

Cultural Daily

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Art Censorship: Please Remove Shoes Before Entering

Dr. Shelby Q. Eggesworth · Thursday, January 6th, 2011

Art Censorship

Well, it's finally 2011 and I'm glad we're so easily offended. We need less hostility and friction from our creative types. If they would be nicer, we really *could* all get along.

All artists need is a little adult supervision.

For example, MOCA director Jeffrey Deitch. [Last month](#) he ordered the immediate removal of a mural by the Italian artist Blu: dollar bill-draped coffins on the museum's thick outside wall. He said it was offensive to people who are patriots, who favor the war, to veterans and to the neighborhood. I never went downtown to see it for the one day it was there, and now I'm glad I don't have to take the trouble. Or ever get offended coming upon it by accident.

Some people were offended by Deitch's being offended. On Monday night, a group of Los Angeles street artists and their supporters projected images on the whitewashed wall in protest. You can see their video [here](#), but it isn't really necessary.

This reminds me of an exhibit I went to see at the Autry Museum called "[Censorship Defied](#)." It chronicles the removal of David Alfaro Siqueiros' Los Angeles mural *La América Tropical* in 1934, and the recent efforts to restore the massive, political work. The Autry curators also expanded the exhibit to include LA street art that has been censored right up to the present day. I found the exhibit troubling, because when I go to the Autry I want to experience the heritage of the American West with cowboys tall in the saddle and noble Indians who have great abs. I suggest you don't go until after Sunday, when "Censorship Defied" closes.

About "censorship." If you're one of those people who is always complaining about it, why don't you take the year off? I don't want to hear your whining. I also don't want to hear The Dixie Chicks, Madonna, Eminem, Kanye West, Richard Wagner or Jean-Luc Godard accepting an honorary Academy Award. And I'm glad the Parents Television Council is [still fuming](#) about an episode of *NYPD Blue* that showed a woman's bare bottom in 2003. I have not been able to get that image out of my head.

Speaking of images, what about those [people](#) at the Gagosian Gallery in New York, who stood in front of Anselm Kiefer paintings wearing black T-shirts with words on them? I'm glad the gallery called the cops to toss 'em out – who wants to look at Anselm Kiefer paintings when other people

are looking at them too? Come to think of it, who *ever* wants to look at Anselm Kiefer paintings? Too depressing.

Getting back to museums, in 2011 it would be good if they would remember that they have walls for a reason. That is, to keep art inside where we don't have to look at it.

I'm all for freedom of expression. This is America! If you're a member of the elite group who goes inside museums, well then, you can probably be trusted to be exposed to some art that may be, what shall I call it? A little outré? As long as it doesn't threaten you too much, and if it does, good museum people, like National Portrait Gallery director Martin Sullivan, will [get rid of it](#) pronto.

Then, if someone's offended by someone else getting rid of it, the first someone can try to pull a trailer in front of the building and call it the "[Museum of Censored Art](#)." But I hope they don't get parking permits.

The point is that most museums take some public money. So they should be doing public good. That means they should be upholding the most treasured American ideals we hold dear. I was going to include the quote from the US Constitution about "freedom from being offended" but the Constitution is kind of long and I didn't want to take the time to find it. But I'm sure it's in there somewhere.

Speaking of not going on too long, that's all I have to say. Blog posts that go on too long are really offensive. There isn't that much to talk about anyway. Not in America. Not today. If our artists could only behave themselves and take it down a notch, I'm sure we can all have a really good year.

(You're invited to post comments, but I will remove anything that is offensive.)

Photo by Casey Caplowe/unurth.com

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