

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Taking More Offense

Adam Leipzig · Sunday, January 16th, 2011

Last week's post attracted comments that are worth noting, and were not offensive. Too bad. I was looking forward to removing some.

Also worth noting is that Smithsonian Institution Secretary Wayne Clough will be speaking at TOWN HALL Los Angeles on Thursday (tickets [here](#)), and that there will be a street demonstration protesting museum censorship (information [here](#)).

Your comments further the discussion. "I've never found any attempt to "define" what art is satisfactory," wrote Jack Grapes. "Art is what the artist does." To which Lew Rosenbaum quoted Nelson Algren: "Literature is made anytime the legal apparatus is challenged by a conscience in touch with humanity." Which is particularly relevant to San Taybi's note that a new edition of Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn has been published with the n-word eliminated.

"I have come to believe that the new generation has no idea what criteria to use when evaluating art, what's art and what isn't," opined Brianna Barcus. "It seems that any type of "art" done for shock value (i.e.: the money coffins) automatically gets elevated to some higher standard without regard to content, process, or intention. There's a whole generation which automatically buys into this as the definition of art – ooh, it's ground breaking, ooh they risked their lives by climbing on top of that building, ooh they avoided the law = they must be a great artist."

Contrast this with Garner Simmons' telling of the Marcel Duchamp story: "In 1917, the Dadaist Marcel Duchamp, purchased a urinal, mounted it at 90 degrees from its intended purpose, titled "Fountain" and signed it "R. Mutt." Calling it a "readymade," he submitted it to an exhibition in New York City. The committee in charge refused to display it claiming among other things that since Duchamp had not physically made it, it could not be considered "art." Defended by Alfred Stieglitz and Beatrice Wood, among others, this seminal work redefined art. In 2004, "Fountain" was voted most influential artwork of the 20th century by a consortium of British artists.

"Though the original was lost, Duchamp created eight replicas in 1964, one of which sold for \$1.7 million in 1999. Even more ironic is the fact that at least three times in the last 20 years, different performance artists have entered museums where one of these replicas was on display and urinated into the "Fountain" — an act that each of these artists claimed Duchamp himself would have understood. And indeed he would. As for those who fail to appreciate it as art — piss off!"

Speaking of appreciating art, get ready for this coming Wednesday, when I will post my perspective on what has happened to American independent films. Hint: It ain't good.

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