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Censorship and the National Endowment for the Arts: An Analytical Look at the Enola Gay and Robert Mapplethorpe Controversies

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"Censorship and the National Endowment for the Arts: An Analytical Look at the *Enola Gay* and Robert Mapplethorpe Controversies"

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"...Art is a nation's most precious heritage. For it is in our works of art that we reveal to ourselves, and to others, the inner vision which guides us as a nation" - former President Lyndon B. Johnson.

ABSTRACT

The topic of my thesis is governmental involvement in the arts community -- how the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is affected, as well as the artists themselves. Censorship is my main focus. I have selected for examination two specific cases -- an exhibition of the works of the controversial photographer, Robert Mapplethorpe, and the display of the *Enola Gay* fuselage at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. The *Enola Gay* incident was more recent, with the exhibit opening in 1995 on the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II, while the Mapplethorpe controversy began around 1988. Both of these exhibits raised many questions by elected officials of the United States government about what should and what should not be shown using governmental funds channeled to the NEA. With Mapplethorpe, the question was one of morality, while the *Enola Gay* was about our nation's history, and how it should properly be interpreted displayed. Both cases deal with official censorship within our society, but each for different reasons. I will explore both sides of the issues surrounding each case, while giving my opinion on the matter as well. These are rather sensitive subjects from either side of the argument, and that is why they have generated so much dialogue. This is to be an exploratory paper into the role that the government played in these cases, and the possible implications that the outcomes may have in future matters. I will also discuss how the government influences the artists, its power over our national museums, as well as a major governmental agency -- the National Endowment for the Arts.

INITIAL RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS

I was fascinated on the intensity of the controversy surrounding the Endowment, and how in recent years, the opposition has grown so strongly. Senator Jesse Helms (R - N.C.) was a major figure in this movement, as he strongly opposed all types of what he determined to be "obscene" art. Initially, he had quite a bit of support from the American public, but it soon became clear that his views do not represent the entire U.S. population., Those on the other side of the argument were fighting for freedom of speech.

When the government bans a work or cancels an exhibit because they find it to be offensive, they are making a judgment for thousands of Americans who have never had the opportunity to view those pieces. It is then that we begin to question; who is a true judge of art? Who can actually deem something "obscene"? Is anybody truly an authority on the matter? Do we, as a culture, have a singular moral or ethical code? These are the issues I plan to explore within the context of the Robert Mapplethorpe and *Enola Gay* controversies.

The photographer Robert Mapplethorpe is known for his sometimes lewd depiction of people in the gay community. He blatantly deals with homosexuality. He focuses on an element of eroticism that many people in the mainstream America neither think of, nor see firsthand. They were obviously not ready to be confronted with realistic images. Museums canceled Mapplethorpe's exhibits, and a director was taken to court on charges of obscenity for displaying the photographs. The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Philadelphia sponsored Mapplethorpe's exhibit "The Perfect Moment" with grant money from the NEA. Even though Mapplethorpe never received direct funding, the controversy remained focused on the NEA's involvement with his work. My examination mainly focuses on the public controversy, and how the government became involved.

A more current issue concerning the National Endowment is that of the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II -- the *Enola Gay*. The controversy is of a different nature than Mapplethorpe. It concerns our nation's recent history and an event that many living Americans experienced. Members of the Air Force Association (AFA) and the American Legion (AL) were incensed over the exhibit because the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum was planning on showing artifacts of the aftermath, which to the AFA and the American Legion seemed to challenge the appropriateness of dropping the bomb. Veterans and members of the aforementioned groups did not agree with this depiction of the bombing at all. Eventually the exhibit was canceled and only the fuselage was shown, accompanied by a video of surviving members of the crew (Fig. 13 & 14).

The more I explored these events, the more fascinated I became with the different views that were expressed in each. I was unaware of how much the arts had entered the political arena, and had not thought about what the future ramifications might be. Although the controversy surrounding the two exhibits is different in nature, they do have some similarities. They challenge our notions of appropriate subject matter, and obscenity, and finally the role of the government within the realm of the arts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There was quite a variety of sources that I turned to for research on this project. It was mainly library research, with some help from outside sources. I began with book research which gave me a strong base onto which I was able to build through further research, which included periodicals and Internet usage. There were four books that I found contributed greatly to my research. The first, written by Joseph Zeigler, gave me basic background information on the National Endowment for the Arts, how it began, and its history up to the present. Arts in Crisis introduced me to the difficulties the

Endowment has had, and was basically a factual look at the controversy. This was one of the first books I used, and it was from here that I began to narrow my topic so that I could find more specific information.

Robert Mapplethorpe was included in many publications, but there were two in particular that I found to be the most helpful. The first, Arresting Images by Steven Dubin, focused on many different artists who have created controversy with their works. Quite a bit of my information regarding Mapplethorpe and "The Perfect Moment" exhibition came from this source. Dubin analyzed the Mapplethorpe controversy by presenting various perspectives. The book was geared towards art enthusiasts and supporters of the arts.

Arthur C. Danto authored a publication strictly on Mapplethorpe entitled Playing With the Edge. This included writings, as well as many photographs, which helped me understand the controversy over Mapplethorpe's work even further. Not only did it include some of the controversial images from "The Perfect Moment", but also some of his less famous works of celebrity portraits and his renowned flower studies (Fig. 10 & 11). This book presented a perspective that explained his motivations and reasons for creating the images that he did, and also explored deeper into his lifestyle. This book was difficult to take notes from because it was not as much of a documentary style as the previous. It was extremely interesting to read, as it was written from a more personal standpoint than your typical research materials. It was an informational book on contemporary art and Mapplethorpe. It gave me much more insight into the artist and his aesthetics than the other publications I had previously encountered.

There were quite a few periodicals on the *Enola Gay* exhibit that were helpful, but the book I found most comprehensive was by Philip Nobile. Judgment at the Smithsonian focused entirely on the controversy surrounding the exhibit and took the reader from the initial script, to the final outcome. It also included the entire original script from which I

was able to review specific items that were discussed in the book as well as in the periodicals.

In the periodicals were items that I found interesting because each author had a very distinct opinion that they expressed throughout the article, and from there I was able to gather quite a few different viewpoints. The most intriguing articles were the ones that I found myself opposing, and I felt my view strengthen on the topic. The Internet was yet another source for opinionated material. There were more home pages and sites than I would ever be able to fully explore, but I found quite a few which gave me more insight as to how people feel about this subject. Although I did not include many within my thesis, it was another way to gather background information on the subjects for this project. I was also able to contact an archivist at the Smithsonian who gave me a few more sources that he felt would be helpful in my research.

Because I concertedly sought out information from a wide variety of sources, I believe my paper is stronger, and reflects the complexity of the issues at hand. The scope of opinions I uncovered has given me insight into many different views and stances on the issue, allowing me to be attune to all views as well as clearly formulating my own opinions.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

> The National Endowment for the Arts, during its first twenty-five years, played a vital part in the cultural growth of countless cities and small towns across America. By doing so, it became an important contributor not only to our cultural life but also to this nation's economic vitality (Benedict 23).

The thought of expanding our nation's cultural opportunities began in the Kennedy administration as a part of his New Frontier. Johnson carried this idea forth in 1965 with

the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts which is a part of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act. This was important legislation, as it showed that support of the arts was an appropriate concern of the federal government. In the words of one author, "...At long last, culture had a national presence" (Zeigler 13, 15, 17).

Mission Statement:

> The National Endowment for the Arts is the Federal grant-making agency that Congress created to support the visual, literary, design and performing arts, to benefit all Americans. The Endowment's mission is two-fold:
>
> - To foster the excellence, diversity, and vitality of the arts in the United States, and;
> - To broaden public access to the arts.
>
> In fulfilling its mission, the Endowment must exercise care to preserve and improve the environment in which the arts have flourished. It must not, under any circumstances, impose a single aesthetic standard or attempt to direct artistic content (NEA home page).

What was the state of public arts before 1965? Major innovations such as pop art and abstract expressionism occurred before 1965, presumably without governmental support. One author feels that there haven't really been any major artistic movements since that time (Veith 49-50). This poses another question -- is governmental funding actually an aid to the arts, or is it inhibiting? There are many diverse views regarding this. Defenders of the NEA say it is essential because it increases distribution and diversity. Yet those who are for the abolition of the Endowment, some of which surprisingly are within the arts community, feel that publicly funded art is not as expressive as art without "restrictive funding". Seemingly, contemporary art is much more innovative when it is not trying to please the grant makers, and therefore it would be beneficial to rid the arts of public funding.

These opposing views have grown further apart since the beginning of what is known as the "NEA Crisis." The nature of art and the art world began to change in the 1980's. It began to reflect political, social and sexual changes that many people were not prepared for, especially government officials. Suddenly, the arts were being scrutinized by everyone, and the crisis ensued when people began naming artists and the art they create "obscene". The main part of the crisis was the question of government funding going towards these "offensive" works of art.

Before Robert Mapplethorpe's controversy came into the picture, there were some forms of art in the 70's that created a stir, which are discussed below. There were strange new styles, and so-called "offensive" topics -- especially political and sexual themes -- that many did not approve of (Dubin 283). Conservatives began to analyze the art, asking if it actually was art. At this time, the questionable works were not painting or photography, but mainly literature. In 1970, George Plimpton edited a NEA-subsidized series entitled The American Literary Anthology. He planned on including a "concrete poem" entitled "lighght." by Aram Saroyan, a graphic designer. One Congressman was appalled because it was misspelled, and stated if his child came home spelling like that he would put him in a corner with a dunce cap. A second piece to be included was by Ed Sanders, a story entitled "The Hairy Table." It had vivid sexual interludes, and therefore was obscene. This particular anthology was eventually published under private rather than public funds to avoid further controversy (Dubin 282).

Then in 1974, $5,000 was awarded to Erica Jong, a poet and novelist, for her publication Fear of Flying. It was a lusty novel, where the NEA was mentioned in the acknowledgments. This associated them with the publication, and Jesse Helms began questioning the NEA, demanding an explanation for the actions of the organization (Dubin 282).

The current NEA chair, Jane Alexander, stated in January of 1995 that there have been in excess of 100,000 grants made, and only 40 of them have been considered controversial. Yet some feel even one is too many (Frame 43). Opponents of the NEA have used these few examples to conclude that the Endowment is out of touch with common, mainstream America. Their main argument is that the NEA consists of a small group of liberal artists.

Another way to approach the problem is to think of it as an eventual solution. Right now, these controversies may cause a bit of tension and dismay. Yet it may, in the long run, begin to get groups to talk and to work out a compromise (Frame 202). Along these same lines, Edson Spencer, chair of the Ford Foundation and former CEO of Honeywell, Inc. states: "The creation of controversy and the clash of ideas are among those forces that help democracy flourish. The arts and humanities are precisely where those controversies are born and grown" (Benedict 20-21). Art is a person's interpretation of an event, an experience, or an issue. It is visual way of expressing a thought. Jesse Helms may express his feelings by speaking or writing, but an artist expresses visually. There is then the problem of making this statement clear in a singular image, without verbal explanation, which is generally where the problem begins.

In the 1990's, the conflict continues. Congress is still considering reauthorization of the NEA. Funds have been cut and the Republican platform is in favor of abolishment. There are still subjects that are creating controversy; now, not only is it artwork that is in question, but song lyrics, film ratings, public television funding, and flag burning are in the limelight. What seems to be at stake is a fundamental right, that of Freedom of Speech (Zeigler 87).

GOVERNMENT

> It is long past time that the federal arts and humanities endowments be de-authorized and de-funded. Spawned during the 1960s' Great Society years, these agencies, despite whatever good they have done, have damaged American culture, ripped off the taxpayer, waged war on the family and religion, and politicized the academy and the arts (Family Research Council web site).

Unfortunately, this is how many members of Congress, as well as others against the NEA feel. There has been a massive movement, especially amendments by the House and Senate, towards reauthorizing or eliminating the NEA.

Newt Gingrich (R - GA.) stated that if the Republicans take office, the NEA will be cut, because it funds artists who are basically unaccepted by taxpayers. This is largely a generalization. Chances are, he has little evidence to back this claim up. True, the artists may not all be accepted by all taxpayers or government officials, but there are people who do accept them as artists. Louis Harris did surveys and research to see how people feel about government funding of the arts. Much of his evidence shows that people do support the arts (Zeigler 121).

	1975	1980	1984	1987	1992
Federal Government should support arts	39%	50%	55%	59%	60%
Federal Government should help individual artists	29%	35%	40%	47%	52%
Willing to pay extra $10 in taxes to support the arts	51%	65%	66%	70%	64%

For the most part, there has been an increase in public support since 1975. Although we currently pay less than $5.00 a year in taxes to support the NEA, this was the item that dropped in 1992. The average taxpayer pays $1618 per year for defense,

$149 per year for education, and a mere $1.03 per year to support the NEA (Ensins 18). It amazes me that public funding of the arts generates such discord when we are taxed so little for the Endowment. Robert Sean Leonard, actor and co-founder of New York City's Malaparte Theater has put the funding issue in perspective when he states, "The government spends more money on military marching bands than it does on the NEA. I find it maddening that arts and education are treated as a waste of taxpayers' money" (Ensins 18).

Gallup polls found in 1989 that 35 percent of people surveyed believed that federal funds should be used to support the arts, while 47 percent felt they should not. In 1990, both sides increased, from 35 to 42 percent in support, and 50 percent not supporting (Zeigler 121).

There will always be people on both sides of the issue. There have been many attempts to alter the NEA in various ways. For example, Representative Philip Crane (R - IL) unveiled his "Privatization of Art Act" which was an attempt to abolish the NEA. Joseph Papp also called for abolishing the Endowment and distributing the money to state arts councils which would then administer the funds. Legislation was presented by Paul Henry (R - MI) that would ban funding for works that attack "the cultural heritage of the U.S., it's religious tradition, or racial or ethnic groups." Yet another amendment to reauthorize was a bill proposed by Sen. Orrin Hatch (R - UT) which would prohibit grants for ten years to artists who created obscene works. Fortunately, none of these attempts at regulation have passed (Zeigler 89, 98). Pat Williams (D - MT) felt that many Republicans, such as the few mentioned above, would make false claims "...to make the American public believe that the Endowment had deliberately set out to fund works that are offensive to the average American, and that a vote by members of Congress to support funding for the Endowment is a vote to support Pornography and obscenity..." (Zeigler

89). What many people against the Endowment do not realize is that most of the funds granted are to institutions, and are not directly given to the artists.

SENATOR JESSE HELMS

"What we are talking about are these sleaze-balls who have been getting money from the NEA under the pretext of having produced something that they call art" (Yule video).

The most well-known activist against the NEA is Senator Jesse Helms (R - N.C.). In October of 1989, Helms attempted to pass an amendment -- the Helms Amendment -- barring the NEA from funding art considered obscene or indecent. This amendment was not passed. However, in its place, a decision was made to authorize the chair of the NEA with authority to determine whether or not art is indecent. So although the amendment was rejected, Helms still persuaded Congress to pass a law encouraging the NEA to act as a censor. He had won a small victory.

A year later, the House and Senate, after conservative threats to shut down the agency, passed the Williams Compromise Bill. This bill lifted the funding restrictions on art that was considered obscene or sacrilegious, and turned many grant-making decisions over to the state. A previous restriction stating that grant recipients are required to repay their NEA funds if the work is later found to be obscene was left in the final bill (Fields 8). Then in Fiscal Year 1992, Helms' continual activism lead to an amendment to the appropriations bill which prohibited the NEA from using funds to support art that depicted sexual activities, excretory activities, or showed any sexual organ.

Jesse Helms was the Endowment's worst nightmare. Although the majority of American public was on Helms' side for a while, eventually many people reevaluated his

stance, and began to disagree with him(Benedict 27). Helms' appreciation of art is rather limited as the following quotation suggests--

> The self proclaimed, self anointed art experts would scoff and say, 'Oooh, terrible,' but I like beautiful things not modern art...There's a big difference between the 'Merchant of Venice' and a photograph of two males of different races (in an erotic pose) on a marble table top...If someone wants to write ugly nasty things on the mens' room wall, the taxpayers do not have to provide the crayons (Dubin #26 plate section).

PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH

When George Bush was elected to office, the Endowment was in a rather vulnerable position due in part to Jesse Helms. It seemed as if Bush would support the NEA as he didn't immediately endorse restrictions, and didn't cut the NEA's budget. That is until the conservatives began to influence him. He then caved in and reversed his position. In 1992, before the elections, Bush proposed a freeze on the NEA budget, which resulted in less available funds when inflation is factored in. This money would still have to be stretched out over the same number of grants as before. The message that he sent was to distribute grants cautiously (Dubin 284-285). Another problem was his appointment of John Frohnmayer as the NEA chair (1989 - 1992). At the time, he seemed a good choice, but he ended up bouncing from one crisis to the next. In the beginning, he had won the hearts of conservative critics, especially Jesse Helms. Frohnmayer claimed that "no more Mapplethorpe-style grants will occur on my watch" (Davis 57). Frohnmayer was said to have a lack of understanding, and was constantly contradicting himself. He was also accused of homophobia and cowardliness (Zeigler 115). He shifted his position on the key issues, such as first supporting controversial art, and then condemning it. These variations

made him appear weak and vulnerable, which confirmed his inexperience with the arts as well as with the political issues. Any credibility he had gained along the way was lost.

In May of 1992, Bush forced Frohnmayer to resign, largely due to pressure from Pat Buchanan and Bush's desire to get reelected. After Frohnmayer's resignation the NEA transformed in many ways. Many wanted radical reformation, and part of this plan was for the Endowment to fund only major cultural institutions.

When Bill Clinton defeated Bush in the 1992 election, the arts community rejoiced. Clinton made a statement that I am sure many people in support of the arts were very pleased about -- "While I believe that publicly funded projects should strive to reflect the values that most Americans share, I strongly support and will defend freedom of speech and artistic expression" (Zeigler 141).

ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

> I think it could be pornography and still have redeeming social value. It can be both, which is my whole point in doing it -- to have all the elements of pornography and yet have a structure of lighting that makes it go beyond what it is. - Robert Mapplethorpe (Danto 89 - 90).

In 1965, when the NEA was first established, art was seen as an enhancement of our spiritual well-being. This was a time of optimism and economic prosperity. Then came times of change. Because of the instability of our international relations, much of the art in the 1970's was a protest or reaction to some event, such as our involvement in Vietnam. This new, modern art had a tendency to be very shocking to the public and seemed to be "anti-government". The more art that was produced, the more experimental it became. As the art began to address a wide range of political and social issues, more and more artists grasped hold of this change and made it their own. Artistic freedoms expanded in both

social and sexual terms. Robert Mapplethorpe was a large part of this movement, and in the 70's and 80's, created major controversies because of his sexually explicit photographic images. In 1989, after his death at age 42 from AIDS, he was considered the most controversial artist in America. When one looks at his art, many questions are raised about freedom of expression, and the artists role in society. He is less known for his wonderful portraits and exquisite representations of flowers; most remember him for the shocking homoerotic and sadomasochistic images that brought a museum director to trial and created multiple uproars throughout the conservative community.

Mapplethorpe's career began in New York City's punk underground where he blended the highly commercialized pornography with the feel of the underground. Galleries refused to exhibit his work because of its graphic sexual nature. He was out to shock and he never denied this. His goal was to achieve "...smut that is also art" (Danto 76). He wanted to create images that would convey the feelings and arousal that you could get from a porn magazine, yet have the aesthetic qualities of artistic images.

Mapplethorpe's series of photographs entitled "The Perfect Moment" began a tour in 1989 with support funds from the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Philadelphia under less than ideal circumstances. The government had just gotten over an uproar over another artist, Andres Serrano. The NEA, its practices, and the artists and institutions who received grants were under a conservative microscope.

In 1987, Andres Serrano received a grant for $15,000 from the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art (SECCA) which is affiliated with the NEA. His tour began, and thus did the crisis (Zeigler 69). The grant was for a work entitled Piss Christ for which the title itself came under attack. It all began with a letter to the editor in a Richmond, Virginia newspaper which was sent to Rev. Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association (AFA). When Wildmon read about the work entitled Piss Christ, he sent a member of his chapter in Virginia to see the exhibit first hand. When it was confirmed that

this was indeed a crucifix submerged in urine, copies of the image were sent to Congress to inform them of this vulgar work being displayed with public funding.

Piss Christ is a distinctive example of the trend of mixing the scared and profane, and the movement away from traditional religious portrayals. The work is a photograph of a crucifix submerged in a liquid, which happens to be urine. Serrano challenged the notion of sacredness by juxtaposing an important religious symbol with something that is considered vulgar.

Many people, whether religious or not, found this work terribly disturbing because it was challenging their past experiences. Because of this blatant mixture of religion and profanity, the SECCA and the National Endowment came under tremendous scrutiny, and there was serious debate over consequences to all involved parties. Political conservatives jumped at the chance to have their voices heard. Jesse Helms called Serrano a "jerk" and saw Piss Christ as a "sickening, abhorrent, and shocking act by an arrogant blasphemer" (Dubin 97). Senator Alphonse D'Amato tore up a catalogue on the Senate floor containing the work because according to him, it was "filth" and "garbage" (Dubin 96).

Despite these criticisms, when looking at the photograph without knowing the title, it is actually quite brilliant. The color emits a unique feeling, and it is a new way to portray the crucifixion of Christ. It is when the title is divulged that people begin to have problems. If we never knew that it was urine that the crucifix was submerged in, all controversy would be avoided. Yet Serrano commented "... I could just use piss for the beautiful light that it gives me and not let people know what they're looking at. But I do like for people to know what they're looking at because the work is intended to work on more than one level" (Dubin 98). The work is spiritual and possibly even beautiful until the title is known, then it becomes shocking. Both levels come into play no matter which way you look at it.

This was not the only "Piss" work that Serrano created. Between 1987 and 1988, he created a series, including Piss Discus (a discus thrower), Piss Elegance (a fashion model), Piss Pope, and Piss Satan (Dubin 98 - 99). These were very unusual puns, and they can either amuse, or offend depending on the viewers attitude towards the subject matter.

MAPPLETHORPE EXHIBITS

Robert Mapplethorpe's "The Perfect Moment" began its tour in Philadelphia in early 1989 where the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) sponsored the installation. The grant of $30,000 was given to ICA by the National Endowment, but the grant was not given directly to Mapplethorpe by the NEA. The NEA has no direct control over how the funds are allocated, so when the Endowment was eventually punished in the end, the charge was unfounded. The main point that some do not realize is that Mapplethorpe never received *direct* funding from the Endowment.

The tour was to stop in six U.S. cities beginning in Philadelphia, and traveling next to Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art. On March 9, 1989, while the show was on display in Chicago, Mapplethorpe passed away at age 42. This was respectfully noted by the gay press in the area (Danto 153). Neither Chicago nor Philadelphia had to deal with the controversy that Washington D.C. and Cincinnati had. The exhibit began smoothly, but it eventually it got caught in a snare.

CORCORAN GALLERY, WASHINGTON D.C.

The first incident occurred in the summer of 1989 (after Mapplethorpe's death) at The Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. Mapplethorpe's exhibit was canceled at the eleventh hour of its opening because of the homoerotic photographs that it contained. The

controversy was said to have been there before the exhibit, and the previous critics considered some of the images pornographic. On June 12, 1989, the museum explained that it would have made an unwise decision in continuing to host the exhibit with the political climate as it was at the time of the show. The museum world had just gotten over the Serrano uproar, and was not quite ready for another incident. And because the gallery relied on government support (they have no endowment of their own) it was also vulnerable. Critics were angry because of the National Endowment's involvement. What many still did not realize is that the NEA did not directly fund Mapplethorpe but made funds available to the gallery to support their exhibition programs. Despite this fact, a letter sent to the NEA stated, "We realize if the NEA has enough money to fund this type of project, then perhaps the NEA has too much money to handle responsibly" (Zeigler 75). Although the NEA has little control over how the institutions distribute the money, they were still taking the blame.

While the NEA was being blamed for sponsoring Mapplethorpe, the director of the Corcoran gallery Christina Orr-Cahall was being accused of censorship. Orr-Cahall defended the museum's actions by stating, "I don't think there was censorship at all. The [show's catalogue] is out, the exhibit has been seen elsewhere and will be seen elsewhere. I think that censorship would have been editing the show" (Dubin 177). In spite of Orr-Cahalls' claims, artists were appalled by the Corcoran's actions, and many pulled their works from future shows, forcing them to be canceled.

The anger that much of the arts community felt towards the Corcoran at this time lead to a protest outside the gallery on June 30, 1989. Nine hundred to one thousand people felt strongly enough to demonstrate by showing slides of Mapplethorpe's work on the side of the building. Orr-Cahall issued a public apology on September 18, and eventually resigned from her position on December 18, 1989 (Dubin 178).

Despite the problems at the Corcoran, a new sponsor for the exhibit was found. A small institution, the Washington Project for the Arts, exhibited the works. The publicity hype boosted the attendance to forty times the norm (Dubin 178). People who otherwise might not have gone to see the show were compelled by the controversy, and felt the need to see the show for themselves.

The next stop on the tour was Hartford, Connecticut, where the most extreme protests that occurred were fifteen to twenty-five demonstrators gathering outside the Hartford Atheneum (Dubin 181). When "The Perfect Moment" moved to Cincinnati though, the fire that began in Washington D.C. was rekindled.

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER, CINCINNATI, OH

The Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) took many precautions, which under normal circumstances would seem to be outrageous. Cincinnati is a rather conservative city with strong moral values, and for such a liberal exhibit to be displayed here was a controversy in itself. Before the show even opened, thousands of people gathered, some to protest, and some to show their support. The director, Dennis Barrie, decided to go on with the show, but not without taking precautionary measures. Children under the age of 17 were not permitted without a parent or guardian. Signs were posted about the graphic nature of some works, and nobody under the age of 18 was allowed to view these images. In order to avoid the issue of public funding, the exhibit was sponsored by a grant from a local business, and the entrance fee was increased. Of the 153 images contained in the exhibit, there were only seven that were thought to be controversial, and the museum even went so far as to request a jury to examine these images before the show to determine whether they were obscene (Fig. 3, 4, 7, 9). This request was denied.

The show opened as planned, yet the audience was not just art enthusiasts and public protesters. Also attending the opening were nine Hamilton County Grand Jury members and Sheriff's deputies from Hamilton County who shut down the Contemporary Arts Center for an hour to take investigative photographs of the exhibition. The Art Center and director Dennis Barrie were then charged with two misdemeanor counts --1) use of a minor in nudity-oriented material, (Fig. 4) and 2) pandering obscenity. Barrie faced up to a year in prison and a $2,000 fine, and the museum faced up to a $10,000 fine. This was the first time that a museum or gallery was to be prosecuted for work that it chose to show. This incident was brought to trial (Anderson 27).

There were eight jurors selected for the trial, and they were seemingly misrepresentational of the arts community. Of the eight, only three had ever been to an art museum. Four of them had been to other types of museums, but only on school field trips. And one 50 year old man had never been to any kind of museum. He even went so far as to state that he couldn't relate to art, nor it's enthusiasts, by claiming "I don't understand art work. That stuff never interested me" (Zeigler 96). In a case of such importance, it seemed unfair that the jury contained no one engaged in the art world even marginally.

Despite the hype surrounding the arts at this time, and the trial about to take place, local support for the arts in Cincinnati grew. The CAC's membership rose 40 percent ten days before the indictment, and it was estimated that almost eighty thousand people viewed the exhibit, which is more than what the museum usually records in a year (Dubin 191).

The country awaited a verdict to come from the courts. Almost everyone expected the center and director Barrie to be guilty because of the nature of the trial. On October 5, 1990, the jury decided that Mapplethorpe was a legitimate artist, and the CAC had every right to exhibit his work. The museum and director Barrie were found not guilty, quite a surprise to many people (Zeigler 96). Finally, a victory for the arts!

One of the most controversial works that was in question at the trial was entitled Jim and Tom, Sausalito (Fig. 7). It is a triptych which shows three stages of a man urinating into the mouth of another, or one man accepting the urine of another depending on how you look at it. When experts in the Cincinnati trial were asked what they saw when examining this series, they described it as a figure study. The jury was convinced, but a question was raised in the minds of critics. Because experts saw this as a figure study, and a layperson saw it as the literal act depicted, the question arose as to whether the public was fit to view this art (Danto 88 - 89). If the answer is no, then the Endowment should not be in existence. The NEA was created so the public can have the opportunity to view art and learn to appreciate it. But if people are not learning from the art, there is no reason that the Endowment should continue to exist. I, personally, do not take this to be true because in cases such as this, people are learning. Yet I can see the argument for both sides. The fact of the matter is, the director and his museum were found not guilty, and the NEA has not yet been eliminated, and the viewer is allowed to determine obscenity for themselves.

The final stop was in Boston where a similar response to that in Cincinnati was expected. In actuality, the exhibit was supported. Neighboring institutions exhibited other controversial artists of our time, and two hundred fifty demonstrators showed support for the exhibit on opening day. Even the press promoted the exhibit. A Boston globe critic said the exhibit was "A poetic and seductive 'Perfect Moment'", and a local television station aired photographs on the nightly news. Included were Jim and Tom, Sausalito (fig. 7) and Self-portrait (Fig. 3), both considered highly controversial images. A few members of the community complained to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding the airing, but the FCC said they had done nothing wrong, mainly because the show was aired after 10 PM (Dubin 191).

Although the Cincinnati museum and director were found to be not guilty, and a few of the other venue cities had no major problems, a significant issue had emerged; that of the movement of art from the aesthetic realm and into the political. The fact that Mapplethorpe was not alive during the debate is disturbing as well. An artist and his work were under tremendous scrutiny, and I find it unfortunate that he was not able to defend his work, and possibly give his motives to aid in the understanding the ideas and images he created.

In my opinion, the arts should have the opportunity to flourish without the restrictions of the government. It is unfortunate that in our culture, artists cannot express themselves without being put under the governmental microscope to determine if the art is legitimate, if it is considered obscene, and if it can even be shown those public institutions which are in existence for the people. Each individual should have the opportunity to determine the personal value of the art. If it offends, they can turn away. But if it intrigues, they are free to explore, learn and enjoy, which is an important element in the visual arts. Either way, the artist is doing what they set out to do, evoke feelings, elicit responses, and present pertinent issues.

THE CONSEQUENCES

THE YATES BILL

The work of the two artists discussed above, Serrano and Mapplethorpe, created new issues about government involvement in the arts and the ethical role of the NEA. Critics were overflowing with ideas of how the NEA should be run, of how to cut funding and, how to possibly eliminate the NEA altogether. On July 12, 1989, the House rejected a proposal to eliminate the NEA, and instead considered a bill introduced by Sidney Yates.

The Yates bill was a partial compromise, because the Endowment was not to be eliminated, but contained several restrictions. A breakdown of the bill is as follows:

- $45,000 was to be cut from the NEA budget. This is the total grant amount for Serrano and Mapplethorpe ($15,000 and $30,000 respectively).
- $400,000 was to be transferred from the NEA Visual Arts Program (which supported the artists) to the Folk Arts and Locals Program.
- A five year ban was to be placed on NEA grants to the SECCA and the Institute of Contemporary Art, both which were sponsors of the artists (Zeigler 79).

The only item that passed was the $45,000 cut to the Endowment. In my opinion, this was still a form of censorship, because without money, there would be no programs for the NEA. It is less harsh than some of the proposals given to abolish the NEA, yet the amendment was still punishing the NEA for something that they had little control over. The institutions could still determine how to distribute the funds, and the NEA still had no say over who or what they funded. The NEA was put in a more vulnerable position by having power taken away through regulation. I feel that by doing this, the Endowment had the potential to become more cautious in granting money, and could possibly deny funding to an artist that could make a positive impact on our society.

On the heels of the Serrano and Mapplethorpe controversy, an Independent Commission was hired in the summer of 1990 to review grant making procedures of public versus private art. Basically what the Independent Commission found was that freedom of speech and expression is essential to the arts, but obscenity is not protected by this right, and therefore the NEA should not fund such exhibits. The definition of "obscene", and the definition of obscene art should be up to the courts to decide, and not for the panelists and staff of the NEA. It also called for the chairperson to have more authority, and for the panels to be reformed to include a broader membership which would

include not only arts professionals, but lay people as well. In addition to the aforementioned, there were also to be basic structure and procedure reforms at every level. All this reformation was an attempt to help reduce controversies over obscene art (Zeigler 125 and Balfe 267 - 268). At this point, it seems as though there will never be an acceptable compromise for both sides. I feel that this may have helped for a while, yet in the end, there would continue to be controversies over "obscene" art.

CONTROVERSY OVER THE CATALOGUE

Art Journal, one of the journals of the College Art Association, the largest association of art history and art academics, decided after the Mapplethorpe controversy to do a special issue in the Fall of 1991 on censorship. Mapplethorpe's photographs were featured. They felt that in order for people to understand the controversy, they would have to be able to relate by seeing the photographs first hand, with accompanying text. The usual printer of the journal, Waverly Press of Baltimore, felt that these photographs were not up to "...the taste and standards we like to uphold", and therefore decided not to print the special issue (Cembalest 32). The magazine then moved to Eastern Press of New Haven which had done two previous Mapplethorpe catalogues for the show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1988. Eastern agreed, and began production. When it was approaching press time, Eastern said the journal had to either take two of the images out, or replace them with something more suitable. Eastern's president, David Johnson claimed that the reason for asking them to be removed was because he "...just found them distasteful" (Cembalest 34). The *Art Journal* editors refused. Studley Press in Massachusetts was consulted next. This time, the magazine went to press as planned, with no major setbacks. But when it reached subscribers, there was a reaction that the journal did not quite expect. The magazine was prepared for some subscribers to ask to be taken off the mailing list, but what they did not expect was the verbal criticism that the magazine

received. It was not as accepted as they had thought it would be, which was unfortunate, but the issue was finally published, and that was what they had set out to do (Cembalest 32 - 34).

As the *Art Journal* stated, they felt that it was important to have people understand the controversy by seeing the images first hand. I felt this was important as well, and proceeded to look up the issue at Waldo library. When I opened the bound volume, I found that this volume was incomplete, and the issue that was to be missing was Fall 1991. This was the third incident of missing or in repair materials on Mapplethorpe that I ran into at the library. I now understand why the materials are on reserve, and I find it unfortunate that even then, people destroy or deface them.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

> The content of the works is often sufficiently erotic to be considered pornographic, even by the artist, while the aesthetic of its presentation is chastely classic -- it is Dionysiac *and* Apollonian at once (Danto 23).

Robert Mapplethorpe was all about shocking the general public. It has been said that when the public's morality changes enough so that his work is no longer shocking, these images will have lost all comprehensibility. He made peoples fantasies a public reality, where fantasies are usually kept in private. Not only did he express these fantasies, but he showed them explicitly and in graphic representation. I believe that because they were photographs and not a painting or print, the graphic nature of the pieces are more prominent and developed. An example was given in Danto's book on painting versus photography. The painting described is Titian's The Flaying of the Marsyas from 1570, where the satyr is "chained and trussed and hung upside-down" (Fig. 5). This is a brutal act, yet since it's creation in 1570, it has been accepted. Mapplethorpe's photograph

entitled Elliot and Dominick is depicting two men in essentially the same position as Titian's painting, yet this is considered unacceptable (Fig. 6). In actuality, the photograph is showing two men who trust each other enough to be put in this situation of sadomasochistic pleasure, and they are not torturing one another as depicted in the painting. Because the photograph portrays real people, in an up-close composition, viewers respond to the literalness of the composition, and not the underlying content and meaning (69-71). Robert Storr, curator at the Museum of Modern Art, reiterates this when he comments:

> 'These are works of art, and they are not simple - not definitive in their meaning. The discussion of the works of art has not taken place - only that the images are supposedly shocking.' Now it's time to address other issues, he says: 'How does it shock? Who does it shock? Why does it shock?' (Cembalest 34).

I would like to address each of these strong questions in a short paragraph, and relate them to Mapplethorpes' work.

"How does it shock?" The answer here seems rather obvious. First, it shocks by the subject matter. Gay men are not yet readily accepted within our culture, especially gay men shown in bondage clothing or as sadomasochistic. When people are confronted with a photograph of Jim and Tom, Sausalito (Fig. 7) or Elliot and Dominick (Fig. 6), the reaction may actually be one of fear. The fact that Mapplethorpe uses photography is another way of shocking. As mentioned above, a painting of the same or similar situation will not bring about the same reaction as a photograph. In a photograph, you cannot deny that these are real people, while in a painting you can disassociate from the figures, because that is what they become -- figures rather than people.

"Who does it shock?" There could be any number of answers to this question. First off, there are the politicians who say this type of art destroys family values and corrupts our society. There may also be an amount of our American society that may be shocked,

whether or not they support the arts. I think that anybody who does not live this lifestyle or see these images on a daily basis will be surprised at the first glance. Although I fully support Mapplethorpe and all artists like him, I will not deny that the first time I saw a few of his images I was taken aback. These images are not common to my experiences. While looking at the images, I was jarred by the delicate flowers mixed with erotic depictions of gay men. There is no doubt that his images are shocking, but I believe that was his ideal reaction. Those who find his work appalling or disgusting or obscene are entitled to their opinions. But censorship has no place in a democratic society. We have a right to be able to make that judgment on our own, without the influence of others views.

"Why does it shock?" This final question is a culmination of all the previous. It shocks because they are photographs. It shocks because of the subject matter. Other reasons are because it is unexpected. As I mentioned above, flipping through Danto's book and being confronted with a penis on a pedestal was unforeseen (Fig. 8). I feel the main reason that his work shocks is because it is outside the "mainstream" experience. The majority of the American public today is not terribly open-minded when it comes to either gay men or S&M. Until more people come to terms with the fact that this is an actual lifestyle for some, this type of work will not be accepted. Going back to a previous point -- when the public's morality changes enough so that this work is accepted, the shock value in Mapplethorpe's work will be lost.

ENOLA GAY

"You have no idea the forces opposing this exhibit, not in your wildest dreams", Tom Crouch, head curator of the *Enola Gay* exhibit (Nobile xvii).

The *Enola Gay*, the plane that dropped the bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima during World War II, was to be the subject of a commemoration of the 50th anniversary

of the end of the war at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington D.C. The original plan was to show the restored fuselage, as well as artifacts and photographs about the bombing (Fig. 13 & 14). The history of this event is itself controversial, and because of this, the opposition surrounding this exhibit was astounding. Veterans groups opposed everything from the artifacts selected, to the way in which the items were to be labeled, but the main protest was over the script.

The "emotional center" of the exhibit was to include artifacts and photographs depicting not only the bombing itself, but the aftermath of the attack. Many people in America are still very sensitive to this event, and with the addition of the artifacts this became very apparent. The military and government played a key role, mainly the Air Force Association (AFA), the American Legion (AL) and the Veterans Association.

"Anti-American" and "pro-Japanese" were terms that were thrown around throughout the entire debate. Because the selected artifacts and the tone of the script seemed to cultivate the two sides of the story, the Smithsonian was accused of saying that the American decision to go ahead with the bombing was wrong, and that we bombed innocent Japanese. The groups argued that the Smithsonian did not portray the horror that the Japanese administered upon the United States, and therefore the exhibit was biased. The groups opposing the exhibit felt that the decision to drop the bomb was legitimate, and the Smithsonian was in no place to challenge this notion.

The role of the American museum soon came into play. In the past, it was felt that the artifacts spoke mainly for themselves, and there was no need to inform the viewer of anything further than what they saw in front of them. Conservative critics felt then, and still feel today, that the museum should display artifacts without evaluation, interpretation or contextualization. More recently though, the thought has been that a museum should challenge and inform the viewer, and get them actively involved, rather that have them passively looking at an artifact. Unfortunately with the *Enola Gay*, we reverted back to

our old outlook -- not informing, but letting the viewer simply gaze at the exhibit and not spark any meaningful discussion or debate (Bernstein 4). The director of the National Air and Space Museum, Martin Harwit, feels that the function of a museum is to inform the public. It is a way to initiate discussion which can lead to understanding and learning. This is what the Smithsonian was attempting to do with their depiction of the *Enola Gay* and the artifacts (Nobile xxxiii). On the flip side of this, a Congressman who was in opposition to the exhibit said that the Smithsonian's "...job is to tell history, not rewrite it" (Mitchell 26). Yet the question remains, whose history is it that we are to portray? With the new evidence that has come forth since the actual bombing, it has been questioned if dropping the bomb was in fact the right decision, and if the war could have ended without the bomb. It should be the museum goers right to be informed of these new developments. With the exhibit as it was originally to be shown, the idea was expressed that there is not one history of an event, but many intersecting ones. Those opposing the exhibit felt that it was still too soon to give the public new information with which they would question what they currently knew.

THE SCRIPTS

The exhibit was scheduled to open in June of 1995, and be entitled "The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II". The exhibit was to include the front section of the restored fuselage, and rare photographs and artifacts (many which were lent by peace museums of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) that were to be part of the "emotional center". These items were the focus of the exhibit at this time, and the reason behind the controversy, because together they showed references not only to the bombing itself, but the horrific aftermath that ensued (Nobile xxiii). The main cause for the cancellation of the original exhibit was the fact that aspects of both sides of the event were to be shown. The Smithsonian was planning of fully exploring the decision to use the bomb, and the effects

of that decision. This plan brought the American Legion (AL) , the Air Force Association (AFA), and the Veterans Association against the museum, accusing them of being anti-American in the depiction of the effects of the bombing. The Smithsonian was going to delve deeper into the issues at hand rather than reiterating the version that has been fed to the American public for the past 50 years. Protests were leveled at the exhibit, the script, the artifacts, and the Smithsonian.

The original script in January of 1994 included many facts and figures that people did not agree with. Some of the artifacts and photographs which showed the aftermath were very emotional and graphic. Instead of showing only examples of Japanese atrocities, the exhibit was also showing the opposing side. This disturbed the Air Force Association and the American Legion greatly. Included in the display were: a child's lunch box with carbonized remains, a wooden clog with an outline of a foot, many photographs showing people suffering from radiation disease, as well as people dead and dying from the bomb. There were also photographs of the mushroom cloud, and the cities before and after the bombing (Goldberg 32).

In addition to the actual artifacts, the front section of the fuselage was to be on display (Fig. 13 & 14). The display plaque accompanying this would include an examination of the buildup to the explosion, the bombs' manufacture, and the actual decision by President Truman. This presentation seems plausible given that it is a contemporary revistation of a past event. This exploration brought about further debates from the Air Force Association and the American Legion because they felt that the Smithsonian was reevaluating the decision to drop the bomb.

In the beginning stages of planning, a historical advisory committee was assembled to read the script, and make suggestions for improvement. The original script was reviewed, and they felt that the initial approach was successful, and with a few minor revisions the problems could be resolved. They felt that "The exhibit would inform,

challenge, and commemorate" which was what the museum was aiming for (Goldberg 30). But the advisory committee met only once. A planning memo on the exhibit from the curator Tom Crouch was slipped to the AFA in September of 1993, and since that time, the two organizations had been in communication regarding the exhibit. After the first and only meeting of the advisory board, the American Legion and Air Force Association took over. They had become the new "advisory" board.

The way the groups felt about the issue influenced their attitudes and actions greatly. The Smithsonian claimed that items were taken out of context from the script making them to appear anti-American (Goldberg 31). For example, John Correll, editor in chief of the AFA's *Air Force Magazine* claimed the exhibit was a "rigged horror show" and began to wage a war against he Smithsonian's script. In his article, he quotes from the script... "'For most Americans,' the script says, 'it was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese it was a war to defend their unique culture from Western Imperialism'" (Nobile xxxi). This quote was taken out of context, and cut in such a way to make it appear different that what it was. The full paragraph of the original script states:

> In December 1941, Japan attacked U.S. bases at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and launched other surprise assaults against Allied territories in the Pacific. Thus began a wider conflict marked by extreme bitterness. For most Americans, this war was fundamentally different than the one waged against Germany and Italy - it was a war of vengeance. For most Japanese, it was a war to defend their unique culture against Western imperialism. As the war approached its end in 1945, it appeared to both sides that it was a fight to the finish (Nobile 3).

When the actual script is read, the twist Correll implied disappears. The sentences leading up to the section Correll cropped and quoted are important because they provide a background. When you are given only the items Correll quoted, it does appear to be anti-American. The full context shows, though, that this is not the case.

Unfortunately many other publications, newspapers and magazine alike did not do their research and simply took Correll's quote and made it their own. Even after the script had been changed and revised, the press continued using this particular section as late as February 1995 (Nobile xxxvi). (The first script was out in January, 1994, and the final revision was done by January 1995. The information Correll extracted was contained in the first script, so by February of 1995, this was rather outdated material (Nobile xxxiii, xliii).)

The estimated number of American lives saved by administering the bomb also created a debate. The script originally reflected the figure of 229,000, which in recent years has been found to be an inflated figure. Many of the historians on the committee knew that this figure was out of proportion and brought this to director Harwit's attention. The actual number that was thought to be saved was only 63,000, and not the enlarged 229,000. By this time, the script had been revised twice -- line-by-line -- with members of the AL and museum curators (Goldberg 32). The second version was to have been the final script, with no further changes. Harwit had even signed an agreement with the American Legion stating that there would be no more changes made. Yet, after great debate, Harwit decided in January 1995 to change the script to reflect the more accurate figure. The AL, as well as members of Congress, were outraged. They felt that Harwit was showing disregard to the "...needed improvements to the exhibit" and the AL's National Commander, William M. Detweiler, took this matter to President Clinton (Nobile xli). The letter basically stated that further attempts to correct the many problems were hopeless, and that it is in the best interest of all those involved to simply cancel the exhibit. He called the exhibit "politically charged" and felt that some of the information included was "highly debatable" (Nobile xlii).

The hostilities felt by all were renewed after the change in the script. The next target at the museum was the new Secretary of the Smithsonian, I. Michael Heyman. In

the beginning of the controversies, he stood fully behind the curators and the museum stating that the museum has a "...broader role than simply displaying items", and should not avoid topics because they may cause political turmoil (Nobile x1iii). Yet on January 29, 1995, he altered his position. He decided that the museum did not take into consideration the intense feelings that this type of display would evoke, and proceeded to cancel the original exhibit. Photographs, artifacts, and most importantly, the script, were all eliminated from the display. This exhibit would now include the fuselage and a sixteen minute video of interviews of surviving veterans (Nobile x1iii).

CONSEQUENCES AND REACTIONS

> The *Enola Gay*, the greatest killing machine in the history of combat, would be presented without context, commentary, or physical reminders of the apocalyptic damage left in its wake, just as the military had always wanted (Nobile xiv).

In the beginning, the plaque introducing the viewer to the fuselage was to read, "This is the plane that dropped the bomb". This, in the end, was transformed into a short description of the plane and its contents (Fig. 15 & 16). The display began as an exploration of the bomb attack, and ended as a commentary of what the military wanted the public to see and know. The exhibit expanded and transformed until it had completely adopted the one sided American military view of the event (Nobile xxxix, Mitchell 24).

"In late June, the Enola Gay exhibit opened, met by protests by disarmament activists and historians who have labeled the censoring of the script 'historical cleansing'" (Mitchell 24).

There were mixed views on the cancellation of the exhibit. Most people not taking the military or governmental side were upset that military censorship was able to influence a public institution. A few museum officials felt as though Harwit and Heyman had "sold out" (Mitchell 22). Others felt relieved by the cancellation stating that because so much had been censored out, it was better to not show the few items that were left. Yet Stanley Goldberg, the author of one article, felt that even the scaled down version would have challenged people and forced them to rethink the event (33). Potential viewers were denied the opportunity to reassess the bombing. A point was made by professor Edward Linenthall at the University of Wisconsin, that the American public lost a great deal by the cancellation. We lost the ability to thank the veterans, be reminded that human events are complex, and not one-sided; be reminded of the horrors of nuclear war; remember that even with "happy" endings, there is still tragedy (Nobile xliv). We also allowed Congress to threaten a public institution. Secretary Heyman was told by Congress that if the exhibit was not canceled, future funds to the Smithsonian would be cut. Then in January, Heyman obliged (Mitchell 22).

In my view, this is a direct form of political pressure to censor an exhibit. This particular case was dictated by the government, because of the nations involvement in the war. It is hard to understand how it came to this point of Congress threatening a public institution. It does not seem fair that the government can dictate the content and structure of the what the public can view. They may feel that the public would interpret the exhibit as being anti-American, yet they do not know for sure. The political pressure on the museum to cancel the exhibit canceled much more than that. It canceled something that could have been a great learning experience for many Americans.

The Smithsonian and its director were under so much pressure from Congress and veterans that Director Harwit quit his job. The unfortunate thing about this, not only that Harwit was pressured to resign, was the fact that he was never able to see the exhibit he

initially fought so hard for, open. He quit in May of 1995, and the exhibit did not open until June.

The Smithsonian's "historical cleansing" did very little to solve the ongoing debates, but it did get some to begin to rethink the outcome. This entire event shows how we are still suppressing the facts and as a society cannot come to an overall conclusion of right versus wrong.

VIEWS AND MOTIVES OF GROUPS AGAINST EXHIBIT

"The veterans groups tried - successfully - to block free inquiry, dialogue, questioning and dissent" (Bernstein 4).

When reexamining the views and motives of the AFA, the Legion, and the Veterans Association, it is very apparent that they were against the exhibit from the beginning. After only one meeting of the historical advisory committee, they took over. They turned the original script around and made the exhibit look anti-American rather than a commentary on the bombing of Japan. The script showed both sides of the issue, not only the well known American military side, but also the actual outcome of the decision.

The American Legion felt that the exhibit slighted the contributions of the war veterans, and did not take their thoughts and feelings into consideration. The Veterans Association and the Air Force Association felt that the script turned history upside-down and made Japan a victim rather than an aggressor, and the *Enola Gay* had turned into a symbol of nuclear terror instead of the means that brought a swift end to the war. The groups felt the script belittled the doings of the veterans, and promoted the "antinuclear learnings" of museum curators (Garvey 49).

Despite the views of the AFA, the Legion and the Veterans, there is now evidence, discussed below, that supports the possibility that the bomb was not needed to end the

war. This is a rather disturbing piece of information, and this is apparently what the groups felt the public should not have been informed about. Truman and his aides knew of alternatives to bombing Japan, yet these were not used. Many feel that we should have warned the Japanese of the devastation the bomb could create. Quite a few respected military leaders - including Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gen. Douglas MacAurthur, Adm. William Leahy and Adm. Ernest King - questioned if the use was necessary (Bernstien 4). These new developments are an important part of the event, and the Smithsonian felt that it was necessary to include parts of this as a portion of the display. The AFA feels that the "...idea of a good museum was strictly celebratory", basically stating that no new information should be divulged, and it should show only what we have known for years (Goldberg 33). I think that a museum can have the element of celebration, but it should also spark conversation and teach people about something they may have not known about before. This, I believe, was the Smithsonian's stance on the issue as well.

PERSONAL REACTIONS

I felt that in order to fully understand the controversy surrounding the exhibit, it would be beneficial to view the outcome first hand. Therefore, I made a weekend trip to Washington D.C. to view the *Enola Gay* exhibit at the National Air and Space Museum. Although I had read about the exhibit for months, the full effect of the exhibit could not be achieved through secondary literature alone. Prior to entering the exhibit, there is a statement from I. Michael Heyman regarding the display. He states:

> The National Air and Space Museum originally planned a much larger exhibition which concentrated attention on the devastation caused by the atomic bombs and on differing interpretations on the history surrounding President Truman's decision to drop them. That planned exhibition provoked intense criticism from World War II veterans and others, who stated that it portrayed the

> United States as the aggressor and the Japanese as victims and reflected unfavorably on the valor and courage of American veterans. The Museum changed its plan substantially, but the criticism persisted and led to my decision to replace that exhibition with a simpler one (Smithsonian statement).

He goes on later to state that the exhibit "does what I intended, with a few changes" (Smithsonian statement). I find this an interesting remark, considering the enormous changes that the display went through. I did find it somewhat surprising that he made such a statement upon entering the exhibit. I actually was impressed. I feel that it is important for those viewing the display to realize what the museum had to go through to bring them what they see now. There was also a section at the end where they provided blank cards for you to express your comments. I found out that they provided blank cards rather than ones with instructions or writing so that people would not be influenced one way or another. I wrote a brief statement about my research and how I felt upon exiting the exhibit. I found this to be an admirable addition to the display.

After months of research on the controversy and the display, it was very interesting to be there in the midst of all those viewing the exhibit. I wondered if the people there knew how the museum struggled to win a losing battle. I know that my emotions were running high as I walked from room to room. I now was able to see first hand what all the hype was about. It was both interesting, in the sense that I was learning about the actual items within the exhibit, and strange because I knew what the original plan was. To not see the artifacts and photographs that were originally supposed to be included was disappointing. I still feel that they could have brought another element to the display that was missing, though the museum did a commendable job in the display as it was finalized. I still feel that we should have had the opportunity to view the original exhibit with its artifacts and photographs included.

CONCLUSION

I find it unfortunate that the public was not able to view the exhibit as it was originally conceived. I agree with those that feel that we lost out as a society by not having the opportunity to reassess the bombing, or at least become more informed on the decision. I do not feel that such an exhibit would have slighted the contributions of the Veterans of the war. They did their duty, and whether people feel that this was a right or wrong thing to do should not matter. I would not look down on any member of the crew of the *Enola Gay* simply because I don't feel that the bombing was necessarily the right decision. In my view, an exhibit which included the plane, artifacts and photographs would not have turned people against the Veterans. Most Americans when visiting the exhibit, would have already decided for themselves if they felt that the bombing was right or wrong. If somebody was unsure, this exhibit would have possibly clarified areas, and helped them further their understanding of the decision and the effects of that decision.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In this thesis, I have explored some of the ramifications that censorship can have in our society through the discussion of the Robert Mapplethorpe and *Enola Gay* controversies. Both exhibits evoked emotions and responses which affected the way in which the National Endowment for the Arts is viewed in our society today. Mapplethorpe was a moral and social controversy, while the *Enola Gay* fell into the political and military arena. Each dealt with sensitive subjects which was the primary reason for the controversy.

Mapplethorpe challenged us to explore a part of society that many Americans are not in touch with, the homosexual male. He shocked us through his explicit photographs, challenged the mainstream American with his ideals, and evoked various responses

through his subject matter. If Mapplethorpe did nothing else, he forced the viewer to think, possibly reevaluate their own ideals and the reality of contemporary life. For this reason he is considered an esteemed artist.

The display of the *Enola Gay* initially sought to inform and educate the viewer on elements of history not touched upon in U.S. history books. Because of various veteran and governmental groups, the original display turned into more of a documentary and less of a revisitation of the event. Rather than challenging the viewers, it simply re-informed them of previous factual information.

The National Endowment for the Arts is a major political institution and is essential for the flourishing art world today. Film, music, visual and performing arts are all put in jeopardy when funding to the Endowment is threatened. The arts are something that we as a society thrive upon. It defines us as a changing society, a different way of looking at our history, and to threaten a public institution for displaying a work of art places a major portion of our livelihood at risk. It is difficult to imagine a world void of art, the symphony, or the ballet, yet without government support, many of these would not have the funds to survive. Censorship effects us all, and we must fight to keep our rights as individuals. I want to have the opportunity to assess a work of art personally before the government begins to call it obscene.

Art has always been considered to be in the eye of the beholder. Every work of art is an interpretation of an event or subject, and through this interpretation, an artist is expressing themselves. Whoever you are, wherever you were raised, however you have explored the world, will always be with you. These become who you are. Your background and upbringing will always play an important role in the decisions you make and the way in which you react to situations. This cannot be avoided. When one thinks about art in this way, it is obvious that people will have different reactions to the same work. I can see how Jesse Helms and others could be offended by Mapplethorpe's intent

and images, and they are entitled to this response. It is when others are allowed to impose their standards upon me to the point that the work is censored, that I begin to have the problem. The topic of censorship will always be prevalent in our society. Sometimes through controversy, though, we can arrive at a greater tolerance for one another, and if not tolerance, and least some knowledge. I was exposed to many differing viewpoints throughout my study of this topic, and I feel that each positions is legitimate.

As a culture, we need to attempt to understand the art of our time, the artist or the exhibit before we censor it. Learning the motivations and background before we condone or condemn, will not only clarify misunderstandings, but also aid in education and knowledge. From here we may be able to focus on the meaning art can give to a society as a form of expression and as a statement of our culture as a whole, and begin to challenge those who look at art negatively, and get them to explore the artistic realm rather than passing it by.

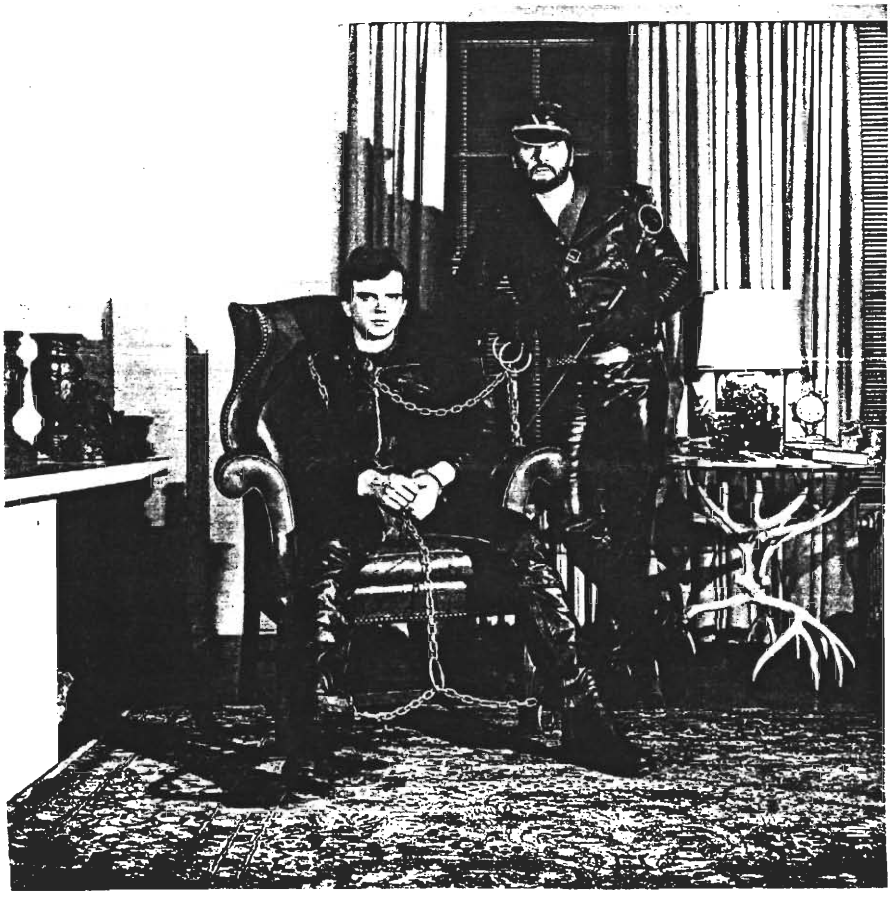


Fig. 1, Robert Mapplethorpe
Brian Ridley and Lyle Heeter, 1979

Fig. 2, Robert Mapplethorpe
Self-portrait, 1980

Fig. 3, Robert Mapplethorpe
Self-portrait, 1978

Fig. 4, Robert Mapplethorpe
Rosie, 1976

Fig. 5, Titian
The Flaying of Marsyas, c.1570 - 1575
Courtesy Art Resource, Photograph, Erich Lessing

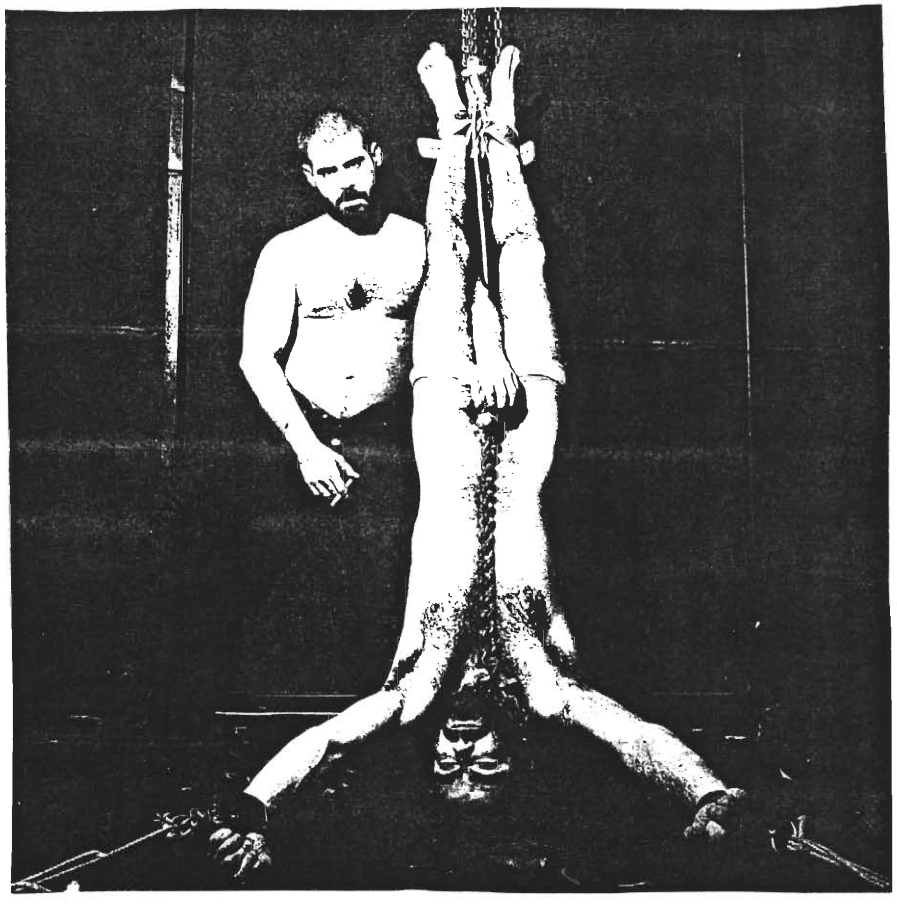


Fig. 6, Robert Mapplethorpe
Elliot and Dominick, 1979
1979 The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe

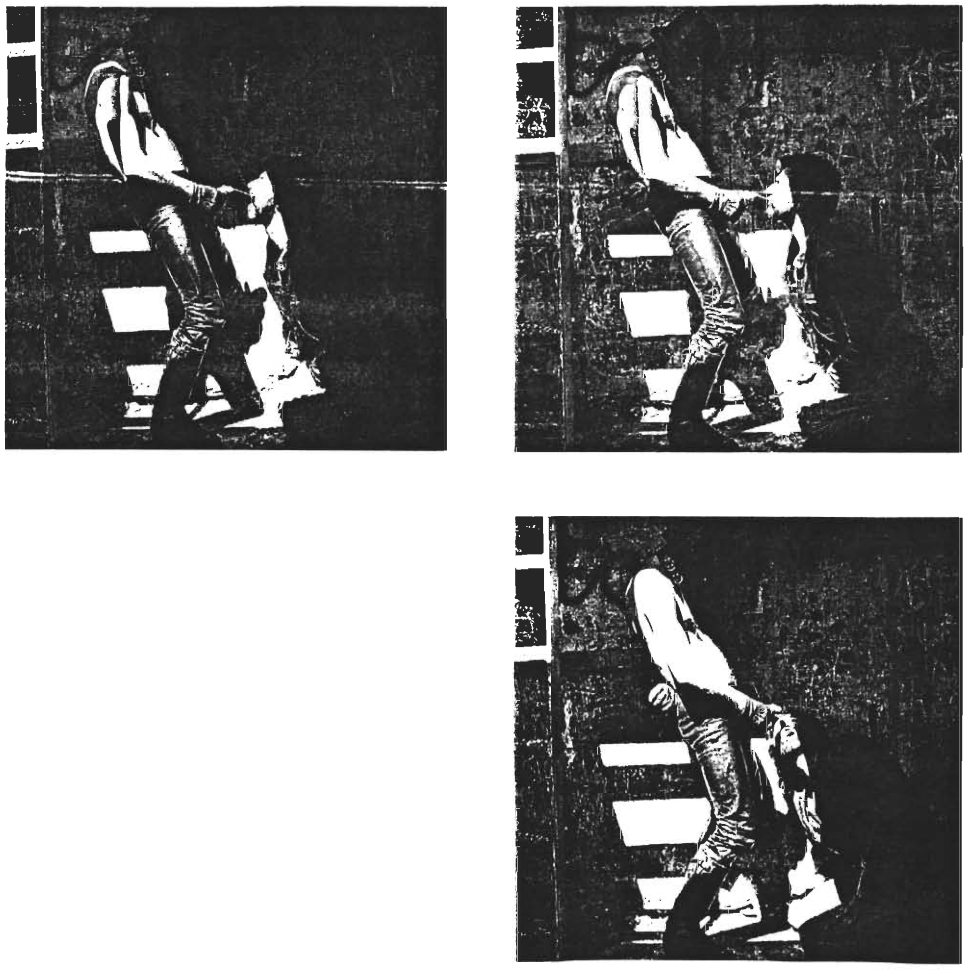


Fig. 7, Robert Mapplethorpe
Jim and Tom, Sausalito, 1977

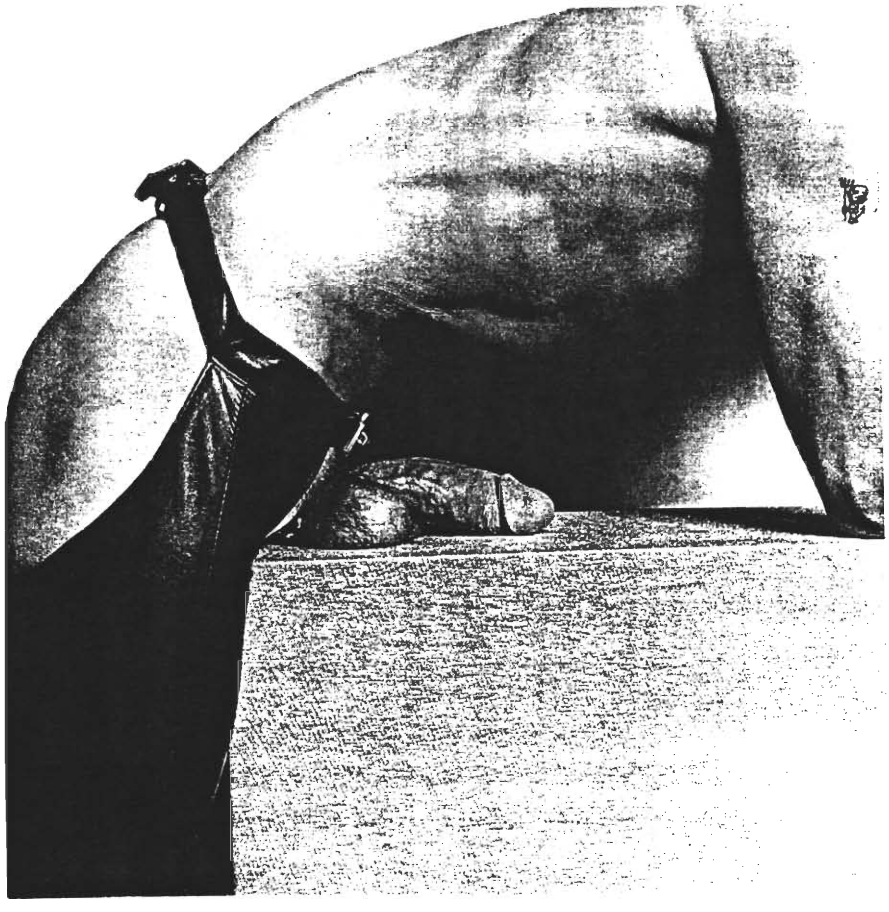


Fig. 8, Robert Mapplethorpe
Mark Stevens (Mr. 10 1/2), 1976

Fig. 9, Robert Mapplethorpe
Man in Polyester Suit, 1980

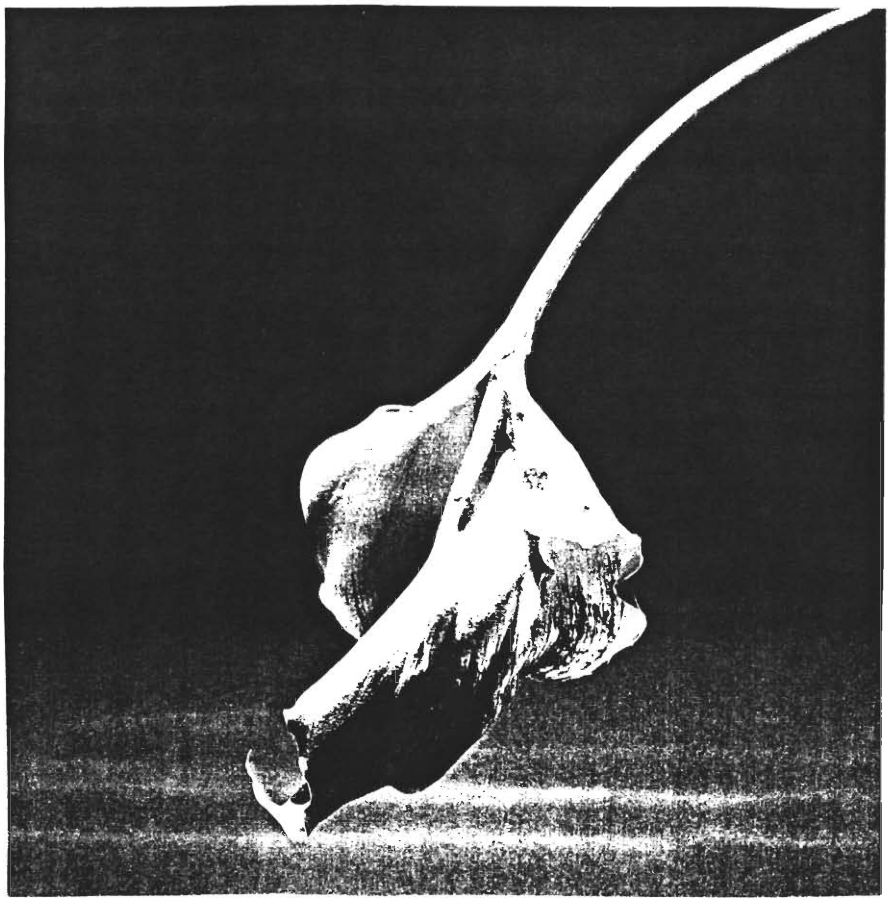


Fig. 10, Robert Mapplethorpe
Calla Lily, 1986

Fig. 11, Robert Mapplethorpe
Lisa Lyon, 1980
1980 The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe

Fig. 12, Robert Mapplethorpe
Hermes, 1988
1988 The Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe

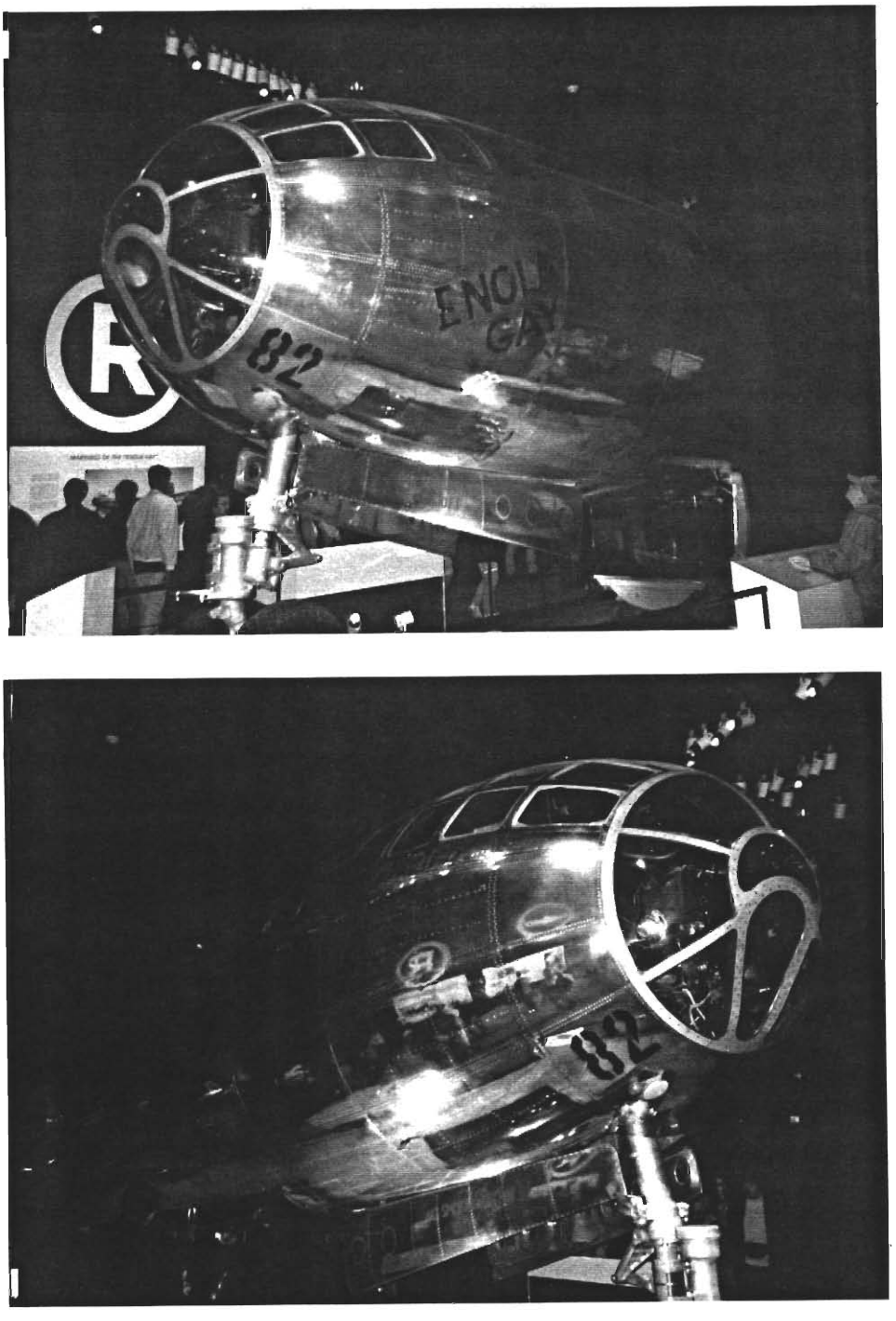
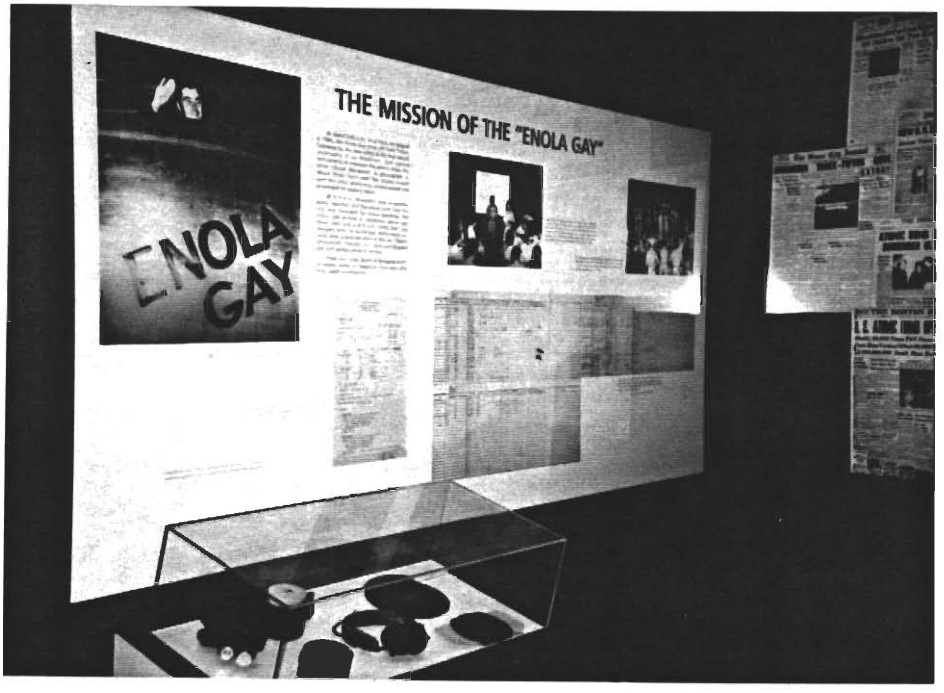


Fig. 13 & 14
Enola Gay fuselage
National Air and Space Museum



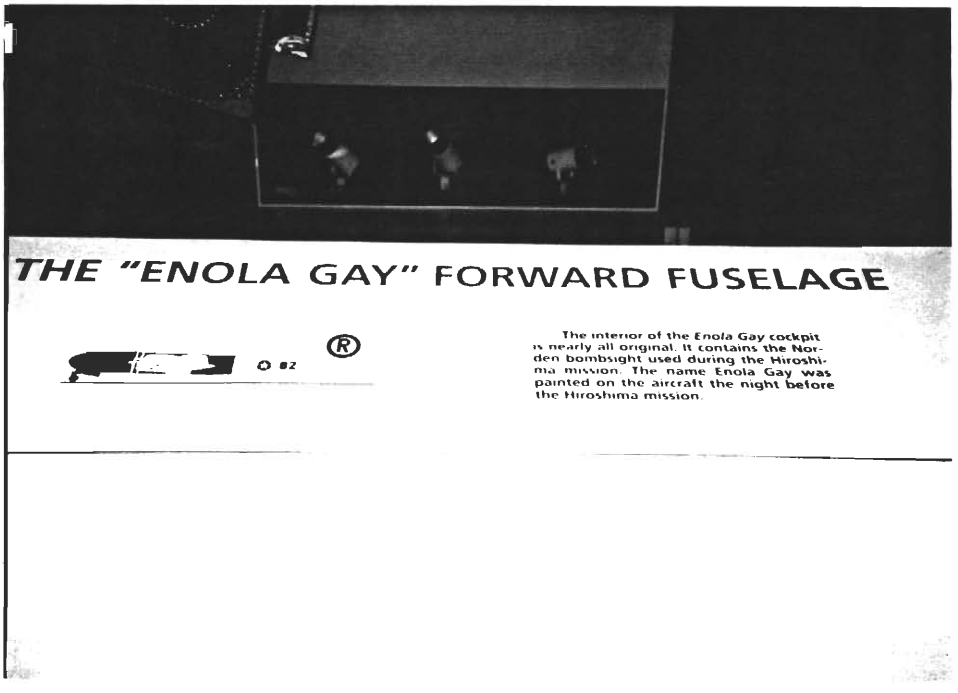


Fig. 15 & 16
Display plaques for the *Enola Gay*
National Air and Space Museum

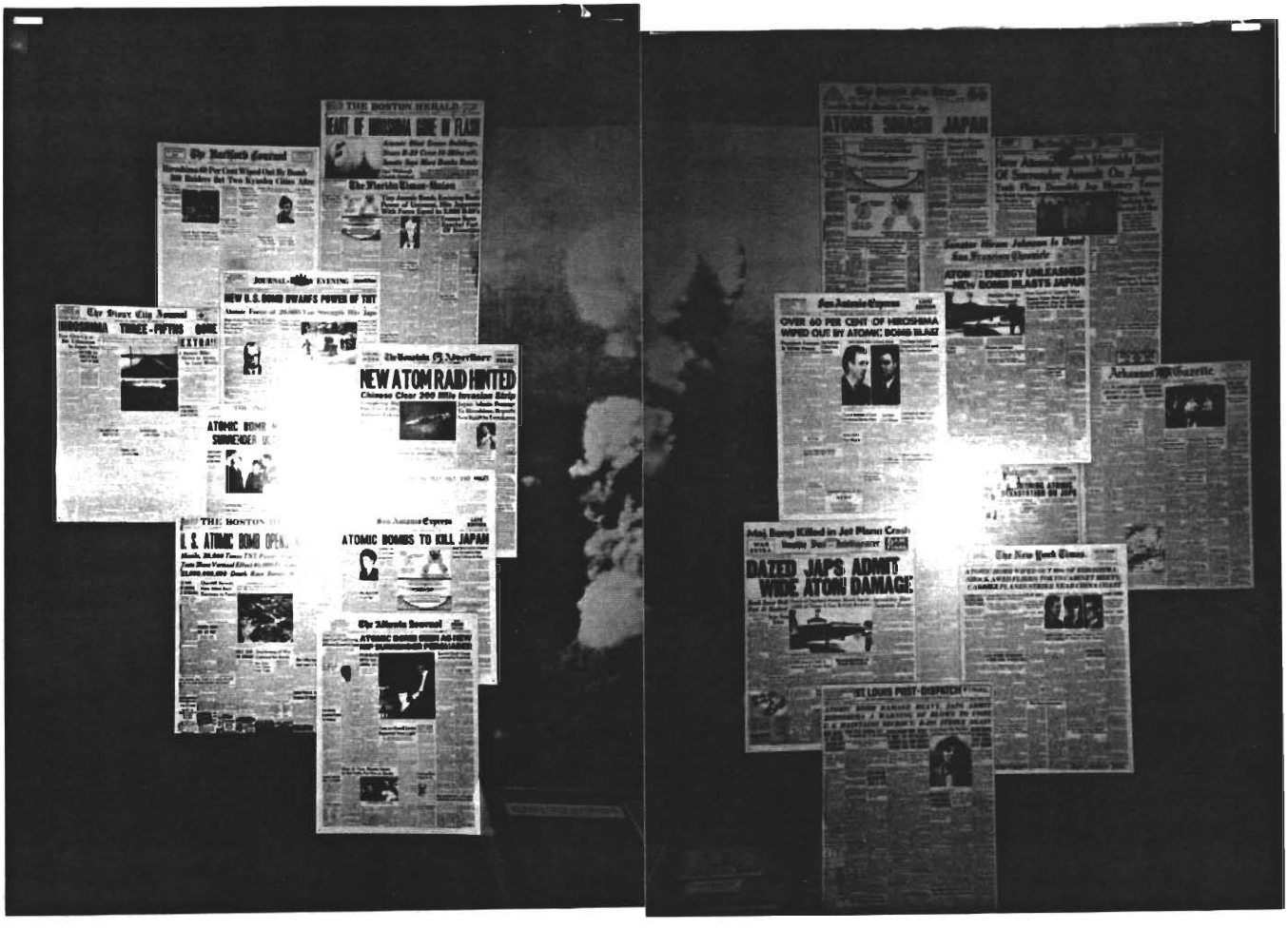


Fig. 17 & 18
Newspaper Display
National Air and Space Muesum

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