

Post a Comment On: [ART 106](#)**"Cooper's presentation (2)"**30 Comments - [Show Original Post](#)[Collapse comments](#)**dominic halley-roarke said...**

The work shows a interesting opposition-on one hand, there is the morbid obsession with death seen in the self mutilation performances and the suicide plans; on the other, there are the desert and outerspace suits that enable survival. I think he really wants the survival element to win the struggle-as evidence for this I take his decision to be frozen at death for possible revival. It was great to hear someone promote this idea as simply and concisely as he did. I have planned for some time to enroll in a cryonics programs (as soon as funds permit!)

I think his titles are not nearly as clever as he thinks, and do not add anything to the pieces. I found them irrelevant, and awkward.

Aesthetically, the work is impressive for a certain elegance in the placement of the objects-utilization of the spaces between elements and their relation to each other. I found myself enjoying this aspect even when those individual components did interest me a great deal. There is a similiar design sense evident in his use of colors, even in the relatively narrow range he uses in the paintings and in the trailer piece. Pratical or not, it would be interesting to see a series of the later.

1:10 PM

**[josh.borgschulte](#) said...**

When Cooper was conducting his presentation in the first minutes, I found it to be interesting and engaging. I was very drawn to conversing with him about his work for a great deal of the presentation. When he began speaking about the self-induced cutting and the "Burden of Chris," I started to become a little leary of his intentions.

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At that time, I felt that it was just shock art that was going a little astray from good taste. Then, when he showed the “plans” of his friend, Rob, committing suicide, I knew events were about to change for me.

For a recap: he explained Rob’s plans for taking his life as walking out to the woods, digging a hole and covering that with boards, which would be camouflaged with earth on top of that. Then, Rob would “blow his brains out” and the exiting material would spray against the board thus eliminating the mess. Then, when Rob slumped over, an attached string would snatch a stick-allowing the trap door to shut. Thus, Rob’s suicide would be, and I quote, not a “big deal.” Upon this statement, I became quite upset (we’ll get to why later).

To top that off: Cooper cutely titled his piece as “Clean for Mother” (I believe). His plan was to slit his wrists in a lengthwise manner because, as he so smugly put it, it doesn’t work by cutting across. Thanks for that tidbit of information, sir. Then, to spare his mother the task of cleaning up her dead son’s blood, he would so “considerately” put his arms in the toilet to allow the blood to be easily disposed of by flushing the toilet. What a wonderful symbolism for life, eh?

The entire time Cooper was explaining these plans, his face was covered with an amused, sarcastic grin. By the end of his description of this piece, I was fighting every inclination to either walk out of the room immediately or begin yelling expletive after expletive at him. I cannot describe the rage and anger that was coursing through my mind. The reason why this bothers me: when I was three, my dad became a victim of suicide. I never consciously met him, and every day of every year, I think about him or his death, or why he did what he did. There are times when I am walking to class or at work and I have to fight off tears to avoid drawing attention to myself. It’s not something that I enjoy talking about, but sometimes (such as now) I feel it is necessary to discuss. Why? Because I feel that many people

disregard the significance of suicide. My father was a prisoner in his own mind. Twenty years before he shot himself, he was involved as an infantry rifleman in the Vietnam War. The things that he and his comrades saw were comparable to a living horror movie. The imagery and experiences that he witnessed tortured him for two decades to the point where he became delusional and extremely defensive until he must have realized that it would not end. That is powerful and terrifying to realize that there are things in this world that are so damaging to your psyche that you would want to kill yourself rather than to spend one more minute with those experiences in your memory.

If it wasn't for that one bullet, that one trigger pull, I would not be writing this, I would not know any of you, I would not know or much less care who Cooper is, I would not be attending this university, and I would not be without a father.

Then, to see this guy treat suicide so trivially and nonchalantly makes me so furious. After five minutes of sitting there in that classroom, I realized that I needed to try to understand where he was coming from. I needed to keep an open-mind about the situation maybe I was reading him wrong. But after asking him about his experiences with suicide in his family, he simply replied that yeah, there is a history of suicide in his family but not to worry because he was not suicidal. If he has this family history then how can he trivialize the event by making false suicide plans with his friend as some sort of joke? You know what, Cooper, I lost all respect for you as an artist when you showed that piece. I have never been more pissed off at a single artwork than I was at that piece of garbage you created.

I am by no means an advocate for political correctness or over-sensitivity. But when you make light of such a traumatic event in someone's life-something that has dictated everything that has happened to them since-something that they will have to suffer with for the rest of their lives...  
wow.

I am certainly not asking for sympathy or condolences from any of you. I have dealt with this for almost two decades, myself, and a “sorry” doesn’t really accomplish anything anymore. What I am asking for is that the next time you think about referring to how you would rather kill yourself than deal with something in your life, think about that. But it’s a lot more than worrying about a little blood that your mom might have to clean up in the bathroom. It’s a decision that will affect your family and friend’s lives forever. It’s something that does not go away, and it causes a pain inside that cannot be alleviated by anything.

7:12 PM

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**amanda said...**

I was a fan of Cooper but not so much of his art. I liked that we works in all size ranges and uses thousands of different materials, but i feel that his ideas are all with a similar morbid theme. i also thought his work lacked colors...which i guess the black an red work with his morbid theme but i didnt like it. His sketches were interesting i always like to see the artists sketches i feel everyone has their own wahy of planning projects. The pre plans and just as interesting as the final piece to me.

I know you dont like when we say this but i agree with dominic with the titles of his work...i think they do not add to the piece they seemed to be more of a joke to him than anything. I think his interest in costume design is great the paper bag idea, the suit on the desert, the dolls, the motorcycle piece...to me these worked better than anything else. I also want to add that what impressed me most is that this guy makes art that is about him and no one else...this added a demension to all of his work that i think was extremely noticable and terrific.

9:21 AM

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**lisa schwal said...**

Cooper himself as a person is very interesting.. a mystery if you will. His train of thought seems..

out of place. The raft.. the suits.. the suicide notes. ALL unique in their separate ways. I do remember what he said about how everything is a sort of self portrait because everything that we do comes from us. That was just about the only insightful thing that i heard him say all night. I also should have asked him this question: Does he think of the title and then come up with the image, or does he create the image and then think of a random title? I know he was probably being creative, but the titles of his pieces (it seems to me) had absolutely nothing to do with the images. I mean.. even i could have pulled titles like that out of my ass. Coopers' "tunnels", I believe were the most interesting pieces he produced. The one that he constructed for his performance with the lincoln mask that he filmed and the one with the music coming from it with the dool on the floor i found to be very intriguing because it's a concept that isn't common (at least by my standards).I just feel like he's trying too hard to impress such a small amount of people. I'm not sure what to make of him, but I do give him some credit. He's definately an individual in this world of similarity, and his work definately accentuates this.

5:40 PM

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#### **lisa schwal said...**

OH yes.. he was all about "i'm from the Basque and we're all about suicide bombings and what not. He was born in the US.. which means his parents or grandparents moved here to the US from Spain. He had no right to be up in arms about me having that comment that the Basque is in Spain.. i'll bet that hes never even been there... i have. twice. I just.. dunno why he got so defensive. He seems pretty detached from his "culture" and therefor has lost his privileges of associating himself with it.

5:43 PM

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#### **naomi witt said...**

As an artist and an individual I have no respect for "Cooper," even if what he was portraying for us in

the classroom was a false identity. I have no respect for people who can't just be themselves to begin with and even less for someone who would choose the persona that he exhibited in the class. His works in taught and in technical execution are that of an adolescent. For example: those little dolls, aside from being morbid, are on par technically with the felt pillow I had to sew together in 8th grade home economics.

I'm also right there with Josh in that the way he spoke about suicide was just down right not kosher. As a human being I think it's wrong that he would trivialize death in such a way. Not only should you just not talk, or promote thinking that way but if you are going to say/show stuff like that, you better be damn sure of your audience. I'm pissed on Josh's behalf but also since Josh was bold enough to share his personal problem in relation to Copper's presentation I'm going share mine in hope that Triff, you do show this to "Copper" and he understands that if he's upsetting people in this manner that he'll bother to raise above what Josh called "shock art" to get people's attention.

I have anxiety and depression problems, and part of my problems are in ruminating thoughts. I avoid scary movies, watching the news and even being in the dark when my problems spike (like they are now). So seeing work like "Copper's" and hearing him talk about slicing his wrist for that one art piece, or about making sure to cut the long way for "clean for mother," those not only upset me in the moment but trigger thoughts in my head that don't leave. Even now sitting here typing this because I'm being forced to think about it again I have to keep running my hand over my forearms and wrist (making sure they haven't magically been gashed open) as I was for the rest of that class after he said it and well into that night because thoughts like that prevent me from sleeping.

Like Josh said (even though I wouldn't even begin to compare my problems to the level of tragedy he's suffered) I'm not looking for a pity party

because of my problems. I'm just trying to get across that "Copper" need to wise up to the reality of the things he's talking about. "Copper's" tactics for getting people's attention, like his works, are that of an adolescent. So congrats "Copper" you got the attention you where pleading for, note though, that it's negative, not an unlike that of child who miss behaves just to get some form of attention. So in closing "Copper," GROW UP OR SHUT UP!

7:15 PM

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### [ana said...](#)

i was going to post my comment on wednesday since i should be studying for a midterm tomorrow, but since this discussion has gotten interesting so soon, i couldn't wait.

i thought cooper's work was interesting. he definitely brings forth an overall mood throughout his pieces and he's got a knack for creating these pieces that seem to be narrating some on-going story--like every piece (even if different in execution and mood) is a clue to a single story that you just have to put together yourself: for example, the suits, the trailer environment, his sketches or plans, and so on...

i didn't have a problem with his execution of his pieces. for example, his puppets could've fit very appropriately into the "Hanging by a Thread" show at the Moore Space (i think that was the name).

i, for one, thought that his titles were somewhat comical precisely because they seem out of place and irrelevant, yet i could somehow see it in the piece. again, this alludes to what i stated earlier about his work being bits and pieces to a single story--a narration that isn't obvious to the eye at first but one can later see it or imagine it.

i must say that my favorite pieces were the Trailer and the drawings of ... the person that sorta looked like cousin It or like a woman with a burka; the color in the trailer was so intense that i could feel it and the drawings possessed a certain luminosity that was quite impressive.

on another note, i wasn't personally bothered as much about his subject matter. i feel like his

making light of such a serious subject like suicide is different. the fact that he has the audacity to make light or fun of such a subject is, i don't know: "wow."

some of us have been deeply angered by his approach to suicide, but perhaps that's his way of dealing with the subject matter. i don't really see it as childish. it's just his art work and one can choose to give the audience an accurate or an inaccurate idea of the artist's personality through the work.

8:54 PM

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#### **at said...**

Nice discussion indeed. Don't mind me.

9:09 PM

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#### **nydia said...**

Hello, everyone, Nydia again just passing on through to see how you all are doing and something tells me it's not so entirely good. Duh-right? Well, I don't know if I'll be able to add anything enlightening but I must say, in terms of Cooper, I have come to the conclusion that in the end, I feel indifferent to him and all his works and just did not take him seriously at all as I think back on the presentation. At first I thought he was trying to be witty and could have even liked his presentation, but the truth is, I just lost taste for anything he had to say after the "Burden of Chris" and the suicide stuff. Even the suits did not catch my attention as much although I did pay some more attention to that than anything else. I guess in a twisted logic sort of way I understood his "joke"-if that's what he calls it-behind the "Burden of Chris" project and suicide notes but that doesn't mean I found them funny. I just thought to myself-"Oh dear, he's another guy trying to make something funny out of suicide" and waited for him to finish poorly as I knew he would. A lot of people don't take suicide lightly, and it's not something that should be taken lightly, and I'm sure he knows that. but did not care to take that into consideration.

Shame on you, Cooper.

I can see Ana's point on maybe this is his way of dealing with suicide-I guess everyone has their own way of dealing with something like that-but if that's the case with him, he has a long way to go before he can truly even grasp the meaning of it.

Shame on you again, Cooper.

As for his work, the only one I can actually say I enjoyed was his trailer as well. The only question I have about that is if he used red for the ink because I wasn't too clear on that? As for everything else, I just couldn't take it seriously and ended up slightly absorbing anything he said. I must admit, the whole suicide jarred me a little bit-which, as Naomi said, is probably what he wanted-but I chose, in the end, that the best thing, at least for me, was not to worry about it and let it go. If he thinks suicide is a joke, then he's a joke.

11:49 PM

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[josh.borgschulte](#) said...

**at said...**

I begin to see a different angle, which -by the way- doesn't contradict your points, that is, the obvious power of art to elicit powerful interactions. As per Cooper, I bet he's less concerned we think of him as a person than having made us think about these topics.

8:53 AM

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**at said...**

It should read, "less concerned with what we think of him..." Sorry.

12:26 PM

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[josh.borgschulte](#) said...

i agree that he may not care what we think of him as a person, but to produce such powerful art shows what kind of person that he is (or wants to

be). by discussing his art and his body of work, you begin to understand what he's all about. my perception is that without the suicide piece (which i take very personal), i see cooper's art as depressing and very disturbed. with the suicide piece considered, i find his art to be cheap and soulless, because that particular piece makes me realize what derives most of his work. i can't help but compare him shock rocker, marilyn manson. the problem i saw with manson was that he was playing off of people's emotions to make money. everyone knew that manson was going to do something taboo and (like watching a car accident) his audience couldn't help but to pay attention. therefore, i see it as cheap. i don't really see a worth while concept in his art, just a money-making scheme from the exploitation of the general public's temptations.

why'd he shoot himself in the arm? it did not bring him to the same "level" as the artist that originally did it. was the reason just to copy another artist? i think cooper would do anything just to garner attention. there seems to be no substantial motive/concept behind his work, it's just him trying to be the modern day sideshow while not being considerate to his audience. i do not respect his WORK, therefore, as an artist, i do not respect HIM.

3:10 PM

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**dominic halley-roarke said...**

When I look at the comments, it seems to me this is one artist where the timeline of his pieces is critical to passing a judgement. I am under the impression that he has moved away from the more morbid pieces, especially those involving self-mutilation-but perhaps I don't recall correctly, and have rearranged the chronology in my mind because I wish that it were so.

If he's still stuck on the suicide theme, than I think its reasonable to conclude that he is either indulging in this morbidity for shock value or because he can't find another source of creative motivation.

I am still fascinated by the trailer piece; it had a

real theatrical sense to it-like a stage set. It made a more positive impression on me than anything else he showed because I see the value in art as more for its own sake, for its sensual value, rather than any sociological or psychological references, and this piece seemed to leave the latter out while offering some engaging interplay between forms, lighting, movement (the ink), etc. I wonder if he will eventually combine this concept with some performance elements. If I recall correctly, this piece also involved some mechanical elements that must have taken some technical ability to realize. Did he do this himself, or in consultation with others? Yes, in general, I agree with one of the posts that complains of the juvenile simplicity of execution of much of the work; but as the trailer shows the ability to do better may be there.

If Cooper sees any of these posts, I would be interest to here of his plans for future projects....

7:46 PM

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**amanda said...**

after reviewing these posts that have so many personal comments...i have to say that i have found his work to be one of the most interesting...yes maybe not many people value him or his work, but the work generates so many emotions from the audience....much more than other artists that have visited. it touches people on a personal level...even if not in a pleasing way. he said he does not sell much of his work, so i dont think he he is all about a profit, but more about self-expression. i see reality in some of his pieces..the mototcycle accidents, the suicide notes, the struggles people face. and while we might not want to face these topics while looking at art they are something that interests and inspires him, so why can people not accept his work for something that is totally his own thoughts and ideas?

of course i am saying this easily because i was not personally offended by his work, i suppose my thoughts would be different if he made art about something that was tough for me to deal with.

9:43 PM

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**at said...**

Interesting comment, Amanda. I was about to suggest to the class how many people got personally ofended with Mappelthorpe's photos of male sadomasochism or Serrano's "Piss Christ." A nice topic for a post, I guess.

10:01 AM

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**[josh.borgschulte](#) said...**

i have to say that i was disgusted by mapplethorpe's photos. i certainly have no desire to see them again, but i was not offended...just put off.

as far as the piss christ, i found that to be degrading and scornful, therefore, yes, it would be offensive to me. regardless of what religious icon is shown, the abuse of someone's religious beliefs is close-minded idiocy. a lot of people see religion as being the most important aspect of their life. the values, ethic code, symbols attached to the religion are deemed as being very important and reverred by the followers of that religion. when you attack those symbols/ideals, you are, in essense, attacking the follower of that faith. i do not take personal offense to piss christ even though i consider myself a follower of christianity, but i see that imagery as offensive because it's such a strong attack to so many people.

also, i wanted to know what people thought about cooper's raft piece. i thought that was pretty unnecessary, especially when he jokingly described it as something that would offend many people. why make art like that? to just piss people off?

once again, it's just trivializing the desperate acts that people are willing to take to escape hardship and oppression. yet, cooper disregards that people are willing to give their lives for liberty, so he makes art that dismisses what's important to some people.

11:30 AM

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**heidi said...**

Cooper made me uncomfortable and occasionally also offended. He has no respect for things that I consider important. To give you a simple example: I don't understand someone who hurts himself to take a picture. When he was talking I was asking myself how come a person who doesn't care about life wants to be preserved when he dies and return to life in 500 years. If his attitude is not fake, he needs psychological help.

In my opinion his sketches are better than the installations. I don't think he wanted to be original, he only wants to bother people and to be against society. That don't make a good artist.  
Heidi

11:46 AM

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**lisa schwal said...**

I guess that after reading these comments, i'm beginning to see what cooper is doing as an artist. perhaps his meanings lie not with the specific art he produces, but what he can evoke from other people. he was very contradictory, it seems, because he would introduce something to us and then refuse to talk about it in hindsight (such as his shooting himself in the arm). His role as an artist is to make us THINK. this explains all the kooky titles of his pieces. If this is truly what he's trying to do then i applaud you, cooper. i do. you've managed to get nearly everyone on this blog riled up in one way or another, though it's not necessarily through delicate means. you're playing upon people's fears, insecurities, and notions of death.. all delicate subjects. This is like some Andy Kaufman (sp?) type thing.. A lifetime performance piece. I wonder how the performance ends..

5:40 PM

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**dominic halley-roarke said...**

I am amazed-and not in a good way-that there are people who still think that when something

belongs to the class of ideas/objects/thoughts labeled "religious" it is entitled to special protection or delicate treatment in the intellectual or creative realm. This is basically the mentality that has given us the Inquisition, Islamic Fundamentalism, and the apparently accelerating capitulation of the left in this country to the right (e.g. Jimmy Carter's comments on abortion, and Hilary Clinton's recent statements about faith in government).

I do have a criticism of art like "Piss Christ" however, in that its not truly analytical; it does nothing to expose the foolishness behind the particular belief system symbolized by this icon. This is why "shock" so often has little value in itself. It seems best to me not to partake of poison in any way, unless one is analyzing it to find the antidote.

5:44 PM

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#### [josh.borgschulte](#) said...

i don't know if dominic was referring to my comment or not, but i forgot to clarify that i don't think christianity should be "protected" from artistic statements. we have the first amendment and i think that censoring art would be a huge violation of that part of our constitution. just like cooper's pieces and mapplethorpe's photos, they all have the right to be exhibited, sold, made, whatever.

at the same time, we have the right to critique them and tell others about our thoughts on them. if it offends you, then you should explain why so that people can understand what they are evoking in their art. if they want to use that information to garner a reaction that they are after from their audience, then that's a great way to do it. but just as artists' have the right to create expressive art, the audience has the right to discuss it.  
p.s. - foolishness? ouch.

6:37 PM

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#### [natalia](#) said...

Unfortunately last class I was feeling very sick and

I had to go home before Cooper's presentation. I really don't know what to say. I have been trying to find some information about him on internet but I have not found a lot. I visited his webpage <http://www.locustprojects.org/y/> but I really could not appreciate his work ( they look too small) . What I was able to see, I did not find any skill or talent especially in his drawings , they look really childish. Having read all the comments, which are really interesting, I agree that he touches subjects that are too emotional and strong such as suicide and I understand why people felt offended. I understand that art has no limits and that maybe being controversial is one of his goals but I really do not understand what his message is other than make a strong impact on the viewer i even find his works incoherent. The fact that he takes suicide as a game really bothers me since for me the idea of suicide really freaks me out and is something that i had to experience very close. I wonder how he can take this subject so lightly. the only thing i really admire is his capacity to make his works to be remember.

8:56 PM

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#### [ana](#) said...

this is very interesting.

i was talking to peter about the discussion and he asked me whether i thought that jean moreno (was that his name? the guy whose presentation we ALL disliked) was better or worse than cooper and i told him that jean's was.

i mean, is it worse for jean to give us a presentation where he's ready to attack us and tell us that we're wrong or for cooper to present to us his work of art that touches on very sensitive subjects?

some of us were offended by the subject matter and how cooper handles it, yet i'm still not clear on whether his art is shock art or really expressive of his personal experiences or conventions, or what the hell. i don't think he was out to get everyone; it seemed to me like jean came prepared to deliberately show us how wrong we are about the entire pop culture crap, or

whatever the heck it was that he was trying to prove.

10:46 PM

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### **[ana](#) said...**

my internet is acting up and i posted the same comment three times!

sorry!!!

10:52 PM

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### **[peter](#) said...**

when i saw cooper's first image of some field trip that he was on when he was a teenager, i thought that him and his art was some sort of reaction against his christian upbringing. from his work and presentation/his attire, i couldn't tell if the wahole thing was a front or if he really is like that. therefore i have some mix reactions from from his work, if his presentation of him and art is who he really is, i would conclude that this guy is kaka in the head. and should be pitied. if the whole thing was just a front, then it's a cheap attempt to get the viewers attention. anyone can think of sick ways to get people upset.

11:32 AM

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### **at said...**

Should we discuss the artistic merit of works of art based on the moral principles they may violate or endorse?

1:53 PM

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**[josh.borgschulte](#) said...**

i think it depends on why those moral principles are violated. if they are done just for attention, then i believe that piece lacks artistic merit. that's just my opinion. without a doubt, the concept of gathering an emotional audience is an artistic experiment, but ethically, i think that it's very weak.

on the other side of the fence, i can't think of any reason why moral principles would be violated for the better.

2:08 PM

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**dominic halley-roarke said...**

I think the issue here is not only the state's permitting the right to express one's reaction to "sacred cows" but the problem of making anyone's beliefs the standard by which the artist him/herself decides if those reactions are going to be published. The First Amendment is of little use if individuals permit themselves to self-censored out of fear of offending others. Intellectual progress comes to a halt regardless of whether it is suppressed by exterior forces, or by individuals themselves.

5:10 PM

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