American Controversy: Nudity in Art and its Discontents

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Arts
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sarah Katherine McPhaul
May 2017

ABSTRACT

While walking through an exhibit at the East Tennessee Historical Society last year, I witnessed one of the curators tape sheets of white paper on top of some of the paintings. The exhibit served to remember the artwork of the Knoxville artist Lloyd Branson (1853 – 1925). His paintings consisted of mostly portraits, large-scale history scenes, and peaceful landscapes. Of the portraits displayed in the gallery, a few of them showed nude women. One of the paintings titled *The Weeping Magdalene* referred to a biblical narrative of Mary Magdalene crying. The other painting was not a biblical story, but one likely pulled from the Romantic period entitled *The Nude*. It showed a woman distressed by a presumable nightmare. Both paintings show the women nude above the waist, but fabric covered their bodies below the waist. They were small-scale paintings whose purpose was to present a dramatic story. These two "controversial" paintings of nude women were, in fact, the very ones that the curator carefully covered up.

As I saw this action taking place, I wondered why. I would later find that the reasoning was due to a fifth grade Christian school group that was scheduled to tour the exhibit. The school requested that the paintings depicting nudity be covered during their visit. After consideration, the East Tennessee Historical Society staff decided to grant their request. My observation of censorship at this local historical society led me to question not only the organization's decision, but also the reasons why the school felt it imperative to censor the art of their students. This event in Knoxville, Tennessee is reflective of a longer and complex history of Americans' debates on nudity in art and also its ideas on whether that material is harmful to children. In this thesis, I take a public history approach to understand how museum censorship occurs and the history of why

many Americans are uncomfortable with nudity in art. Through this approach, I argue that censorship can be harmful to the development of children and young students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

While walking through an exhibit at the East Tennessee Historical Society last year, I witnessed one of the curators tape sheets of white paper on top of some of the paintings. The exhibit served to remember the artwork of the Knoxville artist Lloyd Branson (1853 - 1925). His paintings consisted of mostly portraits, large-scale history scenes, and peaceful landscapes. Of the portraits displayed in the gallery, a few of them showed nude women. One of the paintings titled *The Weeping Magdalene* (Figure 1) referred to a biblical narrative of Mary Magdalene crying. The other painting was not a biblical story but one likely pulled from the Romantic period entitled *The Nude* (Figure 2). It showed a woman distressed by a presumable nightmare. Both paintings show the women nude above the waist, but fabric covered their body below the waist. They were small-scale paintings whose purpose was to present a dramatic story. These two "controversial" paintings of nude women were, in fact, the very ones that the curator carefully covered up.

As I saw this action taking place, I wondered why. I would later find that the reasoning was due to a fifth grade Christian school group that was scheduled to tour the exhibit. The school requested that the paintings depicting nudity be covered during their visit. After careful consideration, the East Tennessee Historical Society staff decided to grant their request because covering the paintings would not impede the intended learning outcome for the school group tour. The censorship at this local historical society led me to question not only the organization's decision but also the reasons why the school felt it

imperative to censor the art for their students. This event in Knoxville, Tennessee reflects a longer and complex history of Americans' debates on nudity in art and also its ideas on what material is harmful to children and who gets to decide.

In this Master's thesis, I plan to discuss this topic through a public history approach. I divide my paper into five sections. The first section discusses museum exhibits that presented or attempted to present "difficult" histories. There have been a number of exhibits that stirred controversy among Americans over the story of American history and who tells the story. Some of these shows included *Back of the Big House* at the Library of Congress in 1995, which attempted to examine slavery through plantation architecture. Another was the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum also in 1995. I discuss these exhibits and why exactly they were deemed controversial. With exhibits surrounding topics on slavery and America's role in warfare, there is a legitimate debate about what happened and how to publicly commemorate it. Especially when presenting this material to schoolchildren, these aspects of history might better serve older students in middle school or high school who have a larger knowledge base to understand the nuances of complicated ideas and events.

There are a number of works by public historians and historians dedicated to public history and controversial exhibits and museum topics. Julia Rose's book *Interpreting Difficult History at Museum and Historic Sites* (2016) addresses some museum exhibits that discussed difficult topics. She also lays out a methodological approach of how to discuss them at historic sites and museums.[1] *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (2006) offers a collection of essays on the

[1] Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016).
[2] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff*

topic of how to accurately and respectfully teach and represent slavery to the public along with real cases where different controversies occurred.[2] Public history also can mesh into the field of archaeology with Barbara Little and Paul Shackel's collection of essays entitled *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (2007), which relates to using archaeology educationally as a way to build relationships in communities and create engaged citizens.[3] These works and others discussing public history arise out of museum exhibit controversies from the 1990s and also the increasing interest for museum and historic sites to develop critical educational programming to connect visitors and students through their museums in better ways.

The second section of my thesis moves to the paper's main issue of nudity as an area of contention in American museums and institutions. Why is nudity controversial? More specifically why is it in some cases determined to be inappropriate for children? Who is arguing this? It is true that nudity in art has levels of suggestiveness. By this I mean that some artwork with nudity is meant to be provocative and even obscene, while other artists aspire to show artistic skill and merit like classical Greek nude sculptures. In many cases, there is a distinction. In this section, my goal will be to show how nudity in artwork has sparse evidence to support the belief that viewing nudity at a museum will harm the development of children. There is sparse scholarship dedicated to answering this question of nudity in art harming children, but there has been scholarship dedicated to answering this question of censorship more broadly. One book in particular is by lawyer Marjorie Heins, who has written extensively on the topic of the history of

---

[2] James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York and London: The New Press, 2006).
[3] Barbara Little and Paul Shackel, *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement* (Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2007).

censorship and the challenges within politics on these issues of censorship in the last few decades. Heins' book *Not in Front of the Children: 'Indecency,' Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth* (2001) argues that the reasoning for censorship of certain materials for children does not hold up when evaluated critically.[4]

Historian Gillian Frank's book *Save our Children* (forthcoming) takes a different approach. He focuses on the rise of religious-oriented conservative politics with Anita Bryant's campaign in Florida to show how that campaign and the religious right use parental fears to win their cause. In Bryant's case, she argued that implementing gay rights would be harmful to society and ultimately children. Her slogan became "Save our Children."[5] However uneducated this belief was, it nevertheless became powerful because it gave individuals like Bryant an argument in defense of society's own future. In presenting the surrounding context of nudity in art with a brief history of censorship in the United States and the culture wars in America with the rise of evangelical conservative arguments and political correctness, the episodes of controversies of nudity in art can be further dissected to show that little has been proven to insist that viewing nudity with art will in fact harm children and their development.

The third section will go further into the history of gender and sexuality in American politics. I will focus on the period of Branson's life as a way to understand what social changes Americans, particularly women, experienced. The Progressive Era, in which Branson lived, pushed women further into public and political spaces where

[4] Marjorie Heins, *Not in Front of the Children: 'Indecency,' Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001).
[5] Gillian Frank, *Save our Children: Conservative Sexual Politics in the United States, 1965-1990* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming).

they were able to initiate changes to improve society. Understanding the United States during Branson's life aids in providing Branson's artwork extended meaning.

The fourth section of my paper expands on the points from section two to consider some of the arguments from contemporary Christian religion perspectives on the issues surrounding nudity. One major concern for some Christians is whether or not it is ever okay to look at nudity in art. The consensus suggests that it depends. If the image is meant to arouse one, then it is not appropriate. If the image is not meant to be suggestive and is more about the naturalism of the body, then it is okay to look at the work. But how can someone with no education in art history decide whether an artist intended their artwork to be suggestive? It is problematic. Discussions about the concerns of pornography consistently arise out of these conversations as well.

In the final section of my paper, I propose a methodology I would use to teach artwork with nudity for a younger student audience. How does one go about introducing that subject? How does one discuss the art historical context of the pieces? After examining different museum's approaches and other methodologies, I find that students' interaction with nudity in art has to become a dialogue with a set of questions posed. In my own personal experience of guiding numerous tours for students and adults at the East Tennessee Historical Society, I have found that the best way to present an exhibit is through a shared dialogue with the visitors. Asking them questions throughout the tour is the best way for the audience to stay engaged, become comfortable to contribute ideas, and overall learn new concepts and facts. I will use the case of the fifth grade Christian school group that visited the Lloyd Branson exhibit at the East Tennessee Historical Society to propose how I would have included a conversation about the paintings with

nudity into the original tour. With the introduction of this approach overall, I aim to argue that challenging children to view nudity in artwork with historical context, in the same vein as adult visitors engaging with "difficult" histories at historic institutions, can be beneficial to their development in life.

CHAPTER TWO

MUSEUM EXHIBITS OF CONTROVERSY

There are museum exhibits that caused controversy among the public within the past few decades. In examining two that developed into national scandals, one can assess how museums and historical institutions have handled these complex situations and also how the professionals in the field have grown from those experiences. Although these exhibits were meant to provide historical information and thought to the public, some groups and individuals received them with strong condemnation. As a result, these exhibits were canceled. The challenge museums face when discussing "difficult" history or topics within their institution is many folds. There is the consideration of funding cuts, boycotts by the public, and most importantly, the reputation of the institution, on which all form the support of the institutions' existence. When sensitive topics are presented for an exhibit, the museum has to understand the responsibility it has to the public to get the information right and to present it in a way that creates an informed public.[6] However, sometimes the public is not ready to critically examine the past and has a different opinion on what museums are supposed to represent.

This section will discuss two museum exhibits that dealt with widespread national and subsequently international controversy. The first exhibit planned to present information and analysis about the end of World War II and mission of the Enola Gay at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in 1995. It received a fury of responses from some veterans and politicians who deemed the exhibit dishonorable to Americans

[6] Gardner and LaPaglia, *Public History: Essays from the Field* (Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 1999), 352.

who served during the war.[7] The second exhibit was displayed at the Library of Congress for a few hours before it was taken down also in 1995. It was titled *Back of the Big House: The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation*, based on the book by John Michael Vlach that discussed architectural design as it related to American slavery.[8]

The Smithsonian planned the Enola Gay exhibit to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The intended exhibit entitled *The Crossroads: The End of World War II, the Atomic Bomb, and the Cold War* never opened. The main idea surrounding the exhibit was to display the aircraft, critically examine the atomic bombing of Japan, and the beginning of the cold war.[9] Some Americans' views on this topic were one of victory, triumph, and technological achievement, while others wanted critical analysis on the harm done to Japanese civilians and its relationship to the Cold War. In a memo addressed to Martin Harwit, the museum's director, curator Tom Crouch asked, "Do you want to do an exhibit intended to make veterans feel good, or do you want an exhibition that will lead our visitors to think about the consequences of the atomic bombing of Japan? Frankly, I don't think we can do both."[10] When positioned in a museum setting, artifacts and history cannot be depicted in a narrow, celebratory mindset. There should be critical and objective analysis. Although other individuals saw the Enola Gay as "a lifesaver, a peacemaker, and a totem of American technological triumph," it is

---

[7] Debbie Ann Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit," *Perspectives on History* December 2003, accessed December 10, 2016, https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2003/historians-protest-new-enola-gay-exhibit#.
[8] John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993).
[9] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."
[10] Edward Gallagher, *Lehigh University Digital Library*, "About, Introduction" on The Enola Gay Controversy, http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/enola/about/intro/.

the museum institution's duty to discuss those aspects and take them into consideration.[11] Museums are not only institutions of renowned objects and ideas; they are also places of educational thought and learning.

After news spread about the proposed exhibit, outrage from other people and groups ensued against the exhibit. Members of the United States Congress and veterans' groups like the Air Force Association and the American Legion created national uproar over the exhibit they saw critical of the decision to drop the atomic bomb.[12] After some months, the museum made the decision to cut the critical evaluation from the text of the exhibit and only display the fuselage of the Enola Gay with minor text.[13] With threats of budget cuts, boycotts, and calls for Smithsonian employees to resign, the museum decided that the originally scripted exhibit would not be able to serve the public.[14]

During this controversy, Texas Republican Representative Sam Johnson did not agree with the originally proposed exhibit saying that the Smithsonian is "not a teaching institution per se, which is what some wanted it to be maybe four or five years ago. It's a museum. It's America's showplace."[15] It is evident from this lawmaker's statement that the idea of what the museum, in this case the Smithsonian, is supposed to represent is different from other people's ideas of the museum's role in society. Museums are absolutely places of learning. The mission of the Smithsonian National Air and Space

---

[11] Arthur Hirsch, "Deadly Courier Retains its Place in History, *Baltimore Sun*, March 24, 1994, A1.
[12] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."
[13] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."
[14] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."
[15] Kathleen Koch, "Some Museum Exhibits Held in Check for Content," *CNN* December 29, 1995. http://www.cnn.com/US/9512/unpc_exhibits/.

Museum is to "commemorate, educate, and inspire."[16] Inspire is further interpreted by the mission statement to mean "inspiring people to foster appreciation for the importance of flight to humanity."[17] Johnson's claim that the Smithsonian was not a place of learning, but instead a "showpiece" marked a sharp divide between museum professionals and those outside the museum profession who had other ideas on how the museums were suppose to serve the public.

The vast majority of historians, museum professionals, and other academics who weighed in made the case that the exhibit was not wrong to provide critical commentary on the history of the end of World War II. Rather, part of being an engaged, well-rounded citizen is to examine all the facts of the story as well as the arguments academic scholars present. In the exhibit's script, the museum did not take a side in its proposed content on Enola Gay; it simply planned to present more than one point of view. But for veterans' groups, any critical analysis was unacceptable.[18]

It proves difficult to many Americans who risked their lives in service of the military to be questioned later by their own institutions and citizens. Some Americans who served during World War II and their families were offended and felt personally attacked as a result of the proposed exhibit. The Smithsonian was aware of the critiques that could result from the exhibit because they had worked with veterans' groups while planning the exhibition. They were working together to make sure that their voices were heard. Nevertheless, the history was very much personal to individuals who served in the

[16] *Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum*, "About," http://airandspace.si.edu/about.
[17] *Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum*, "About."
[18] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."

military, and the original exhibit script did not represent the military and the nation as the groups envisioned.

In discussing the changes made to the original proposed exhibit, several sections were cut due to public outcry and response from veterans' groups. The items eliminated included, a lengthy discussion of the postwar nuclear race, areas that emphasized the horrible effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan, and estimates of the number of casualties that might have resulted if the United States would have invaded Japan instead of dropping the bombs.[19]

It is challenging for museums to fully represent "difficult" parts of the past. With this example and others what are museum professionals and even school teachers supposed to do with this situation? The content has to be factual, ethical, and even sensitive. It proves a tough balance to master depending on the historical topic.

In partial response to the Enola Gay exhibit controversy, several professional organizations, including the Society for History in the Federal Government, the National Council on Public History, the Organization of American Historians, and the American Historical Association created a set of "Standards for Museum Exhibits dealing with Historical Subjects" during the late 1990s.[20] They recommended five points to aid museum professionals.

1) Exhibits should be grounded in scholarship, marked by intellectual integrity, and subjected to rigorous peer review. Evidence considered in preparing the exhibit

[19] Neil A. Lewis, "Smithsonian Substantially Alters Enola Gay Exhibit After Criticism," *New York Times* October 1, 1994, http://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/01/us/smithsonian-substantially-alters-enola-gay-exhibit-after-criticism.html.
[20] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."

may include objects, written documentation, oral histories, images, works of art, music, and folklore.

2) At the outset of the exhibit process, museums should engage stakeholders in any exhibit and may wish to involve their representatives in the planning process.
3) Museums and other institutions funded with public monies should be keenly aware of the diversity within communities and constituencies that they serve.
4) When an exhibit addresses a controversial subject, it should acknowledge the existence of competing points of view. The public should be able to see that history is a changing process of interpretation and reinterpretation formed through gathering and reviewing evidence, drawing conclusions, and presenting the conclusions in text or exhibit format.
5) Museum administrators should support the work of curators who create historical exhibits produced according to these standards.[21]

These standards take into consideration a range of issues that could serve any museum institution when presenting and interpreting "difficult" histories. Number five stands as an imperative point. If curators' work is done according to the guidelines, the museum administrators should do whatever it takes to support their employees' work. Although there are cases where politics and public outcry become tangled in well-intentioned exhibits, the administrators carry the task of defending their museum's work. With the Enola Gay exhibit, the threats of job loss and funding cuts were too much of a risk for the museum administrators. It is easy to criticize leaders for some of the actions

[21] "Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects," last modified 2017, https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-and-standards-of-the-profession/standards-for-museum-exhibits-dealing-with-historical-subjects.

they take. However, through continued dialogue along with the foundation of codes of standards like this, it is the hope the museums will not have to compromise their reputation in the face of political damage on a national scale like the Enola Gay exhibit. Historian Michael Hogan aptly sums it up in his book *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (1996) stating, "The issue is whether or not the nation's history can be openly and critically discussed or whether organized political pressure will encourage censorship and promote a false consciousness about the past."[22]

The exhibit did finally open in summer 1995, but it had been scaled back significantly. In 2003, the Smithsonian announced the opening the new National Air and Space Museum at Dulles Airport that would become the permanent home for the Enola Gay. This announcement opened up the debate about its history again as the Committee for a National Discussion of Nuclear History and Current Policy challenged the institution's plans to exhibit the Enola Gay as a "magnificent technological achievement" without discussing the historical context.[23] The Smithsonian responded to this statement by saying that the label used for the Enola Gay was "precisely the same kind used for other airplanes and spacecraft in the museum" and did not "glorify or vilify the role this aircraft played in history."[24] They also insisted that the artifact and the accompanying text adhered to the museum's mission to "memorialize the national development of aviation and space flight."[25] But did the institution truly fulfill the other part of its

---

[22] Michael Hogan, *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 61.
[23] Edward Gallagher, *Lehigh University Digital Library*, "The Enola Gay Controversy, Round Five," http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/enola/r5/2003/.
[24] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."
[25] Doyle, "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit."

mission statement to "educate?"[26] The aircraft today continues to be housed in the Smithsonian with the same text devoid of historical context.

During the same period as the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, another exhibit controversy erupted five blocks away at the Library of Congress. *Back of the Big House* focused on the architectural significance of Southern plantations during the nineteenth century. Based on the academic book *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (1993) by American studies scholar John Michael Vlach, his book includes hundreds of black and white photographs and drawings from the Historic American Buildings Survey Archive that focus on the design of southern plantations constructed during the nineteenth century. The Historic American Buildings Archive is made available through the Historic American Buildings Survey, which was conducted a government program documenting examples of early architecture and historic structures by photographs and drawings beginning in 1933.[27] The collection includes about 23,000 properties in the northern and southern United States.[28] These images coupled with testimonies from the Federal Writers' Project collection focus on the perspective of former slaves, not the owners who designed the spaces. How did enslaved African-Americans see these spaces? How did they cope with their environment? Vlach argues that although slaves did not design the plantations, they used the spaces in a way to help them deal with working, living, and surviving there. In other words, the slaves

---

[26] *Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum*, "About."
[27] *National Archives*, "Records of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)/ Historic American Engineering Record (HAER Division)," last modified May 19, 2015, https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/515.html.
[28] John Michael Vlach, "The Last Great Taboo Subject: Exhibiting Slavery at the Library of Congress," in *Slavery and Public* History, ed. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton (New York and London: The New Press, 2006), 59.

"claimed and modified [the spaces] for their own domestic purposes to provide them with their own sense of place."[29]

The book became a museum exhibit within the next few years, which included many photographs of the plantation structures and of the people who lived and worked there. Former enslaved peoples' testimonies from the 1930s and 1940s were placed throughout the exhibit as well. It was an honest and scholarly representation of the harsh realities of slavery in the United States. The exhibit started as a traveling exhibit that went to four venues in South Carolina, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Arkansas before it made its way to the Library of Congress. But when the exhibit opened at the library in 1995, it created negative uproar so intense that the exhibit was closed and the materials removed the same day. Why would this exhibit that tells the history of slavery through the eyes of former slaves be considered offensive? Who was upset?

The reason why this exhibit was not well received at the Library of Congress was due to the complaints of many of the African-American employees who worked for the library. The episode may be further explained by JoAnn Jenkins, the library's senior adviser for diversity at the time who said to *The New York Times*, "You got off the elevator and there was, this six-foot screen, 'Back of the Big House,' and this older black gentleman crouched down, hitting you in the face."[30] Because of the visual nature of Vlach's book, the exhibit was covered in large, direct images of Southern slavery. Most images showed the architecture of the plantation structures, but there were images of

---

[29] John Michael Vlach, *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, 236.

[30] Karen De Witt, "After Protest, Library of Congress Closes Exhibition on Slavery," *The New York Times*, December 21, 1995, accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/21/us/after-protests-library-of-congress-closes-exhibition-on-slavery.html.

older, former slaves whose faces offered an impactful reminder of how difficult their lives had been. There were also images of slaves working and standing in front of their living quarters. One of the male, African-American Library of Congress employees, talking about a photograph of an overseer directing cotton pickers, went on record to say, "It reminded me of the white overseers here at the Library of Congress looking down over us to make sure we're in the fields doing our work."[31] There is no question that these images were painful for some people to examine.

Jenkins said, "You have to look at this in terms of the Library of Congress, its strange relations with its employees in terms of race."[32] She was referring to a 1982 class-action suit stating that the library discriminated against its black and female employees. The case had settled for $8 million, but many of the employees had not yet received any money.[33]

News of the exhibit closing soon garnered national attention. To resolve the employee complaints, within a month, the exhibit opened again but at a different location. It stayed in Washington D.C., but relocated to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library. George Martin, who was the art librarian at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library told *The Washington Post*, "Something like that should have been shown. It's not until those kind of things are exposed or out in the open that ones gets an opportunity to heal. It's part of our history. It's a reality."[34] The scandal of the exhibit

[31] Vlach, "The Last Great Taboo Subject: Exhibiting Slavery at the Library of Congress," in *Slavery and Public* History, ed. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, 62.
[32] De Witt, "After Protests, Library of Congress closes Exhibition on Slavery."
[33] De Witt, "After Protests, Library of Congress closes Exhibition on Slavery."
[34] Linton Weeks, "Plantation Life Display Revived," *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1996, accessed December 10, 2016,

closing at the Library of Congress proved to increase attendance and coverage at the next opening. The traveling exhibit made eighteen more trips around the country at various institutions until it ceased.[35]

Due to the circumstances at the Library of Congress in which the employee-employer environment was hostile, the exhibit provoked offense and misunderstanding towards the staff. At the previous institutions at which the exhibit stopped before it came to the Library of Congress, the exhibit did not attract controversy to the point of closure. What is important to note is that this was a traveling exhibition. Therefore, it traveled to different institutions. The environment of the Library of Congress was not the same environment as The University of Tennessee's Hodges Library in Knoxville or the environment of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington D.C. One of the factors that museums consider before exhibiting a show is if it will be relevant to their community. Will the public come to the show? What will they think about it? This traveling exhibit did not take those local ideas into consideration as much because the people involved saw the show as important to the national or regional audience as a whole. Displaying Vlach's exhibit at the Library of Congress proved ill conceived due to the history of employer-employee mistrust, rather then how the exhibit stood on its own accord.

After the occurrence of both of these exhibit controversies at the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, scholarship dedicated to

---

https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/01/04/plantation-life-display-revived/14cdb51c-4cf4-4140-9b92-e755ca94ab71/?utm_term=.ba8eaf942acd.

[35] *George Washington University*, "American Studies in the News," Accessed December 10, 2016, https://www2.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/about.html.

discussing public history and "difficult" histories for museums and historic sites became increasingly available. Among the best examples of work pertaining to this subject are James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton's collection of essays, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (2006) and Julia Rose's *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites* (2016). Each draws connections from the field of memory studies and psychology while also recounting personal examples from working in the field of public history and history to present information that many museum education departments need to properly train their docents and tour guides. *Slavery and Public History* even includes a chapter written by Vlach discussing the controversy of the "Back of the Big House" exhibit closure at the Library of Congress. Along with discussing the topics that are difficult to discuss with the public, they also offer guidance for museum professionals and public historians on how to discuss these topics with the public. Both show that the most effective way to discuss these topics at museums and historic sites is through conversations and dialogue with visitors.

Other examples of public historians working towards the implementation of "difficult" histories are archaeologists. In discussing the case of the home site of musician Scott Joplin, archaeologists Tim Baumann and Valerie Altizer along with historians Andrew Hurley and Victoria Love argue that Joplin's home should no longer ignore the aspects of prostitution, racial injustices, or even sexually transmitted diseases in Joplin's story. Although these factors in Joplin's life prove challenging to discuss with visitors, only providing the celebratory history prevents educational learning

opportunities.[36] Many of these difficult occurrences of the past are in the past, but they remain closer to current day affairs than largely understood.

With the debates from the Enola Gay exhibit and the *Back of the Big House* exhibit, legitimate arguments exist as to why people believed they should not be displayed. There were conflicting views on the types of history that should be represented, and the widespread debate provoked a national discussion about history and its meaning. Some lawmakers and veterans against the Enola Gay exhibit believed that the Smithsonian was unjust in bringing critical evaluation to the front. They were adamant that the American museum was out of line for creating an exhibit that publicly questioned the decision. Although the museum was not intentionally attempting to demonize the American military or nation, they did try to offer critical thought on the outcome of the situation and what it means to make decisions on that level.

The *Back of the Big House* exhibit was interpreted by some African-American employees at the Library of Congress to be representative of their treatment while working there under white authority. The exhibit made the staff feel like they were still oppressed by unfair actions. The sight of the images of slavery was too painful for the staff to encounter. However, many of the staff who did not support the exhibit misinterpreted Vlach's thesis, which brought attention to the perspective of enslaved African-Americans. Had the staff been given the opportunity to have a conversation with Vlach, it is possible that many of them would have been more receptive to the exhibit and its new, powerful interpretation of that past. Nevertheless, the exhibit did provoke

[36] Baumann, Timothy, Andrew Hurley, Valerie Altizer, and Victoria Love. "Interpreting Uncomfortable History at the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site in St. Louis, Missouri," *The Public Historian* Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 37-66.

painful and somber images of a past that was evidently not very far from the minds of the staff at the library.

CHAPTER THREE

NUDITY IN ART AS A CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT

Is nudity in art controversial? One might say that it depends on the level of suggestiveness. In some countries like France for example, the simple presence of nude bodies in art is hardly controversial. In fact, it is not uncommon to see a magazine cover with a fully nude woman on public newsstands in Paris. In the United States, at almost every grocery store, there will be magazines at the checkout line. Many of the magazines may have a woman on the cover in a bathing suit or a short dress. Those magazines are usually covered with cardboard because there is the risk of children coming into contact with the images while shopping with their parents. There are no cardboard coverings for magazines in France or any country in Europe. The issue of nudity is not contested there. In America, it has been a topic of polarizing discussion for decades.

There have been recent instances in the United States where nudity in art has been an issue for children visiting art museums or historic institutions, like the case at the East Tennessee Historical Society mentioned in the introduction of this thesis. It is important to note that not every instance of museum censorship is reported in the newspapers. Had I not walked into the Lloyd Branson gallery last spring at that specific moment during the day, I would not have known about the censorship of the paintings. Although there have been a few news reports on art museum censorship in the United States, the museum professionals and interns who work at the museums and historic institutions are the people who are most aware of the problems of censorship.

In 2006, a fifth-grade art teacher, Ms. Sydney McGee, took her students on a principal-approved field trip to the Dallas Museum of Art. A few other teachers and parent chaperones accompanied the group, and all seemed to have gone according to plan during the trip. The following day at school, the principal suspended McGee from her job without pay. The reason was due to the fact that one student on the field trip saw one art piece that contained a nude, which they reported to their parents. The work in question was a classical nude sculpture. In short, the parents told the school about their anger over their child viewing the piece at the statue, and the principal took action against McGee. The principal and superintendent of the school insist that McGee was dismissed for other reasons. But due to McGee's long twenty-eight year history working at the school and her good job evaluations through the years, it simply did not add up with the timing of the incident.[37]

One year earlier at the Pratt Museum in Homer, Alaska, a group of second graders from an elementary school planned to tour the natural history institution. One of the artworks in the gallery displays an ivory sculpture of a mythical sea goddess that shows the figures' nude body. The school asked the museum if they could cover the statue. The museum compromised and let teachers place a drape over the exhibit case if the museum could have a conversation with the students about censorship.[38]

Even years earlier in 1988, several field trips to Laguna Art Museum in California were cancelled by the school administrators due to controversial works in a temporary

---

[37] Ralph Blumenthal, "Museum Field Trip Deemed too Revealing" *The New York Times*, September 30, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/30/education/30teacher.html.
[38] Michael Armstrong, "Conversation on Censorship continues Museum Dialogue," *Homer News*, June 23, 2005, http://homernews.com/stories/062305/art_0623art003.shtml.

exhibit gallery they considered to be inappropriate for the students.[39] The works in question were contemporary and not classical nudes like the one contested at the Dallas Museum of Art. The artwork of concern in this museum were Neo-Expressionist paintings from the 1980s in an exhibit titled *Morality Tales: History Painting in the 1980s*. The subjects in the paintings selected showcase ideas from "prepubescent prostitution in urban America to mainline feminism."[40] One of the paintings by Eric Fischl poses controversy even to adult audiences with his work "Education," which shows a completely nude woman masturbating while a young boy next to her looks at her.[41] These are very different from the Greek and Roman statues and classical paintings of biblical scenes. The question is should students be allowed to see these kinds of paintings at museums on a school field trip? This is where it becomes a broader question of concern. Classical nudes are one thing, but art depicting direct nudity explicit with sex acts and ideas concerning prostitution are another. However, if the school group in question was high school students, it might be worth the school to consider visiting the exhibit because the students would be at an age where they would be more aware and informed of what the world really looks like outside their community and time. The historical context of the artwork displayed would also connect with various topics they learn in their history courses. For elementary students, their education level has not

[39] Randy Lewis, "Art as Tool in Helping Children Understand Life's Weirdness," *LA Times*, February 21, 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-02-21/entertainment/ca-44025_1_art-museums.
[40] Zan Dubin, "Morality in '80s Subject of Museum Exhibit," *LA Times* November 8, 1987, http://articles.latimes.com/1987-11-08/entertainment/ca-21706_1_laguna-art-museum.
[41] Dubin, "Morality in '80s Subject of Museum Exhibit."

prepared them enough to understand the ideas, themes, and context represented in the particular art exhibition *Morality Tales*.

The issue of age appropriateness is not simple. First, students vary in maturity level and cognitive ability. One museum that discusses age appropriateness for their institution is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. Although this museum is a history museum and not an art museum, it exposes visitors to real horrors in the world that include photographs, videos, artifacts, and various other pieces. The museum says that with elementary school students, they are not yet able to place individual stories into larger historical contexts.[42] Older students have studied European history and are able to understand more from their interaction with the museum. Younger children are not restricted from the museum, but there is a special children's exhibit for ages eight and up. However, their reasoning on children's brain development and America's social studies curriculum standards suggests that their museum better serves older students in middle school or high school who have already been learning about the Holocaust in their classes.

The National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee also discusses age appropriateness for their institution. They created a family guide for parents to use before taking their children to the museum. The museum recommends that the permanent exhibits should be viewed by children twelve and older.[43] The content of the museum does include lynching, violent police attacks, and peaceful protesters being

---

[42] "Age Appropriateness," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/age-appropriateness.

[43] "Family Guide-National Civil Rights Museum," National Civil Rights Museum, 2014, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/Assets/2417/FamilyGuide2014_singlePgs.pdf.

physically harmed. Again, the museum does not say that children are not allowed to view the entire museum, but it does warn parents that children might not be mentally ready to understand some of the content. Much of the content is disturbing even for adults and justifiably so.

Age appropriateness dialogue at art museums is not as much of a conversation as it is at history museums or similar institutions. It does not come up as often as when one should teach their children about the Holocaust or the history of African-American struggle in the United States. But many artworks do tell stories relevant to historical events. The artwork, like from the temporary exhibit at the Laguna Art Museum in California, offers commentary on the ills and harsh realities of society today. Sometimes the art takes a bit more time to unwrap than straightforward photographs from history, but that educational process of interpreting art builds critical thinking and observational skills. Like the Holocaust Museum and the Civil Rights Museum, art can teach children about history and the world around them. It is important, though, to assess age-appropriateness just like one would before visiting "difficult" history institutions. If the child is not ready to see or hear about certain issues in history or events in the world, they will not be comfortable during the learning process. The student has to be at a comfortable maturity level before the lesson plan can take place. Otherwise, the learning experience will not likely benefit them as intended.

In an article discussing the school field trip cancellations in California art museums, journalist Randy Lewis points out the censorship might be worse for those students than being able to engage in the art at the museum. He poses,

> "What happened to the concept of education that encourages individuals to think, that exposes students to the widest range of ideas, rather than merely supplying career training? Without that, education becomes so safe it is passionless (not to mention boring), and art is once again shunted off, de facto, to the realm of esoterica."[44]

Lewis argues that students should be exposed to all kinds of art as a way to help them understand the world along with their normal classroom curriculum. If discussed the correct way, students will benefit from seeing art that does not always show the world as a harmonious, organized place. Not all art is pretty or aesthetically pleasing to the eye. He does not advocate for elementary school students to see extremely graphic or disturbing art. Rather, he is simply attempting to ask the question of why should slightly controversial artwork be censored from students who are progressing through a stage in their life where they are learning about how the world around them has never been a perfect place.

Lewis is not a psychologist, museum professional, educator, or academic scholar, but his thoughts reflect others who think censorship of art or history to students is troubling. How does one balance age appropriateness and legitimate censorship? Attorney Marjorie Heins, founder and director of The Free Expression Policy Project, advocates against "censorship designed to shield adolescents and children from controversial art, information, and ideas."[45] Heins has written extensive articles about

---

[44] Lewis, "Art as Tool in Helping Children Understand Life's Weirdness."
[45] "About FEPP," The Free Expression Policy Project, accessed November 10, 2016, http://fepproject.org/fepp/aboutfepp.html.

different kinds of censorship, including Internet, advertising, television, and school plays imposed in society today.

Her most detailed discussion, *Not in Front of the Children: 'Indecency,' Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth* (2001), traces the evolution of censorship in the United States from a strong legal history perspective. Heins traces the Victorian era's ideas on child development, Comstock's vehement ideas on restricting all "obscene" material, and recent politicians' attempts to censor certain material in the name of protecting youth. Her main questions that she poses are "In what sense is it harmful? And does it justify censorship?"[46]

Many of the arguments for censorship assume potential harm to children. Heins gives several examples of this. One being when judges in a case in 1998 North Carolina ruled that school officials did not violate a high school drama teacher's right to academic freedom when they cancelled her acting assignment for a school play which addressed issues of divorce, out of wedlock pregnancy, and homosexuality.[47] The judges cited a passage to argue the case from Plato's *Republic*, which states,

> "A young person cannot judge what is allegorical and what is literal; anything that he receives into his mind at that age is likely to become indelible and unalterable; and therefore it is most important that the tales which the young first hear should be models of virtuous thoughts."[48]

---

[46] Marjorie Heins, *Not in Front of the Children: "Indecency," Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 5.
[47] Heins, *Not in Front of the Children*, 3.
[48] *Boring V. Buncombe County Bd. Of Educ.,* 136 F.3d 364, 370 (4th Cir. 1998), quoting Plato's *Republic: Book II* (Benjamin Jowett, trans.) (New York: Walter J. Black, 1942), p.281, quoted in Heins, *Not in Front of the Children*, 3.

In examining the ruling of this case based on this reasoning, was this a good justification of censorship? Heins cites Henry Jenkins, an academic in American media studies as saying "censorship to preserve the myth of childhood innocence fulfills the 'symbolic demands' of adults; it shifts attention 'away from material problems affecting children and onto the symbolic terrain.'"[49] In other words, how does one decide that something truly harms children? It seems like an impossible question to reach a shared conclusion given that not all children are the same.

The argument that nudity in art will somehow impair children is a powerful one. Many arguments persuade parents to be concerned about protecting their child. For example, during the 1970s, entertainer Anita Bryant entered the political sphere when Florida decided to pass a measure that prohibited discrimination based on sexual or affectional preference. Bryant advocated for the repeal the law and was successful, arguing that the presence of laws in favor of same-sex relationships threatened the safety of children. She became a part of a campaigned that gained many supporters with one of the slogans being "Save our Children."[50]

In 2002, the issue of nudity in art entered the political arena in the public sphere. Former Attorney General John Ashcroft decided that the *Spirit of Justice* statue along with the *Majesty of Law* statue resting in the Department of Justice since the 1930s was not appropriate. Ashcroft did not like giving speeches and being photographed or filmed with the pieces behind him. He came to the solution that the statues should be covered.

---

[49] Henry Jenkins, "Introduction," in *The Children's Culture Reader,* supra n. 12, pp.1, 14, quoted in Heins, *Not in Front of the Children*, 11.
[50] Gillian Frank, "The Civil Rights of Parents: Race and Conservative Politics in Anita Bryan's Campaign against Gay Rights in 1970s Florida," *Journal of Sexuality* vol. 22 no. 1 (January 2013): 128.

The cost of this was a staggering $8,000 for the drapery.[51] The cost is testament to how uncomfortable the statues made Ashcroft. This decision is interesting because it had nothing to do with the reasoning of children being harmed by seeing these statutes, which had been in that building for over fifty years. Although these partially nude statues were not housed in an art museum, they were placed in a public space where many government officials gave speeches and discussed important current affairs. They would subsequently be photographed or filmed in front of the statues during these events. Although it is largely uncertain as to why exactly these statues were covered during the Bush administration when they had not been an issue in the past, the covering of these statues can be categorized as an example of censorship of nudity in art.

In analyzing these instances of covered public artwork, canceled school field trips, and the cases claiming certain material will harm children, it brings one closer to piecing together why censoring nudity in art to grade school students continues to be a polarizing issue today. Examining how historical institutions develop guides for parents and schools on age appropriateness of their museum's content serves as a tool to understanding where students are at mentally during their development and how to present the museum's content in a way that is beneficial to their learning process and outcomes. Art museums have not developed age appropriateness guides for their collections or galleries that present nudity in art as often as historical institutions have done with their "difficult" history exhibits and collections. Because there is no justifiable evidence that nudity in art will harm the development of children, there is little reason for art museums to create content justifying the benefits of teaching nudity in art.

---

[51] "Justice curtains Naked Statues," *The Washington Times*, January 29, 2002, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/jan/29/20020129-035157-6576r/.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN AMERICAN POLITICS

Discussing the history of gender and sexuality, especially during Lloyd Branson's lifetime, is beneficial when examining his art. To place Branson's art into historical context, even the paintings without nudity, can be informative in this field of history.

Branson lived during the middle of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. During the early to mid nineteenth century, the majority of American women were confined to a role within their homes. Historian Barbara Welter defined this circumstance as the "cult of true womanhood."[52] Taking care of the children and making sure the household operated efficiently served as the full time Republican duties of American wives and mothers.[53] Gender roles rapidly changed and were challenged during this period. Women increasingly entered the public and political sphere inside and outside of their homes during a period of increased determination for progressive policies.[54]

Women were not permitted to vote in the United States until 1920, but in the decades leading up to that point, many women greatly advocated for social change. Women attempted to make up for the lack of programs and social workers in areas on which men in politics did not focus, such as child labor laws, women prisoners, the

---

[52] Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* vol. 18, no. 2 (July 1966): 151.
[53] Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *The American Historical Review* vol. 89, no. 3 (June 1984): 625.
[54] Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," 620-621.

homeless, and prohibition.[55] These were issues that affected women's lives and their families, so they were compelled to improve their society at large. Many women organizations and clubs rose during this period as well. Some of the United States' most famous historic homes were saved by women's groups, including George Washington's Mount Vernon in 1858 and the Blount Mansion in Knoxville, Tennessee during the 1920s.

As women became more directly involved in local and national politics, the Progressive Era ignited. The major Progressive Era reforms enacted included the income tax, citizens' right to choose senators, prohibition, and women's right to vote.[56] Although these laws were put into place by the men during the time, women's voices were heard through public commentary, protests, and also through their fathers, husbands, and brothers. In fact, the state of Tennessee became the deciding thirty-sixth state to vote yes for women's right to vote nationally after the change of mind from a young Tennessee politician, Harry Burn. Burn's mother wrote him a letter on the day of the vote attempting to convince her son that voting yes was the right decision.[57]

Branson lived in Tennessee during a lively moment in history when women were granted the right to vote. It is unclear what Branson's thoughts were on all of the current affairs during his time, but one does have the paintings he created. Branson's work does not offer direct commentary from the time period. Most of his paintings are peaceful,

---

[55] Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," 620-621.
[56] "Reforming Their World: Women in the Progressive Era," *National Women's History Museum*, accessed February 1, 2017, https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/introprogressive.html.
[57] Carol Lynn Yellin and Janann Sherman, *The Perfect 36: Tennessee Delivers Woman Suffrage*, ed. By Ilene Jones-Cornwell (Oak Ridge Tennessee, 1998).

pastel colored landscapes and portraits of prominent members of Knoxville society. This is the area in which he earned his living through portraiture, decorative artwork for homes, and various advertisements for products.

One portrait that stands out against the others is the painting of Ellen McClung (1893-1992) from 1920 who was the great-great granddaughter of Knoxville's first permanent white settler James White. The painting presents McClung as a young woman in her white debutante gown looking outside towards the Tennessee River.[58] She is separated from the outside by a heavy blue curtain. Although the blue curtain serves as an aesthetically pleasing pictorial quality for the framing of McClung, this aspect can be interpreted to see McClung as a woman shielded from the outside world. She is placed safely behind the curtain to protect her from the outside world and its elements. Although women were given the right to vote in 1920 when this painting was completed, women were still largely encouraged to make caring for their husband and children their primary duty in society.

Another Branson painting from the exhibit reflected women's roles at the time. *Women at Work* from 1891, depicts five women working outside to clean picked fruit. Although these women are shown working outside their home, they are still confined to their domestic sphere. Men are absent from the painting leading the viewer to believe that this group of women placed in the rural scene is close to home.

Understanding how the historical context of Branson's lifetime entered his art offers another avenue for students to examine the exhibit in a way that goes beyond the artwork and into histories that they are already learning in school. Connecting these

[58] *The East Tennessee Historical Society*, "Celebrating a Life in Tennessee Art." http://www.easttnhistory.org/lloydbranson.

larger historical themes along with discussions of the paintings themselves offers students an understanding of art through multiple perspectives.

CHAPTER FIVE

THOUGHTS ON NUDITY IN ART

FROM THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

As noted earlier, the elementary school that visited the East Tennessee Historical Society for the Lloyd Branson exhibit that spring day was a Christian school. It is a possibility that the issue of nudity in some of the Branson art was troubling to the school or parents because of their religion. However, as discussed in the previous chapter with other cancelled school field trips on similar issues, those schools were not religious-affiliated. The issue of nudity in art reaches across both public and private schools. However, examining the Christian perspective on the controversy of nudity in art offers an avenue to explore their reasoning behind censoring certain artworks.

In attempting to find a Christian perspective on nudity in art, there are many different materials one can find. The most frequent instance is information from blog posts and various Christian websites. For example, one website post entitled "Should Kids see Nude Art? Should you?" dates to 2015 and is from a Christian Internet safety website called Covenant Eyes. The most striking factor in this post is how quick the author is to mention pornography when she is supposed to be discussing art at museums. The author begins by discussing how nude art has been apart of society for a long period of time. She then states,

> "As a parent, you might hesitate and wonder whether you should be allowing your children to see these images. After all, we're becoming more and more conscious

that pornography does great harm to children and to adults and will go to great lengths to protect our children from exposure of naked images."[59]

Why does pornography become an immediate concern when the topic is supposed to be focused on nudity in art at museums? If an art exhibit at a museum shows images that are graphic or resemble pornography, like the Laguna Art Museum exhibit discussed earlier, the museum will make sure to inform visitors. Nevertheless, the author offers a distinction of the difference between nude art and pornography. If the image is designed to arouse a person sexually, then it is pornography. If the image's purpose is to show the human form with "an air of innocence and beauty," then it is not pornography.[60] The author offers the advice that if the image is under her definition of pornography, then it is best not to look at the image. If children should be allowed to look at nude art, she says that it is up to the discretion of the parents. If parents do decide to visit a museum and look at some of the art with nudity, the author says that it could offer a unique learning opportunity to "show the wonder of God's creation."[61]

The post from this website indicates that pornography and the perceived potential harm that it can create is a concern for some Christians. It is such a major concern that they want to make sure that the nudity in art at museums would not fall under the category of pornography. However, who decides if an artwork is meant to arouse someone? There are indeed grey areas here that are left up to the interpretation of the individuals involved.

---

[59] Caitlin Bootsma, "Should Kids see Nude Art? Should you?" from Covenant Eyes: Internet Accountability and Filtering, Oct. 13, 2015, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.covenanteyes.com/2015/10/13/should-kids-see-nude-art-should-you/.
[60] Bootsma, "Should Kids see Nude Art? Should you?"
[61] Bootsma, "Should Kids see Nude Art? Should you?"

Last fall, a piece in a news bulletin of The Association of Classical and Christian Schools raised this question of nudity in art. The author, Matthew Clark, is an art teacher at an affiliated school in Pennsylvania who holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master of Arts degree in printmaking. In the article, Clark describes a man named John who, while visiting an art museum, becomes distressed when he encounters art with nudity. Clark states,

> "He finds himself wondering if he should leave the museum in a state of disillusioned protest. As a Christian, John understands the need to shun pornography; but what he is seeing is not Hollywood at its X-rated worst, it is Western Civilization."[62]

Clark begins his article much like the previous perspective from the Christian accountability website. He first brings in a discussion addressing pornography, recognizing how often pornography and nudity are conflated. Clark goes further in that he says individuals have to understand the context of the artwork in question to decide if it is okay to look at it. But how is one to understand the artistic context, if one holds little knowledge of art history?

In deciding if an artwork is not appropriate to view, Clark notes one still has to study the image in their process of deciding. Interestingly, he says, "If our education is to have any value we must confront opposing worldviews…the sin does not necessarily occur when we look at such material, it happens when we approve of it."[63] For Clark, context is key to deciding if an artwork is appropriate to view or not. On deciding if it is

---

[62] Matthew Clark, "A Christian Perspective on Nudity in Art," *Classis: The Bulletin of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools* vol. 11, no. 1 (Jan. 2004): 1, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.accsedu.org/filerequest/2308.pdf.
[63] Clark, "A Christian Perspective on Nudity in Art," 2.

okay for children to view nudity in art, he makes the assertion that children should be exposed to it from an early age with understanding that contexts can differ.[64]

In the case of the Branson paintings with nudity at the East Tennessee Historical Society, context is important with these paintings. The paintings offer a story to tell. The images of the nude women are placed in a scene with detailed backgrounds that present a complex scene. One of the paintings depicting nudity happened to be a scene with a biblical context because Mary Magdalene is referenced in the title. The other Branson painting with the reclined woman may be more suggestive than the Magdalene scene because the woman is reclined, but the scene is not comforting. There is a hideous monster in the background, so there is the notion that the scene could not be from real life. Aside from the artist's story represented in these paintings, the historical context of when the works were completed also offers an educational opportunity to learn about how the paintings fit into Branson's lifetime.

It is unknown if these paintings would be labeled as pornography by the Christian perspective. What is known is that these paintings tell a larger narrative than a simple figure of a nude male or female. The paintings contain women that are nude from above the waist. However, because of the context of the paintings, there is a larger purpose than simply to show a partial nude female figure.

The Christian perspective proves difficult to understand fully because artwork with nudity is left up to the interpretation of the individual to determine if it is appropriate to view or not. And if one were to determine if a piece was inappropriate or not, would they not have to hold a knowledge of what pornography looks like? In the process of

[64] Clark, "A Christian Perspective on Nudity in Art," 3.

deciding, they have to study the art for some period of time to reach their debatable conclusion.

One of the best ways for people to view artwork with nudity is through the guidance of a tour with the museum's informed guide or educator. Through historical and art historical context, the art develops in the viewer's mind through an educational process. The next section discusses a methodological process in which to engage students with artwork in nudity to benefit their critical thinking skills and develop their observational skills.

CHAPTER SIX

PROPOSAL FOR A METHODOLOGY

This section offers a proposal for a methodology of how to teach artwork with nudity for a younger student audience. How does one go about introducing that subject? How do you discuss the art historical and/or historical context of the piece? Why is it important to use a methodology in this instance?

Museum educators and tour guides know all too well the difficulties when discussing certain topics or artifacts at their museum. There is almost always a visitor whether they are a child or an adult who feels offended or uncomfortable by something in the collection and lets the museum staff know their feelings. The reasons for their reaction could be varied. Perhaps the piece challenges their religious beliefs. Maybe it leads the visitor to recall painful memories. There could also be an instance where the visitors themselves are not offended, but they insist that their child is harmfully affected. Whatever their reason is, the fact remains that the visitor does not want to engage in viewing the piece.

In the museum industry, there are certain methods and approaches taken to teach students and the public about the art and artifacts in their museum. Julia Rose, who is the director at the West Baton Rouge Museum, employs her methodology when discussing "difficult" history with museum visitors. The term "difficult" history could refer to discussions of African-American enslavement, the Holocaust, or other injustices experienced throughout history that are challenging for individuals today to think about or discuss. In her book *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*

(2016), she discusses CMP or Commemorative Museum Pedagogy. She defines it as "an approach to teaching about difficult histories that takes into account the ethical responses of the learner to the difficult histories, and it offers an approach for history workers to develop and construct ethical historical representations of oppressed, victimized, and subjugated individuals and groups."[65] Within this approach, she employs the five Rs: Reception, Resistance, Repetition, Reflection, and Reconsideration. This method takes into account visitors' resistance to hearing information that goes against their collective memory or beliefs and allows the instructor to ask questions to the visitor in a non-threatening way to make them reconsider why they believe something. The last two Rs allow the visitor space to process the information given and contemplate possible reconsideration.[66] In short, this approach is a process. It allows the visitor and the tour guide to engage in conversation and discussion about the stories presented in the museum.

Another approach that many museums use are VTS or Visual Thinking Strategies. This method developed during the 1990s between cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen and veteran museum educator Philip Yenawine. Yenawine was the Director of Education at The Museum of Modern Art for ten years during the 1980s and early 1990s. Their program is "a method initiated by teacher-facilitated discussions of art images."[67] It essentially aids in the development of a learner's critical thinking skills and creates a dialogue where a student's visual skills are heightened. It improves students' observational skills by developing their ability to apply what they learn. The purpose of

[65] Julia Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 72.
[66] Rose, *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*, 78-93.
[67] "What is VTS?" accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.vtshome.org/what-is-vts.

VTS is not necessarily to learn about the history of art or specific artists. The purpose is for educators to use art to develop students' learning skills in a different way.

With these two programs, the mutual idea is to create a conversation between the instructor and the visitor. It should never be the case when discussing a topic or artifact to simply state the information on its case label or to offer one factual statement. Instructors should ask questions to the visitor, and if visitors bring in comments or questions, the instructor should be ready to engage in fruitful dialogue.

The methodology I propose draws from VTS and CMP. It is adapted for a specific topic: nudity in art and discusses some of its significance to history and art history. It is primarily intended for a student K-12 audience with different variations depending on their age and maturity level. To map out the methodology, it consists of:

1) Listen to students' comments and questions initially

2) Ask general questions back to students about the piece overall

3) Ask questions about details of artwork

4) Ask questions about what possible story the artwork tells

5) Ask questions about why the piece was created

This method could vary in the length of time taken to employ it. Depending on the age of the students, it could take several minutes for them to have enough time to study the painting to begin engaging in the conversation.

Before analyzing the five points of this methodology, it is important to understand a few key issues. First, visitors do not have to look at any part of the museum that they do not want to view. However, those visitors should not be allowed to restrict other visitor's access to a part of the museum. The museum is a shared space for the public

and the community, and one visitor's opinion should not restrict another's access. Also, every school group should be well informed of their visit to the museum about which their students will be learning.

After understanding that not every visitor is going to have a positive or even neutral reaction to every part of the museum, it is imperative to be prepared to talk about the piece in question. For the purposes of this paper and employing the methodology, I will give the example of one of the Lloyd Branson paintings that was referenced at the beginning of this thesis and outline how I would include teaching the nude painting in the guided tour of the exhibit. I offer an alternative way to teach this painting to the fifth grade class that visited the East Tennessee Historical Society that day had the school not chosen to request the nudes be covered. One of the paintings that was covered was Branson's *The Nude* from 1911. It is a horizontally formatted painting that shows a woman lounging on her side with her arm over eyes as if troubled by a nightmare she is experiencing. The viewer could assume that the reclined women is having a bad dream due to the hazy, painterly quality of the image and the monstrous figure floating above her body. The woman is nude except for the thinly veiled fabric that serves as a blanket for the lower half of her body.

In the gallery of the Lloyd Branson exhibit, its purpose was to present, for the first time, a retrospective of the life, career, and legacy of the Knoxville artist.[68] It showed paintings by local teachers of his, tracing his development as an artist. It displayed several portraits of prominent members of society in Knoxville, which attested to Branson's popularity in his business. Branson also painted large-scale history paintings,

[68] *East Tennessee Historical Society,* "Celebrating a Life in Tennessee Art."

like *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals* (Figure 3) from 1915, that showcased Knoxville's importance in American history. Branson was not one of the great artists well known in the history of art, but he was a local artist who continues to hold a high place in Tennessee's history and legacy. The exhibit certainly adhered to The East Tennessee Historical Society's mission statement "to preserve, interpret and promote the history of Tennessee, focusing on East Tennessee, in order to educate and connect the region, its people, history, culture and heritage."[69]

In preparing for a school visit, museum educators know to provide materials to prepare teachers and students for the visit. Pre-visit, visit, and post-visit plans are essential for the students and teachers to get the most out of their trip. The pre-visit materials would be given to the teachers about one to two weeks in advance. The visit materials would be the museum educator or volunteers guiding the tour through engagement with the students. The post-visit materials would be given to the teacher immediately after their class visit.

The pre-visit materials would include details of what would take place at the museum, how long the tour would be, and other logistics like bus drop off, lunch, museum rules and etiquette, and contact information. In the case of the example for the fifth-grade Lloyd Branson exhibit tour, I will outline what I would include for these materials. The pre-visit materials also include ways to prepare the students for the visit either with activities, questions, or tie-ins with what students are already learning in their classrooms.

---

[69] *The East Tennessee Historical Society*, "Mission Statement," http://www.easttnhistory.org/about/mission-statement.

Currently in Tennessee, fifth grade social studies standards focus on the United States from 1850 to the present.[70] One way to use tie-ins to introduce students to Branson would be to share with them some of the scenes that Branson painted, like the history scene depicting the Overmountian men during the Revolutionary War. The teacher will not have to show the students the paintings. That is what the museum visit will provide. The teacher will just use a few talking points to inform the students what they will do and see at the museum. The teacher should inform the students that Branson was an artist from East Tennessee and lived during the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century. They can go over what events they have been learning about that took place during Branson's life, including Reconstruction, the Industrial Revolution, and the Progressive Era. All of these events are in the Tennessee State Standards for fifth grade social studies. Thus, fifth grade teachers will be well prepared to introduce the historical context of Branson to their students.

Another point to include in the pre-visit materials is a discussion of different kinds of paintings the students will encounter. The Branson exhibit includes paintings with nudity that the students will encounter and will discuss with the tour guide during the visit. Informing teachers on these points are imperative so that no surprises or confusions occur during the class visit. The teacher will be encouraged to use the pre-visit materials so that the students will be prepared to engage in discussion with the tour guide and be able to see the connections between the exhibit and what they are already learning in their class.

---

[70] *Tennessee Department of Education*, "Social Studies-Fifth Grade," https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachments/std_ss_gr_5.pdf.

During the day of the visit, the students will be guided through the Branson exhibit. The exhibit is fairly small so the students should be able to see most of the works on display. Branson's painting *The Nude* does not enter visitors' gaze until the middle of the exhibit. The beginning of the gallery focuses on Branson's training and early portraits. As the school children would enter the gallery for the tour, the start of the discussion could describe where Branson lived, why he decided to be an artist, and what sort of subjects he painted. The tour guide would then discuss how Branson had to earn a living. Being an artist usually did not afford people much income. Therefore, many artists had to have portraits commissioned on a consistent basis to make ends meet. Branson was first and foremost an artist, but he was also a businessman. Having this discussion with students would help them understand the complexity of working as an artist in Tennessee and why many of his paintings are portraits of wealthy people.

When students first see the nude painting, some may ask questions, or share a comical remark or laugh. This is completely normal, and it should not just be brushed off and disregarded by their teacher or tour guide. If the instructor were to ignore students' comments and move along to the next paintings in the exhibit, it would create a missed learning opportunity. The nude paintings in the exhibit should not be covered or dismissed.

Because students will most likely be the ones to engage in conversation with the painting first, it is helpful to give the students a moment to process the image and ask questions. This is step one in the methodology. This will help the tour guide easily transition into having a discussion with the students. One student might pose the question as to why the figure is nude, while another student could ask what the creature is

above her. It is important that the tour guide initially respond back to students with open-ended questions in order to engage their critical thinking skills. This is step two in the methodology. For example, the instructor could ask the student back, "Why do you think that?" and "Is this painting confusing in any way?" With questions like these, it forces students to look at the painting as a possible question.

Step three requires the instructor to begin asking students about the details of the painting. Questions asked should be along the lines of "What is the woman wearing?" "Where is the woman?" "Is she inside a home or outside?" What is the figure above her doing?" These questions will help students to see the painting as more than just an image of a nude woman.

Step four poses more questions to the students. Ask them what they think this painting is about. It is titled *The Nude*, but is there a larger narrative? "What kind of story is this?" "Who is the woman?" and "Why does she look distressed?" Of course some of the students' questions will not have one certain answer. With this painting in particular, it is largely unknown what this scene represents. Branson did study in New York City for a period.[71] It is probable that while there he encountered European art or postcards depicting eroticized women from the Middle East or North Africa. Orientalism was a popular theme among French artists during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[72] This painting could also come from a story or novel from the Romantic period. Informing the students of these possible answers will continue to help them study the painting more critically.

---

[71] Jack Neely, "A Portrait of the Artist: Lloyd Branson," *Knox Mercury* November 4, 2015, http://www.knoxmercury.com/2015/11/04/a-portrait-of-the-artist-lloyd-branson/.
[72] Tara Burk, "Sexuality in Art," edited. Amy Raffel, *Art History Teaching Resources*, http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/lessons/sexuality-in-art/.

After discussing the subject of the painting, it is then apt to discuss the topic of nudity in art itself. This correlates with step five to ask the students why the painting was created. Again, it is not entirely known why Branson created this painting. He mostly created landscapes and portraits, so this is not a typical Branson painting. It is also not clear if this painting was Branson's personal painting or if he was commissioned by a client to paint it. The painting does closely resemble a well known painting by Henry Fuseli entitled *The Nightmare* from 1781 where a women is reclined and sleeping while a monstrous figure sits on top of her body. The conversation to have with students could center on asking them their thoughts on this question. Nudity in art was not necessarily meant to be scandalous. It was a means of showing the community that one could successfully depict the human figure. This was an impressive talent. All of the great artists in history had successfully mastered painting, drawing, or sculpting the nude, whether it is of a man or woman. If an artist could not do this, then it would be clear to other artists that the person was not trained properly. Studying the nude was an essential part of developing a career as an artist. Discussing this fact to students will allow them to see nudity not as a scandalous image, but an important skill that expressed the status of an artist.

Another part that could be included in that conversation is a discussion of women artists. One of the reasons why it was not considered appropriate for women to become artists was because of this feat of studying the nude. It was not deemed suitable in society for women to look at the nude male or female figure for artistic purposes. Although, this fact varies among countries and time periods, most women were not allowed to attend art school until the late nineteenth century. Bringing this piece into the

conversation with students will give them an expanded perspective on artists and why men created much of the artwork hanging in museums. This discussion of women could also be extended to talk about the Progressive Era (which the students are learning about) and how women increasingly entered the public sphere alongside men.

These five steps in the methodology could be adjusted or abridged depending on the time limit and response of the students. Also, this approach could work with other paintings or even sculptures that depict nudity. The goal is to not tell the students every little detail and idea surrounding the painting. This approach should foster engaged discussions around the visuals of the painting, and how students can understand the painting by using their thinking skills. It will challenge students to look past nudity in art to really understand what the painting is attempting to express. However, it is important to also have a discussion about why depicting nudity is commonplace in the art world during certain times and what that is intended to express to the audience. The methodology will be the most successful if the group can go beyond the basic observational skills and bring in some of the art historical contexts of nudity in art that can connect with their school's learning standards.

After the engagement activity with the nude painting, the tour guide would then move along in the exhibit to discuss Branson's legacy and his other paintings, which include several landscapes and the larger history paintings. During the original exhibit tour, when the East Tennessee Historical Society covered the nudes, the tour guide focused on the history paintings. The students did an observational exercise with Branson's *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals* where they tried to

figure out who certain figures were based on their clothing, what the scene represented, and the time period the painting took place.

For the post-visit materials, I would send a PDF file to the teacher with some additional American paintings from Branson's lifetime that they could use to teach students about the time period through visual sources. Because Branson lived during a time of industrialization, modernization, and the Progressive Era, I would include Thomas Moran's *Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* (Figure 4) from 1872, William McGregor Paxton's *Tea Leaves* (Figure 5) from 1909, and John Sloan's *Dust Storm, Fifth Avenue* (Figure 6) from 1906. These paintings do not depict nudity, but they were painted during Branson's life and represent reactions to changes reflected during this period in America. Collectively, these additional paintings present how America is changing through avenues of industrialization, conservation and environmentalism, Westward expansion, and gender and sexuality. Teachers could employ a similar visual learning exercise, as done with the nude Branson painting, with these paintings to continue to discuss historical idea and themes extended from the Branson exhibit. In understanding the historical context of Branson and the period in which he lived, just showcasing only his work can be limiting. It is important for students to view other American artists' work at the time to see how the period was seen through other artists' interpretations.

The important point with the post-visit materials is to ensure that the teacher has something from which to build off. Providing images of other paintings representative of America during this period can give teachers new sources to use in their classroom that they could also replicate themselves for future lesson plans throughout the year. The

learning experiences from visual paintings and images will aide in improving students' learning levels and become a part of their development process in a positive way.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Nudity in art proves to be an area of controversy in American museums and institutions. Through the right approach and methodology in educating the public from an earlier age, it is possible that censorship of basic examples of nudity in art will not be feared by parents, teachers, or schools who think that students' encounter with artwork with nudity will harm or impede their development in life.

Museums and other institutions of learning cannot censor their art, artifacts, or historical documents based on one visitor or group of visitors' request. Although these institutions have the responsibility of serving the entire public, it is important that they stick to their mission and ethical standards. These pieces often help guide museum leaders to the right decisions in complicated situations. When an institution censors their collection or exhibits, it has the potential to send the wrong message to the visitors who encounter the covered pieces.

When the fifth grade school group toured the censored Lloyd Branson exhibit, some of the students were immediately drawn to the covered paintings and tried to take off the paper coverings to see what they hide. What message did that send to the students that day? In that moment, they might have asked themselves, why is this painting covered up? If it is just a nude woman, why is it covered? Why are we not allowed to see it? The East Tennessee Historical Society did not plan for the students to be intrigued by the covered artwork. But the students were, and an opportunity was missed resulting

in the students not being able to ask the right questions about the artwork with nudity in a discussion based learning exercise.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

"About FEPP." The Free Expression Policy Project. Accessed November 10, 2016. http://fepproject.org/fepp/aboutfepp.html.

"Age Appropriateness." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. Accessed November 10, 2016. https://www.ushmm.org/educators/teaching-about-the-holocaust/age-appropriateness.

American Alliance of Museums. "Ethics, Standards and Best Practices." Accessed November 10, 2016. http://aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices.

American Historical Association. "Standards for Museum Exhibits Dealing with Historical Subjects." Last modified 2017. https://www.historians.org/jobs-and-professional-development/statements-and-standards-of-the-profession/standards-for-museum-exhibits-dealing-with-historical-subjects.

Armstrong, Michael. "Conversation on Censorship continues Museum Dialogue." *Homer News*. June 23, 2005. http://homernews.com/stories/062305/art_0623art003.shtml.

Baker, Paula. "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920." *The American Historical Review* vol. 89, no. 3 (June 1984): 620-647.

Baumann, Timothy. "An Historical Perspective of Civic Engagement and Interpreting Cultural Diversity in Arrow Rock, Missouri. *Historical Archaeology* Vol. 45, No. 1 (2011): 114-134.

Baumann, Timothy, Andrew Hurley, Valerie Altizer, and Victoria Love. "Interpreting Uncomfortable History at the Scott Joplin House State Historic Site in St. Louis, Missouri." *The Public Historian* Vol. 33, No. 2 (Spring 2011): 37-66.

Blumenthal. Ralph. "Museum Field Trip deemed too Revealing." *The New York Times*. Sept. 30, 2006. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/30/education/30teacher.html.

Bootsma, Caitlin. "Should Kids see Nude Art? Should You? from Covenant Eyes: Internet Accountability and Filtering. Oct. 13, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2016. http://www.covenanteyes.com/2015/10/13/should-kids-see-nude-art-should-you/.

Branson, Lloyd. *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals*. 1915. East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville. easttnhistory.org.

Branson, Lloyd. *The Nude*. 1911. East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville. easttnhistory.org.

Branson, Lloyd. *The Weeping Magdalene*. No date. East Tennessee Historical Society, Knoxville. easttnhistory.org.

Burk, Tara. "Sexuality in Art." Edited by Amy Raffel. *Art History Teaching Resources*.

http://arthistoryteachingresources.org/lessons/sexuality-in-art/.

Clark, Matthew. "A Christian Perspective on Nudity in Art." Classis: *The Bulletin of the Association of Classical and Christian Schools* vol. 11, no.1. (Jan. 2004):1-5. Accessed November 10, 2016. http://www.accsedu.org/filerequest/2308.pdf.

De Witt, Karen. "After Protests, Library of Congress closes Exhibition on Slavery." *The New York Times*, December 21, 1995. Accessed December 10, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/21/us/after-protests-library-of-congress-closes-exhibition-on-slavery.html.

Doyle, Debbie Ann. "Historians Protest New Enola Gay Exhibit." *Perspectives on History* (December 2003). Accessed December 10, 2016. http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2003/historians-protest-new-enola-gay-exhibit#.

Dubin, Zan. "Morality in '80s Subject of Museum Exhibit." *LA Times* November 8, 1987. http://articles.latimes.com/1987-11-08/entertainment/ca-21706_1_laguna-art-museum.

East Tennessee Historical Society. "Celebrating a Life in Tennessee Art." http://www.easttnhistory.org/lloydbranson.

East Tennessee Historical Society, "Mission Statement," http://www.easttnhistory.org/about/mission-statement.

"Family Guide-National Civil Rights Museum." National Civil Rights Museum. Accessed November 10, 2016. http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/Assets/2417FamilyGuide2014_singlePgs.pdf.

Frank, Gillian. *Save our Children: Conservative Sexual Politics in the United States, 1965-1990*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, forthcoming.

Frank, Gillian. "The Civil Rights of Parents: Race and Conservative Politics in Anita Bryant's Campaign against Gay Rights in 1970s Florida." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* vol. 22, no. 1 (January 2013): 126-160.

Gallagher, Edward. *Lehigh University Digital Library*, "About, Introduction" on The Enola Gay Controversy, http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/enola/about/intro/.

Gardner, James B. and Peter S. LaPaglia, editors. *Public History: Essays from the Field*. Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 1999.

George Washington University. "American Studies in the News." Accessed December 10, 2016. https://www2.gwu.edu/~folklife/bighouse/about.html.

George Washington University. "The Cultural Landscape of the Plantation." Accessed

December 10, 2016. https://www.gwu.edu/%7Efolklife/bighouse/intro.html.

Heins, Marjorie. “Do We need Censorship to protect our Youth?” *Michigan State Law Review*. 2005: 795.

Heins, Marjorie. *Not in Front of the Children: ‘Indecency,’ Censorship, and the Innocence of Youth*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2001.

Hirsch, Arthur. “Deadly Courier Retains its Place in History. *Baltimore Sun* March 24, 1994, A1.

Hoobler, James. “Lloyd Branson.” *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Last modified February 13, 2011. Tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=130.

Horton, James Oliver and Lois E. Horton. *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*. New York and London: The New Press, 2006.

Hogan, Michael. *Hiroshima in History and Memory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

“Justice curtains Naked Statues.” *The Washington Times*. January 29, 2002. http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2002/jan/29/20020129-035157-6576r/.

Koch, Kathleen. “Some Museum Exhibits Held in Check for Content.” *CNN* December 29, 1995. http://www.cnn.com/US/9512/unpc_exhibits/.

Lewis, Neil A. “Smithsonian Substantially Alters Enola Gay Exhibit After Criticism.” *New York Times* October 1, 1994. http://www.nytimes.com/1994/10/01/us/smithsonian-substantially-alters-enola-gay-exhibit-after-criticism.html.

Lewis, Randy. “Art as Tool in Helping Children Understand Life’s Weirdness.” *LA Times*. Feb. 21, 1988. http://articles.latimes.com/1988-02-21/entertainment/ca-44025_1_art-museums.

Little, Barbara and Paul Shackel, editors. *Archaeology as a Tool of Civic Engagement*. Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2007.

McGregor Paxton, William. *Tea Leaves*. 1909. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. metmuseum.org.

Milwaukee Art Museum. “Nudity in Art and your Students.” Sept. 8, 2014. Accessed December 10, 2016. http://teachers.mam.org/resource/nudity-in-art-and-your-students/.

Moran, Thomas. *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*. 1872. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. metmuseum.org.

Museum of Art and Archaeology. "Addressing Nudity in Art." Accessed December 10, 2016. https://maa.missouri.edu/sites/default/files/education/addressing_nudity_in_art_09.pdf.

National Archives. "Records of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)/ Historic American Engineering Record (HAER Division)." Last modified May 19, 2015. https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/515.html.

National Council on Public History. "National Council on Public History Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct." Accessed November 10, 2016. http://ncph.org/about/governance-committees/.

National Women's History Museum. "Reforming Their World: Women in the Progressive Era." Accessed February 1, 2017. https://www.nwhm.org/online-exhibits/progressiveera/introprogressive.html.

Neely, Jack. "A Portrait of the Artist: Lloyd Branson." *Knox Mercury* November 4, 2015, http://www.knoxmercury.com/2015/11/04/a-portrait-of-the-artist-lloyd-branson/.

Plato. *Republic: Book II*. Benjamin Jowett, trans. New York: Walter J. Black, 1942.

Ringel, Paul. "How Banning Books Marginalizes Children." *The Atlantic* Oct. 1, 2016. http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/10/how-banned-books-marginalize-children/502424.

Rose, Julia. *Interpreting Difficult History at Museums and Historic Sites*. Lanham, Boulder, New York, and London: Rowman and Littlefield Press, 2016.

Sloan, John. *Dust Storm, Fifth Avenue*. 1906. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. metmuseum.org.

Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, "About," http://airandspace.si.edu/about.

Tennessee Department of Education. "Social Studies-Fifth Grade." https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachments/std_ss_gr_5.pdf.

The Art Institute of Chicago. "Body Language: How to Talk to Students about Nudity in Art." Accessed December 10, 2016. http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/citi/resources/Rsrc_001627.pdf.

Utah Museum of Fine Arts. "Teaching the Nude in Art." Sept. 2010. Accessed December 10, 2016. http://centralpt.com/upload/417/12396_teachingnudeslessonplans.pdf.

Visual Thinking Strategies. "What is VTS?" Accessed December 10, 2016. http://www.vtshome.org/what-is-vts.

Vlach, John Michael. *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

Weeks, Linten. "Plantation Life Display Revived." *The Washington Post*, January 4, 1996. Accessed December 10, 2016. http://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1996/01/04/plantation-life-display-revived/14cdb51c-4cf4-4140-9b92-e755ca94ab71/?utm_term=.ba8eaf942acd.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* vol. 18, no. 2 (July 1966): 151-174.

Werbel, Amy. "The Crime of the Nude: Anthony Comstock, the Art Students League of New York, and the Origins of Modern American Obscenity." *Wintherthur Portfolio* vol. 48, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 249-282.

Werbel, Amy. *Thomas Eakins: Art, Medicine, and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Philadelphia.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007.

Yellin, Carol Lynn and Janann Sherman. *The Perfect 36: Tennessee Delivers Woman Suffrage*. ed. by Ilene Jones-Cornwell (Oak Ridge Tennessee, 1998).

APPENDIX

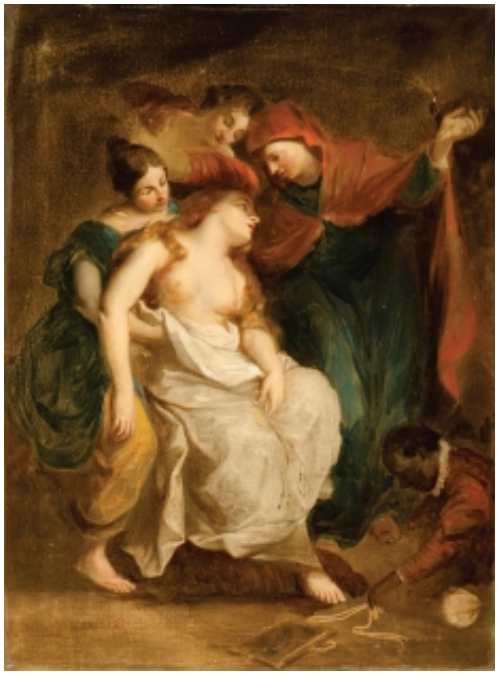

Figure 1. Lloyd Branson. *The Weeping Magdalene*. No date. Oil on Paper. McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture. From: The East Tennessee Historical Society, http://www.easttnhistory.org/lloydbranson.

Figure 2. Lloyd Branson. *The Nude*. 1911. Oil on Canvas. Private Collection. From: The East Tennessee Historical Society, http://www.easttnhistory.org/lloydbranson.

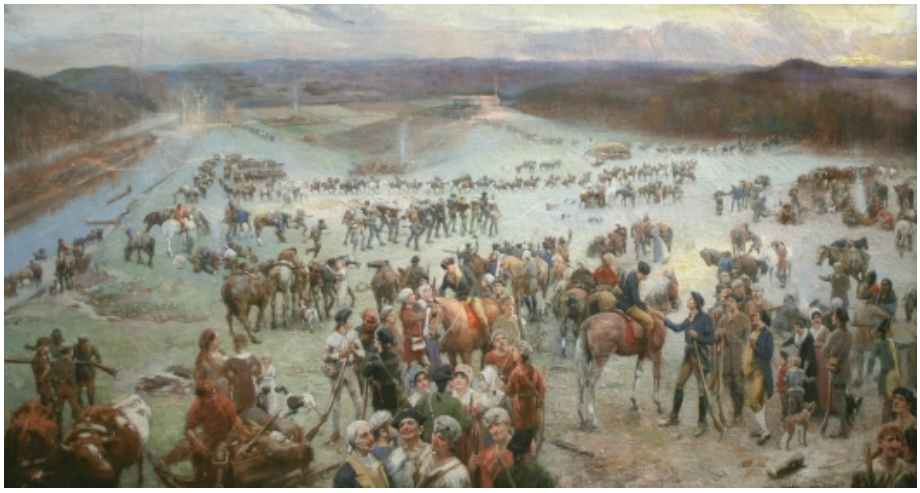

Figure 3. Lloyd Branson. *Gathering of Overmountain Men at Sycamore Shoals.* 1915. Oil on Canvas. Tennessee State Museum. From: The East Tennessee Historical Society, www.easttnhistory.org/lloydbranson.

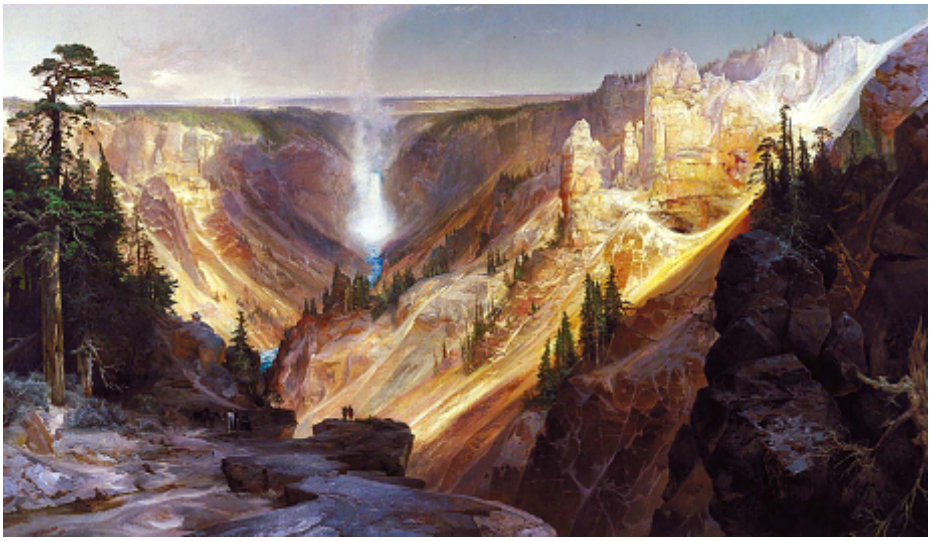

Figure 4. Thomas Moran. *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*. Oil on Canvas mounted on Aluminum. 1872. Smithsonian American Art Museum. From: Smithsonian American Art Museum, http://americanart.si.edu/collections/search/artwork/?id=17832.

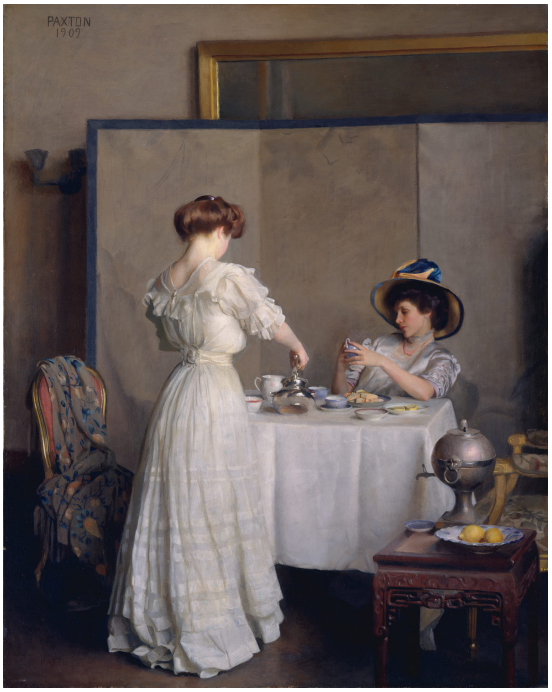

Figure 5. William McGregor Paxton. *Tea Leaves*. 1909. Oil on Canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/10.64.8/.

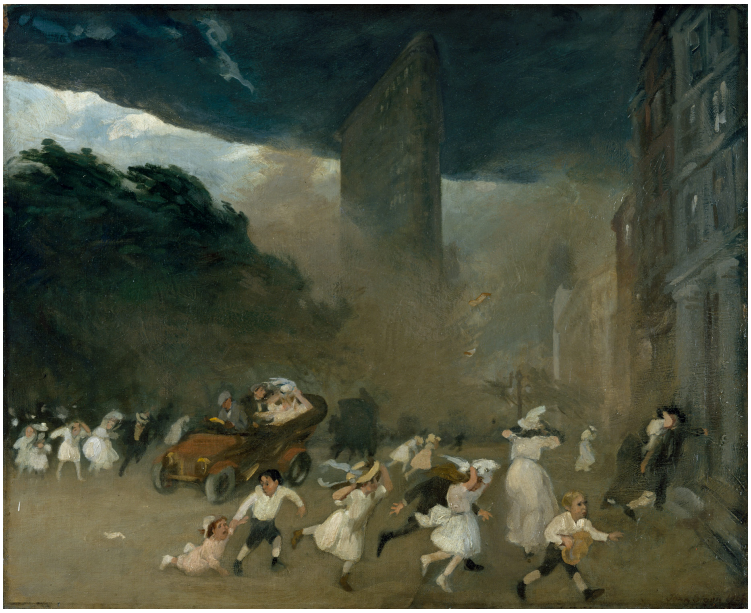

Figure 6. John Sloan. *Dust Storm, Fifth Avenue*. 1906. Oil on Canvas. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. From: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/21.41.2/.

VITA

Sarah Katherine McPhaul was born in 1993. She graduated from Oak Mountain High School in Alabama in 2011 and received the Bachelor of Arts degree in Art History with a minor in French from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in 2014. She is currently enrolled in the Master of Arts program in history at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.