far. In contrast to the recent film "Innocence Muslim" which not only breaks Islamic laws but provokes human vandalism and pushes the limits to the extremes, exactly a human death. But the question is: can a society living in the medieval to overleap its social and cultural point of view? Hardly. It will not change even after this cheap provocation.

The modern society should become more open minded and free ourselves from the religious prejudices and Serrano since 25 years ago is driving people all over the world towards this goal. Work Cited: 1. Holy Bible, New
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