

PATRICK BUCHANAN

Pursued by baying yahoos

The "Senate's most persistent yahoo," bellowed Tom Wicker; "as wily and contemptible a character as one could hope to meet," bayed Jonathan Yardley in *The Washington Post*.

What's got the boys bananas is an amendment by Sen. Jesse Helms, North Carolina Republican, to ban federal funding, through the National Endowment for the Arts, for "obscene or indecent materials, including ... depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts." Whistled through without dissent, the amendment will become law, if a conference committee does not peel it off the \$10.9 billion Interior bill.

Propulsion for Mr. Helms' amendment comes from the now-famous photographic exhibit by the late Robert Mapplethorpe, tossed out of the Corcoran Gallery, which features a little girl with her dress up, one man about to urinate in the mouth of another, an elephantine penis hanging out of a pair of pants, and the "artist's" nude photo of himself, with a bullwhip sticking out of his rectum.

"[T]he artistry is transparent," coos Hank Burchard of *The Post*: "His eye for the human figure, male and female, is superb, but what is most compelling about his nude studies is the lack of any suggestion that the models are being manipulated."

(Query: If Mapplethorpe's photos are that good, why doesn't *The Post* publish them?)

Jeffrey Tucker of the Ludwig Von Mises Institute, however, was revolted, especially by "Tie Rack" ... an icon of the Virgin Mary, desecrated and constructed to hold



Jesse Helms

Bible-belt yahoo to wave in front of

the folks back home," mocks Mr. Burchard. But, Swift's "Gulliver's Travels," where the squalid creatures first appear, reveals yahoos to be moral twins of the dead pervert with the bullwhip whose work so enthralled Hank Burchard.

Excuse me, but God bless Jesse Helms!

His retabbling of this issue, after the House thought it sidetracked it, with a tiny nick in the NEA budget, is a deliverance.

For the Mapplethorpe exhibit, along with the NEA-underwritten "Piss Christ" (Andreas Serrano's self-titled photo of a crucifix in a vat of his own urine), and the paralysis that has gripped the "arts" crowd, as decent folks demand they condemn such filth, is raising America's consciousness to the moral squalor of so much modern art, and the amorality and cowardice of art "critics" whose duty it presumably was to maintain some standards.

This episode is going to do for the "arts community" what the cave-in to the Filthy Speech Movement and student riots did for the academic community in the '60s; i.e., strip them of respect and make them objects of ridicule.

"Art is the signature of man," said G.K. Chesterton. Sculptor and art historian H. Reed Armstrong adds: "Whether it be the religious fervor of the Middle Ages, the humanism of the Renaissance, or the romanticism of the 19th century, the visual artist is the medium who most faithfully reflects the spirit of the age."

"The 'Art' of the twentieth century is a fearful indictment of our culture. It is the fruitless art of 'liberated man,' disunited from the cause of his being ... the 'artist' of today 'fulfills himself' as does the cancerous cell, in total disregard of the life of the organism which feeds and nourishes it."

T.S. Eliot saw it coming: "Culture, he wrote, 50 years ago, is the 'incarnation ... of the religion of a people.'"

"If Christianity goes, the whole of our culture goes. Then you must start painfully again, and you cannot put on a new culture ready made. You must wait for the grass to grow to feed the sheep to give the wool out of which your new coat will be made. You must pass through many centuries of barbarism. ... But we can at least try to save something of those

goods of which we are the common trustees: the legacy of Greece, Rome and Israel, and the legacy of Europe throughout the last 2,000 years. In a world which has seen such material devastation as ours, these spiritual possessions are in imminent peril."

Barbarism! The precise word, as we observe journalistic yahoos hail poor, pathetic Robert Mapplethorpe for having photographed, for their amusement, the degraded acts by which he killed himself.

What's to be done?

We can defund the poisoners of culture, the polluters of art; we can

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sweep up the debris that passes for modern art outside so many public buildings; we can discredit self-anointed critics who have forfeited our trust. America is not yet Weimar.

"A whole paradigm shift to New Age paganism has taken over the arts," Reed Armstrong wrote me recently: "Conservatives had best become interested in art if they wish to see civilization survive into the 21st century."

This is all-important: Not simply to cut out the rot, but to seek out, to find, to celebrate the good, the true, the beautiful. But, first, tell Jesse to hold the fort; help is on the way.