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Offensive Exhibit

The National Endowment for the Arts has made a wise decision in withdrawing its sponsorship from the gallery called "The Exhibition" which is to be held in New York City. The exhibit is a collection of drawings and paintings by a group of artists who are known for their "offensive" and "obscene" work. The National Endowment for the Arts has made a wise decision in withdrawing its sponsorship from the gallery called "The Exhibition" which is to be held in New York City. The exhibit is a collection of drawings and paintings by a group of artists who are known for their "offensive" and "obscene" work.

The show, it's clear, will go on; the NEA grant is but a small percentage of its budget. (Yesterday's announcement that the gallery director means to refuse to return the money leaves us baffled: It would surely be a waste of everyone's time if the NEA had to go to court to get its own money back).

The point, of course, is one of principle. There is absolutely no reason that a drawing or a painting or a vicious and puerile attack on New York's cardinal. This is asking a bit much. The fact that Cardinal O'Connor personally urged the NEA to withdraw the grant — on his generosity of us entirely irrelevant — whose position is helping AIDS victims — a national in- "under himself" the issue. In this has been subjected to obscene mock- say, some members of the community — so fond of asserting their independence, even as it relies on the subsidy — will rise to declare is engaging in "censor- themselves as vic- repression, just as in the past. member that no one is pre- from writing, producing they wish. The the general underwrite anything an artist After all, should the tax- be obliged to Hitler? Even most artists, say, Adolf would answer in the negative. But the difference between such an effort and the description of the cardinal as a "fat cannibal in a black skirt" is a matter of degree, not kind. Let these artists — whose record of work with AIDS victims couldn't possibly exceed the cardinal's in terms of compassion, devotion and inspiration — call him anything they wish: but not on our dime.

Wojnarowicz 1990



