Institutions, Audience and Classification As Art: Considerations of the Obscene in the 1980s

Susan M. Ryan
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Abstract
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Senior Thesis

Institutions, Audience and Classification as Art: Considerations of the Obscene in the 1980s

by

Susan M. Ryan

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The report of the investigation undertaken as a Senior Thesis, to carry one course of credit in the Department of Art and Art History

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ABSTRACT

In the realm of contemporary art, social concerns and political debate can often impact the public response to art. Determining the cultural value of these works is not an easy task. It is built from a combination of institutional validation and audience response which work together to classify art works as ‘Art,’ and determine the degree to which they impact the art world and society at large. By investigating the specific cases of Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence, the author will analyze how these groups have previously interacted, and argue for a balance between these groups in the classification of Art.
For

My Family
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INTRODUCTION

Art has long been implemented as a tool for both understanding and influencing the world in which we live. Artists employ their craft as a form of self-expression, for what they experience, for their thoughts and for their desires. Art acts as a means of documentation and interpretation simultaneously, as artists strive to present images that are both conceptually understandable, and visually interesting and pleasing. Art can be indulgent or political in nature, it can be simply a documented image that has been imprinted with the artist’s way of seeing, or a presentation of theory and ideal. No matter the artist’s intent, most art carries a message: This is the way things are. This is the way things were. This is the way things should be. This is something worth acknowledging. This is something you didn’t realize was being ignored.

Art holds an interesting place in society, because of the way in which it reflects what we know and who we are. Artistic feats provide a legacy, evidence of the people who created them, their individual beliefs and their culture. The ability to own art shows wealth and taste beyond the average man. The ability to create art is a skill that can provide a livelihood for the artist during their lifetime or a legacy for those who are able to render their work as masterpieces. The images that these masterpieces present are beautiful, and can present any number of complex meaning that stand as a testament to the society which created it, or as a challenge to what has previously been revered. However, while anyone can appreciate art, very few possess the financial means to obtain art, and many people doubt their own ability to understand the individual value and significance of specific pieces. Art possesses both material and intrinsic value in western society, and so, like many valuable things, the general public looks to those who possess specialized skillsets to explain the complex reasons for its value.
This group of specialists are the individuals and institutions which make up the art world: Museums, galleries, publications, artists, patrons, curators, critics, and scholars. These are who the general public turns to when interpreting art: experts who have made careers studying and valuing artworks for their technical skill, innovation, expression and the revelations they provide about the artist. Museums and Galleries act as a stage, on which the best of the best artworks are showcased; exhibitions present a hand-picked display of artworks that those same experts work tirelessly to select for presentation. The people and institutions which have a direct hand in the art world are part of a closed list, due in part to the limited access which the general public has to the art world and its productions. However, the art world is not completely enclosed; if the general public were to stop seeing art as a social value, the need for the art world and its expertise in production, preservation and appraisal would decline. Even if internal circulation was able to maintain some of the value of artworks, the fall in associated status would deter interest in art from the standpoints of collection, preservation and display.

The many roles of art have only become more prominent in recent decades, as the art world has expanded. So, it is important to consider the institutions which determine the value of Art. The role of art institutions which showcase the finest works of each era, is determined simultaneously by the directors and curators who run them; while the majority of funding for these institutions may come from a select number of donors and patrons, it is the general public who provide the majority of interest in and audience for these works.

As a result, a complex relationship between institution and audience exists in determining the value (especially the social value) of artworks. While the institution provides access to the art world and expertise that helps analyze the works, it is the
general public that provides interest in the artworks and exhibitions which display them. If the general public is not interested in an artist or their work because it is either out of touch with society or falls short aesthetically to the audience’s expectations for Art, the social value of those works will be limited, and the institution that displays them will not be able to attract visitors through the reputation of those artists or works. Institutions are acutely aware of the impact that audience interest can have on reputation and revenue, so they take these factors into consideration, when deciding what works to display, what works to validate. The constant exchange between institutions and audience is the vital aspect of what contributes to our ever-evolving perception of art.

Some events from the 1980s provides us with an interesting case study of how art institutions, artists, and their audience intersect and influence one another. During this time, public concerns regarding morality and obscenity leached into the art world, and sparked a debate that would define much of the art world for this era: Artworks which were created as social commentary pushed boundaries with new subjects; Artists such as Jo Spence and Robert Mapplethorpe were interested in utilizing the grey area between what was ‘beautiful’ and what was not meant to be seen, as a means of giving meaning to their artworks. Both of these artists specialized in photography, and preferred the human body as a subject; However, their specific representations of that subject dealt with issues of homosexuality and illness that were uncommon in the institutional art world at the time. Simultaneously, the general public was already in the middle of a culture war that set traditional, but limiting conservatism against progressive, but jarringly new liberal ideals; at its most extreme, this conflict would lead to public reactions wherein the works of specific artists were targeted for removal from institutions.

The combination of institutional and audience response would come to define the
lives and legacies of the impacted artists. Because institutions act as the public figurehead of the art world, their influence on public opinion regarding the standards of Art is incredibly important; however, an increase in public patronage (both through visitation by the general public and more widely available federal funding) has resulted in an audience which can exert influence over the display and conception of art in return. The complex relationship that exists between these entities raises a question: What should the role of institutions be in the classification of art? Is there a role of the audience? Surely, disregarding public opinion as simply uninformed would be problematic, as it is from society that Art gains a significant portion of its value; however, bowing to public opinion alone, when it is institutions who maintain the study of art and employ experts within the art world would be impeditive to the study and progress of art. This paper deals with these questions and argues for a balance between the institution, the artist and the audience, which allows for the classification of art that is important both art historically and culturally.

The first section defines the types of art institutions that will be discussed in this paper, and details their position as the point of contact between artists and audiences. The primary objective is to establish a vocabulary which defines public, private and academic institutions. In doing so, the goal of the first section is to differentiate between the types of institutions so that their specific roles within the art world can be clarified. This section will also discuss the types of audience each institutional type attracts and caters to.

The second section analyzes the social situations which surrounded the art world in the 1980s. It assesses the public and private pressures which influenced art institutions, the art vs pornography debate and battles over public funding. This timeframe is notable because both national governments, and small private interest groups were exceptionally
vocal, regarding the standards they expected institutions to set for what was considered ‘Art’. Two main points will be the focus of this section. Firstly, an analysis of the shifting social climate of the time. The 1980s marked the beginning of a conservative era in the United States, and a new trend of emerging globalism in the art world that impacted the themes and subjects that artists were exploring. It is important to understand the social context that the artists were commenting on, because while the art world is somewhat independent, art production is never a completely independent endeavor, it is always influenced by the society in which the artist lives.

Secondly, this section will look specifically at the medium and subject matter that comprises photography of the human form. Not only is this the medium which both Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence preferred during their careers; photography also occupies a unique space within the art world as a newly developed medium. Images rendered in photography represent something different, to the art world and to greater society alike, than images rendered in paint or stone. Photography was also the most targeted medium of the 1980s debates, so an analysis of its history and application in the 1980s is essential to understanding public reactions to the artworks that will be addressed.

It should be noted, that in the 1980s, critical vocabulary for art could vary widely, with some art called ‘pornographic’ (“the depiction of erotic behavior… intended to cause sexual excitement”\(^2\)) by critics, while other works were deemed simply ‘offensive’ (“making attack…; giving painful or unpleasant sensations…; causing displeasure or resentment”\(^3\)), and others still as obscene (“abhorrent to morality or virtue…; containing or being language regarded as taboo in polite usage…; repulsive by reason of crass disregard of moral or ethical principles…”\(^4\)). The three terms were used somewhat interchangeably in the circumstance the time, with individual sources picking a term and
sticking to it for the length of the commentary. Criticism using these types of language, were most frequently aimed at artworks which depicted the human form, especially if the figure depicted was nude. When criticisms were leveled with the intent of removing artworks from public display, ‘pornographic’ was the most frequently utilized word. However, I believe the word pornographic to be misleading and limiting, both in the context of discussion of the 1980s, and in the context of this paper. Similarly, ‘offensive’ seems too light a word to capture the nuance of the images and their opponents’ concerns.

While dissecting the works of photographers from the 1980s, and assessing the way public perceptions have impacted the classification of these works as Art, I will be using the word ‘obscene.’ Merriam-Webster defines ‘obscene’ as “disgusting to the senses… containing or being language regarded as taboo in polite usage… repulsive by reason of crass disregard of moral or ethical principles.”5 I believe that this definition best suits not only the intentions of many artists, but also the aspects of said art that those who opposed it found offensive. In this instance obscene is not a negative word, only a neutral descriptor, which describes images that were opposed to the moral standard that the audience who stood in opposition to these artists’ work were trying to elevate.

The third and fourth sections of this essay will consist of case studies for the bodies of work of two artists who were active in the 1980s. Jo Spence and Robert Mapplethorpe’s work both fell into the category of ‘obscene’ as defined above, but for two different reasons, in spite of sharing a similar subject matter. Both artists’ photographic portfolios are focused almost exclusively on the human figure as a subject, depicting human models in various states of full and partial nudity. By analyzing their specific bodies of work, we can better understand the arguments regarding obscenity in the 1980s, and see how institutional reactions helped shape not only the artists’
reputations at the time, but also their legacies after each artists’ unfortunately early
death. Both artists were bold in their opposition to the standards of their time, creating
dynamic photographs which captured the heart of the social debate; that they experienced
near the ends of their lives. Through studying their stories, and seeing how each artist
interacted with their audience and the institutions which hosted their works, I believe we
better understand the roles of the audience and institution in the classification of ‘Art.’
CHAPTER I: INSTITUTIONS, VISITORS AND ART

Museums and galleries are integral parts of the art world which act as access points through which the general public can view and learn about art. This access is vital to maintaining the cultural significance of art, as it facilitates continued interest in and preservation of art works among the general public. Different types of art institutions do so in different ways; Museums, generally have a focus on education and preservation; they maintain the works of historic artists while offering opportunities for the general public to learn about artworks without needing any kind of specialization in the art world. Meanwhile, galleries have a primary focus on displaying artworks that only sometimes includes an educational component, and might have an interest in the reselling of art; they tend to focus more on contemporary artworks by artists that are currently working or recently retired (or deceased) than on historic works. The prestige of institutions is gained through their ability to amass collections and by the presence of experts as institutional staff which give institutions a degree of assumed authority over the art world. That said, institutions are not simply free to simply do as they wish. Audiences do not walk passively through exhibitions because they are interactive by nature; as audience members they experience the presented exhibition, then offer judgment regarding the quality of the institution through their spending, either on tickets for repeat visits, the purchase of art, or donation.

This section will look at the complex relationship which exists between art institutions and their visitors as they exist in modern society; then, in turn, look at how the audience influences the decisions institutions make regarding collection and display. This section is an analysis of the status quo, and preparation of analysis for the events which surround the classification of Mapplethorpe’s and Spence’s artworks.
1.1: *Institutional Types*

In loosest terms, an Art Institution would qualify as any organization which specializes in some way with the collection, preservation, study, display or selling of art. For the purposes of this paper, my interest is in museums and galleries of three specific sub-types: Private, public and academic. The reason I have selected to focus on museums and galleries is that their primary function is the exhibition of artwork, and this places them in a unique position to interact with both the art world and society at large.\(^{11}\) Because they display art, museums and galleries require an audience to view artworks; however, as the resale of art is not their first priority, they do not require said audience to have the means to acquire art.\(^{12}\) This is also the reason I chose not to focus on commercial galleries, which priorities the sale of art and do not interact with the general public in the same way.\(^{13}\) Exhibition-focused institutions exist in a space between the general public and the art world, which places them in a position of perceived superiority over the audience.\(^{14}\) They determine what artworks are displayed, and present to their audience a narrative which determines the significance of the presented artists and works.

These institutions are primarily concerned with the accumulation of art and building of a collection, which prevents the exhibition space from profiting off of the sale of artworks.\(^{15}\) Because of this factor, they are dependent on public interest to keep their doors open and maintain their ability to purchase new works for the collection. As a result, museums and galleries must be hyper-aware of the public response to their collections and exhibitions. Museums and Galleries can be further classified into three sub-types: Public, private and academic. This distinction is determined primarily by the origin of the funds for the institution’s annual budget; this is because funding

Of these three institutional types, most people are primarily familiar with public
art museums and galleries. According to a 2014 study by the Institute of Museum and Library services, there are approximately 35,144 museums in the United States alone;\textsuperscript{16} of those, approximately 4.5\% (approximately 1,500) are art museums, making them the fourth most common museum type in the United States.\textsuperscript{17} Today, no museum derives funds from a single source. For most art institutions, an endowment covers at least a portion of their operating cost each year, though every institution has a different method for determining what services (maintenance, accession, preservation, display, staff payroll, etc.) take precedent for funds allocated from the endowment. Most institutions also have at least a few private donors who provide large donations, either in the form of artworks or finances. Every institution, that falls into the categories I have chosen depends to some degree on the patronage of an audience in the general public, who provide revenue and reputation through visitation. This audience-based patronage can take the form of everyday ticket sales, annual membership fees, sales from the institution’s included gift-shops, or visitation-generated interest. Public interests can offer institutions access to public funds allocated from governmental sources, by increasing the institution’s visibility and proving demand for projects or exhibitions that are hosted by that institution. For the purposes of this paper, institutions will be defined by their affiliations to non art-world institutions and the origin from which the majority of their annual budget is derived from.

For the purpose of this discussion, I will be classifying public institutions as those which receive the majority of their annual budget from public sources, namely the spending of the general public and allocations by local and federal government sources..\textsuperscript{18} The dependency which public museums and galleries have on public funds sets them apart from other art institutions, because they are particularly sensitive to public opinion
and response to their collections and exhibitions. Many of these institutions are either associated with the city or country who provides the majority of these public funds. They may also claim not-for-profit status and view themselves as public services with a focus on supporting the Public Interest through fine arts education for the general public. As a beneficial result, these institutions generally enjoy a great deal of visibility in the community which supports the institution via taxes. This results in a wide audience base from the local community. These institutions can also generally offer cheaper ticket prices (with some going to far as to offer fee-entry to locals on certain days of the week), as directors often make a conscious effort to make the museum available to the public that helps to fund it. Therefore, they tend to experience a greater level of financial stability so long as they can maintain federal and local financial support.

Private institutions do not often experience the same level of access to public funds. Instead, they rely primarily on generated income as a means to balance the annual budget. For the purpose of this paper, private museums and galleries, are defined by the way in which their founding affects funding. Usually, private institutions are founded by a private collector without support from governmental funding: they have no access to funds allocated from local taxes, although they may apply for national grants that support the arts. Like public institutions, private galleries will also generally be open to the public, however as they do not depend on money derived from public funds and taxes, private galleries have more freedom to display artworks according to the collectors’ aesthetic preferences. Private galleries are exhibition spaces first, so they maintain the same emphasis on display that is seen in public institutions. However, as these institutions do not rely as heavily on public funding exhibitions at these institutions may lack the educational components seen at their public counterparts. Private galleries
are also more closely intertwined with the art market, as their founders are collectors who are more invested in the material value of works. This is because most art collections begin not only out of the collector's interest in art, but also as an investment, due to the fact that most art increases in value over time and can be resold for the collector's financial gain.23

Academic Institutions fall into somewhat of a grey area between the public and private. For the purpose of this paper, academic institutions are those museums and galleries which are associated with a school (most commonly a university or college). Most of these institutions are free to the public24 and derive the bulk of their funds from three sources: an endowment (or endowments) specific to the gallery space, donations from alumni who are specially interested in the art collection or gallery space, and funds allocated from the university’s annual budget.25 The nature of academic galleries’ association with colleges makes these types of institutions educationally focused at their core. However, these galleries generally serve an audience that is assumed to have some degree of specialization in the art world (students engaged in art or art history as their main course of study), which can impact the focus of educational components within exhibitions. They focus much of their collection and exhibitions strategies to furthering the areas of study that students are naturally engaging with through their course of study at the college. These institutions are generally viewed as public entities, especially if their associated school is a national or state college: however, there tends to be an understanding that the first priority of the exhibition space is to the university’s students.26 The response of the general public is not as high a concern at academic institutions as it is at public institutions. However, these institutions can enjoy a greater level of access to public funds than private institutions (although they are still unlikely to
enjoy support derived from local tax dollars. This means that the general public still can have an impact on academic institutions, especially if the funds for a specifically targeted exhibition were derived in part from publicly funded grants or awards.

Each of these institutional types play a role in the art world, specifically in determining how different artists and their works are viewed by scholars, collectors, and the general public. Institutions are viewed by the general public as taste-makers, which set the standards for collection practices, and considerations of importance. This role becomes especially apparent when historical eras are left behind, and the art whose merit is under scrutiny is art of the contemporary. Unlike historic periods of art history, in which the value of individual artists and their works have largely been settled, contemporary art is difficult to value, because the impact of the artists, and importance of individual pieces within that artist’s career are not yet known. It is with the collection of contemporary art, that museums, galleries, and academic institutions play the most significant role in classifying artworks as Art that are of social or art historical significance.

1.2: The Role of Institutions in the Classification of Art

Public, private, and academic institutions play essential roles in the art world. Their role as access points through which the public can view artworks has already been described in the previous section, but this is not the only function of exhibitionary institutions. All museums, regardless of their specialty, are understood by the general public to be authorities in their field of collection. The cause of this is two fold: Firstly, the ability of museums to collect is indicative of wealth and taste. In art museums this is particularly prominent, because the ability to acquire objects which lack a utilitarian use,
but which hold high aesthetic value is in itself a sign of status, which is implied to carry with it the knowledge to understand the immaterial value that is held by art objects.

Secondly, art museums and galleries house collections that draw the attention of academics who wish to study artworks first hand, whether they be scholars, critics or other artists. Art institutions have the ability to amass not only art objects, but individuals who specialize in the various academic components of art history and the art world. As a result of this collection of experts, museums are viewed as educational forces (and indeed, most public museums consider public education as one of their primary functions); this in turn, contributes to the social demand for and value of art institutions.

Generally, the public trusts art institutions to act as experts in the field of art; they have faith that the curators of exhibition spaces will select the most exemplary works from any given era and utilize them to educate the general public. Institutions are aware of this public trust; however, they are also aware that the general public is by no means obligated to attend exhibitions. Museum audiences do not engage in mandatory cultural education, but in ‘free-choice-learning,’ which is defined by Falk, Dierking and Adams as “learning that is intrinsically motivated and reflects the learning individuals do because they want to.” This means that audiences have certain expectations for what they will see upon entering museums; should museums not meet those expectations, the public response will likely be a decline in admission numbers and consequently revenue.

Museums and galleries have two primary means through which they can try to draw in visitors’ interest and support: a prestigious permanent collection and interesting temporary exhibitions.

Permanent collections are prominent aspects of most art museums. Every year,
approximately five percent of the average public museum’s budget is allocated to the acquisition of new artifacts for their collection.\(^{36}\) Curators in charge of acquisitions each year, are charged with the task of bringing in works of art by artists of the highest reputation and artworks of the highest caliber.\(^{37}\) Museums that are able to advertise possession of the best known masters can bolster visitation numbers. The prestige of an institution’s collection is especially important for drawing in visitors who do not live in immediate proximity to the museum.\(^{38}\) The ‘tourism audience’ can be especially difficult to draw in. Some areas are heavily saturated with art institutions, and these visitors generally have a limited time in the area, so will be incredibly selective about which institutions they want to visit.\(^{39}\)

Of course, most museums lack not only the funds but the space which would be required to create a collection on par with the world’s premiere institutions (i.e. the Musée de Louvre or the Metropolitan Museum in New York), but there is a secondary challenge which museums face when trying to collect historic artifacts. Within art collections in particular, there is a distinct lack of redistribution of objects among museums.\(^{40}\) The current practice for most museums’ collections management, is to acquire as many prestigious artworks as possible, and then never remove anything from the collection. To some, this may seem counter-intuitive, as there is no way for museums to display their entire collections to the public. In fact, the majority of art currently owned by museums is simply being held forever in storage. The problem is that museums are limited in their ability to benefit from any kind of deaccession process. While it is undeniable that most museums would have no difficulty finding buyers for even the more mundane objects in their collection, it is rare for such sales to occur because they do not to actually generate funds for the museum. Generally, profits gained from sales result in
one of two results: sometimes, instead of going back to the museum, profits gained from sold artworks are returned to the public trust that helped fund the initial purchase of the sold piece. More frequently, once an art institution is seen to make money from the sale of art, it is perceived that they do not need the same access to public funds that they had required to maintain themselves before. By selling artworks institutions run the risk of cutting themselves off from funding through other sources.

This inability to sell art objects form an institution’s permanent collection is one of the primary reasons that temporary exhibitions are essential to generating public interests in museums.\(^4^1\) There has been a marked increase in the number of temporary exhibitions in recent decades. The benefit of these shows are twofold. Firstly, temporary exhibitions facilitate artifact redistribution for museums, without requiring them to sell artworks. Most frequently, temporary exhibitions are comprised of the artworks from a permanent collection that are not on current display at their home institution, but are sent on a tour of sorts to other museums that allocate a space for temporary displays. This not only grants curatorial staff the ability to showcase artworks that might otherwise be neglected in storage, but provides the museums who host temporary exhibitions with the opportunity to showcase aspects of art history that their own collection does not represent well. In addition, the rotation of artworks and exhibitions create an incentive for the repeated attendance of local audiences, who are unlikely to spend money repeated visiting the permanent collection they have already seen.

Academic galleries can also experience excessive difficulty in the deaccession of collections; however, this difficulty is not as often linked to a threat regarding funding.\(^4^2\) More frequently, the collections of academic galleries are comprised of donated artifacts, instead of artifacts that were purchased through donated funds. These types of collection
donations often come with clauses attached in the contract, with stipulations requiring the institution to maintain the donation as a part of its own collection. It is understandable that donors would want to see their collections remain intact and under the control of the institution that they entrusted their artifacts to. Yet this same difficulty in deaccession puts academic galleries in similar positions to public museums, so they too depend on repeat visitation generated by temporary exhibitions to maintain visitation numbers.

Private ownership means that private institutions do not experience the same limitations in buying and selling that public and academic institutions experience. In fact, private galleries can often utilize the sale of artworks to facilitate the acquisition of new ones or for the undertaking of renovation and conservation projects. That said, some private galleries do follow similar patterns of accession and accumulation as public museums, due to an individual collector’s unwillingness to part with the art that he or she has accumulated. In either case, temporary exhibitions are still important aspects of private galleries, which depend on the interest generated by special exhibitions to inspire repeated visits by the general public. In the case of temporary exhibitions it is not their function of them between the institutional types, but the form.

It is through temporary exhibitions that the influence of private galleries over the art world and art market becomes most apparent. While it is undeniable that most collectors begin to acquire art out of an interest in art, the longer they interact with the art world, the more savvy they become at both navigating and manipulating the art market to benefit the value of their own collections. Because of their potential interest in the resale value of art, private galleries have a unique interest in emerging contemporary artists, whose works will increase in value over the course of their career. If a gallery can successfully scout a prominent artist early in their career, they can benefit in two ways as
the selected artists gains reputation. First, any early works that the gallery acquires will be able to be resold for incredible profit as the name of the artist gains value in the art market. Second, by being the first to promote an artist who becomes widely respected, the collector or curator bolsters the reputation of the gallery as a taste-maker, and subsequently increases the value of other works in the collection. In many ways, private institutions are the gatekeepers of the art world, acting as the point of connection through which young artists can access the art market and begin to network with potential buyers and further their career. Private galleries determine trends and offer safe havens where artists who work in a technical style or with a subject matter that has not yet been viewed in publicly funded museums may practice and showcase their craft.

As an artist gains reputation in the art world, his or her works will inevitably begin to draw the attention of public museums. Museums do not often purchase the works of young emerging artists for their permanent collections; however, they are very open to utilizing temporary exhibitions as a means of gauging the audience response to the works of specific artists. Here, it is important to note, that while the distinct institutional types may differ in their specific goals regarding the exhibition of art, all three exist within the enclosure of the art world. The art world is not very large, consisting of a closed circle of curators, academics, critics and artists who are all aware of each others’ movements and preferences to some degree. This can result in a self-perpetuating cycle, wherein curators are validated in the selection of artists to exhibit because curators at other institutions are also featuring the same artist, whose reputation is increased by their inclusion, thus resulting in that artists gaining more exhibitions.

The ultimate culmination of the reputation cycle results when the artist gains enough fame that he or she becomes indisputably important, and museums (preferably
public and with an art historical focus) take an interest that goes beyond the hosting of temporary exhibitions. Due to the reputation and expertise that are attributed to public museums, the acquisition of an artists’ works by these institutions acts effectively as a stamp of approval for the works of art.\(^50\) Museums are viewed as keepers of cultural patrimony, and it is to this end that they determine both the significance of individual artists, and the value of their works which remain available for sale on the art market.\(^51\)

Academic institutions play a slightly different role, as they are focused on a specific community.\(^52\) Frequently, little of the annual budget of Academic institutions is allocated to the acquisition of art, and instead, the collection is dependent on donations form wealthy alumni to grow. More of their funding goes instead to the maintenance of the collection, and establishment of special exhibitions, which reflect the course of study needed for their students. At art schools this will inevitably include student art exhibitions, but schools where the study of art history is prominent, will also generally include exhibitions which reflect on the art historical subjects being studied by students during the term.\(^53\) Focusing on the students, means that academic institutions can exhibit artworks that deal with more controversial subject matter so long as it engages the student interest. In addition, because the primary audience for academic institutions is the associated university and not the general public, wider social issues will only impact the academic gallery if the student body, alumni or campus community draws attention to the exhibition first.

The specific interests of the different institutions are derived from their audiences, comprised of the general public, local community or donors and patrons. Public museums determine what is historically important for the general public and help educate them on interesting subjects that they lack specialization in. Private galleries exhibit the
collections of private collectors, and identify new artists that are emerging in the
contemporary art world. Academic Galleries determine specific topics and artists
associated for those topics that are historically important for scholarly research by a
student audience that has some specialized training in the art world. Together the
institutions determine the value of distinct artists and art works. Their collections and
exhibitions draw in audiences through their assumed expertise, informing visitors to the
exhibition space about what is important, but what they display is generally determined
by what will pull in visitors to the collection. In short, the interests of the public
determine what institutions display but the institution determines how they choose to
display it; the degree of their funding which is derived from public sources determines
the degree to which the general public has influence over both these aspects of display.

1.3: Collections and Audience Response

Exhibition spaces play a unique role in the shaping of public identity. This is
because exhibitions fit into a space which feeds a somewhat inherent desire in people to
understand that which we do not know. Art institutions do this in a manner that takes
advantage of visual mediums, which facilitate egalitarian learning and interaction. The
exhibition takes aspects of our society that are otherwise inaccessible (Works of art,
cultural artifacts, etc.) and renders them visible, then seeks to present these aspects in a
way that makes them knowable and understandable. Museums and galleries provide
spaces in which the general public can view masterworks which have influenced the
development of social aesthetic values. The institutions are seen as experts in what is
important, and as exemplars of taste, due to the origins of art collecting being viewed as
an elite activity. In western society, art collecting acts as a symbol of status, which was
for centuries limited only to kings and aristocracy, who could afford the high costs of materials, skill and time that went into the creation of a painting or sculpture. So, it was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the first public art collections in western history actually originated as the collections of European kings, which were ‘donated’ to the public upon removal of the monarchy in favor of a new governmental system.58

Up until this point, the general public had experienced only limited exposure to the arts, through public works. They lacked the knowledge of what made art ‘good art’ in relation to the technical and thematic evolutions of art history. So, museums and galleries very suddenly became imbued with a sort of cultural equity.59 At their conception as well as now, art institutions had access to the largest collections of art, of cultural artifacts that represented the pinnacle of talent and achievement by the shapers of our history. As time went on, new types of museums and galleries started to emerge as private collectors founded their own galleries and donated works to museums. This resulted in a shift in the 19th century, which saw the rise of public institutions as we know them today: publically conscious spaces for the arts education of the general public.60

We do not value art because its components are inherently valuable.61 Artworks have no utilitarian value, they are impractical as tools and inessential to life. Instead the value we attribute to art is based primarily on artistic and aesthetic qualities, which are intangible at best, and subject to individual whims at worst. They signify not only the wealth, but also the taste of the collector. I would argue that this means that artworks collected in public institutions reflect not only on the curators who oversee the collection, but the population to whom that collection theoretically belongs.62 The people of that nation or community, the general public who play no direct hand in the acquisition of art, but are impacted by what that collection says about the taste and values and history of
their society as a whole.\textsuperscript{63} Publicly funded collections, while they are put together by curators and other art historical experts, also reflect on the public which funds the collection, so it is only natural for audiences to react in a manner that seeks control over exhibitions when those exhibitions are perceived to push too far against the margins of what that community considers to be Art. There is a perception that the pieces acquired in institutions are the ‘most important,’\textsuperscript{64} This perception, paired with the fact that works are rarely deaccessioned, forms a notion that artworks accessioned by museums become permanently in a record of ‘what is important.’

It is then, no surprise that the general public can occasionally feel the need to be involved with the curatorial process at public institutions or publically funded exhibitions. This is not because they think they understand the artistic and aesthetic value better than curators in charge, but because of political motivations that affect how individual audience members may view individual artworks.\textsuperscript{65} These instances are rare, but tend to result in extremely vocal outrage, because there is a sense that some boundary has been breached, a sense that the trust placed in institutions to present artworks that reflect public perceptions of Art has been broken. The end of the twentieth century saw a huge rise in public movements and outcry against specific institutions, artists and exhibitions.\textsuperscript{66} Well organized groups of protestors fueled by an ongoing American culture war sought to remove whole exhibitions from public museums by targeting artists and their works which fell outside of their perceived standards. Interestingly, these artists’ works were rarely criticized on the grounds of the artistic merit their art presented, but rather on the subject matter which they displayed.

In her article on audiences for contemporary art, Roxana Modreanu divides visitors to contemporary art galleries into several categories. She identifies one of these
groups as the ‘politicized audience’ who have strong political beliefs and are pushed to action when art becomes intertwined with political messages. Modreanu considers this type of audience in relation to those who visit institutions because they have a general interest in art. As a side effect, Modreanu narrows the category of ‘politicized audience’ to only consider visitors which attend exhibitions featuring politicized artworks because they are ardent supporters of both the work and the political message of the artist.

I believe that this categorization is too narrow, and the ‘politicized audience’ should include both those who choose to attend an exhibition because they agree with the political message of the featured artist(s), as well as the audience who will choose not to attend the exhibition while engaging with the controversial themes because they disagree with the message of the featured artist(s). If members of the general public are unwilling to view artworks because they disagree with the message of the show, but are willing to expend a great deal of time and energy openly protesting the show, they are proving that the issues that artist wants to discuss are of poignant concern in wider society, and validate the artists’ choice of medium through which to discuss these concerns by inducing such a strong reaction. As this unwilling politicized audience is not willing to see the show to judge it for the aesthetic merit of the artworks, their actions instead act to validate the social value of the artist. Modreanu states that the presence of her the political audience validates the artwork because they agree with the artist. Confirming that the political meaning of the artwork is not only valid and correct but has weight.

Opponents of specific artworks hold a similar authority to validate the artwork, although their actions tend to have the opposite effect on the artists’ reputation than the one which they desire. In the late twentieth century, the kinds of political art which were being produced often carried a message that was seeking representation for groups that
had previously been marginalized,\textsuperscript{68} or for subject matters that had been dismissed as uncomfortable or displeasing.\textsuperscript{69} By trying to exclude political artists who were trying to dissect and represent these themes in their artwork, political activists were inadvertently interacting with the themes that artists wanted to encourage audiences to contemplate. Whether intentionally or not, they have engaged the artwork in the same way as Modreanu’s willing politicized audience does: as a contemplation on what the theme means for their society. While the irony of the situation can be appreciated, considerations of the outrage felt by certain parts of the politicized audience raise a question about why art incited such a strong response from these members of the audience.
CHAPTER II: ON OBSCENITY AND PHOTOGRAPHY

The 1980s was a decade marked by a battle between liberal and conservative ideals, which seemed to peak near the end of the decade. Amidst a battle over obscenity and public morals that would focus heavy public criticism on the art world, the 1980s would see a culmination of a conservative wave which had begun mobilizing in the 1970s. Conservative grassroots interest groups and lobbying organizations sprang up across the country, and although they were slow to gain momentum, they would ultimately become vocal enough to usher in the wave of conservative thinking seen in the 1980s and 90s. In America, the major signal of this political shift was the outcome of the 1980 presidential election, wherein President Ronald Reagan won the White House as a Republican over the incumbent Democratic nominee, President Jimmy Carter. At the same time, the art world had seen different but prominent shift as artists and their movements became more connected with liberal social movements and interactive on a global scale as similar shifts where taking place in Europe.

The rise in visibility for religious groups and conservative activists brought with them questions of social standards and public morals. These concerns, which emerged in response to the liberal social change of the ‘swinging sixties,’ would have unforeseen but unsurprising impacts on the world of contemporary art. As social concerns regarding public morals rose, influences which were viewed as corruptive or degenerate were protested against using mostly well meaning but over-extended regulations. As conservative groups increased in visibility, they looked for places that their causes could be championed and further increase their visibility.

In many cases, the art world became the place where debates of this nature took place. As prominent members in conservative activist communities became aware of
artworks which pushed against the morals their group championed, they could direct negative attention to the artists, who were generally utilizing obscene themes as a means to further a more liberal political agenda. Art has been a political tool for much of human history, so it is unsurprising that artists were utilizing their preferred mediums to make political statements in the 1980s. The late 1980s saw a culmination of these arguments in the form of several court cases. These resulted in controversies for artists like Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence, which then impacted which institutions would show their work, and in what contexts. A decade long debate regarding obscene themes and subjects would largely define the decade for the art world, several artists and their works. This included an ongoing question regarding whether Art could be pornographic and vice versa, which was a major concern in regards to public funding which was heavily entwined with ongoing social debates.

2.1: Culture War

The 1980s saw a rapid increase in both the number of public interest groups, and the intensity with which they expressed their concerns. The political shift that was seen in 1980s interest groups was the result of two political movements from previous decades.

First, public interest groups owe a not insignificant portion of their foundations on an organizational and operational level to the establishment of labor unions. Trade unions emerged to represent the combined interests of tradesmen to the government, providing a voice for individual workers and the industries which employed them; it gave these groups a voice when trying to bargain with more powerful patrons who employ the industry. Trade unions were officially recognized by the United States Government in the 1930s, and legal frameworks were put in place to allow for trade unions to work with the
government to peruse the best working conditions for their industry workers; this helped negate the need for tactics like large-scale strikes or protests which gained traction in mass-media to attract change, but took employees out of work. These unions were not active in the art world, but they did lay the foundations for how future activists groups would interact with governmental organizations who provide funding for the arts.

Approximately 80 percent of public interest groups consists of trade unions and similar, occupationall-focused groups who are primarily active representing the interests of workers in a profit-making sector. The remaining 20 percent are the ones which are of interest to my research. These groups typically structure themselves in the same way as trade unions, and interact with the government utilizing the same frameworks to lobby for changes they wish to see enacted. However, these groups differ significantly from trade groups because they are not seeking the material benefits for a trade or industry, but to enact social change. The second foundation for their actions and motivations lies not with the trade unions, but with the broad social movements and widespread political activism which emerged in the 1960s. These types of social movements tend to arise more spontaneously than those which manage professional interests, and their success hinges on two main factors: 1) members of the group must accept the belief that there is a present and active threat to fundamental rights or the public good; and 2) Leaders of the group must be able to secure large amounts of initial funding, generally through the patronage of wealthy groups and individuals in order to attract members who can sustain the movement moving forward.

During the 1980s, liberal advocacy from earlier decades such as the feminist and civil rights movements had continued to be championed. In terms of liberal advocacy, the two most notable changes of the 1980s was the decline in anti-war based activism.
(which followed the end of the Vietnam war in 1975), and the rise of LGBT movements, which had been gaining traction since the 1960s, but exploded in visibility with the beginning of the AIDS crisis in 1981. Many artists and curators in the art world as well as its communities were very liberal and interacted with the themes of these movements. Even if artists were not associated with specific movements, many of them were intertwined with the interests of social movements by proximity, which was reflected in their artworks. As those artworks fell under public scrutiny in the exhibition spaces of art institutions, they came into contact with the conservative action that was increasing in the general public. This is what provided the stage for the two sides of political activism to clash throughout the decade. The case studies of Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence offer unique insights into how public interests affected the response to artists who were interacting with the themes of liberal activism in their artwork.

Robert Mapplethorpe was a gay man who was not active in the gay liberation movement himself, but his art reflected his life experience and therefore, the themes made visible in the movement. Much of his work was fueled by the increasing confidence and visibility of the homosexual community. He was interested in representing his own experience, and the world in which he lived through his artworks, and as a side effect his preferred subject matter linked him to the gay liberation movement. His work was only explicitly associated with the movement one time, when his work, Bull’s-Eye, appeared on the 1970 fall cover of Gay Power (Figure 2.1), which considered itself “New York’s first Homosexual Newspaper.”

Jo Spence was involved more directly with the Feminist movement, finding solidarity in the political struggle felt by herself and other women of her time.
artworks confronted the same themes regarding the female body and its objectification as other feminists, dealing with the question of subject and artist and representation, were common in Spence’s photographic depictions of her own body. However, where many other feminists were concerned with the marginalization of women in the art world, Spence was more interested in themes of class and disease. As an academic as well as an artist, she focused in on three roles of Art in her life: an application of theory, a reflection of her feminist views, and ‘phototherapy’ which helped her come to terms with her own struggles regarding health and cancer. Images such as the 1982 photograph, *Property of Jo Spence*? (Figure 2.2), plays on the feminist concerns over ownership of the female body, while simultaneously reassuring herself of her rights to her own body.

As artists were engaging with progressive social movements, conservative interest groups were rising in response and in opposition to the new wave of social progressive movements. Many of these new organizations were Christian-based interest groups, who viewed the changes sought by liberal social movements as threatening to public morals and values. The art world offered a place for these two movements to openly clash. Works by artists like Mapplethorpe seemed to galvanize those groups who feared the influence of images they viewed as obscene (abhorrent to moral values or virtue) on social values, while artists like Spence were highlighting obscene (uncomfortable and taboo) subject matters that academics and the art world found interesting, but the general public did not want to confront.

Perceptions of these images as obscene were what drove people to not want to engage with them; some groups went so far as to seek censure to remove them from the social sphere. The art world was exceptionally visible in the 1980s, because of expansion and globalization that were marked by an increase in artists, dealers, collectors,
publications and exhibition spaces, as well as an increase in interaction of these entities both domestically and internationally. This expansion was followed by an increase in public patronage through visits to institutions which exhibit art. It is no wonder, then, that a simultaneous rise in the concern regarding public funding occurred alongside the expansion of the art world, which accompanied an increase in federal spending on the arts.

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was founded in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, which offers support and funding for artists and exhibitions in the United States. By the 1980s, the national fund had seen heavy fluctuation in the amount of funds allocated to it, and President Regan entered office with the intent to remove the organization over the course of three years, mostly as a means of balancing the budget. However the president’s appointed task force assessed the situation and concluded that federal support for the arts was important, and a matter of public concern that would reflect poorly if abolished. As a result, while the NEA Budget took an initial hit in 1981, decreasing from $158.8 million to $143.5 million, by 1989, the budget had rebounded up to $169.1 million, (a high that would not be matched again, as the budget would decline in future years). As the NEA and other governmental programs derive their funds from national and state governments, it is only natural that taxpayers wanted to know where and how their money was being spent.

The result was the 1980s being largely identified by an outbreak of cases where the general public rebelled against artistic works of all kinds for a variety of reasons. Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc* (Figure 2.3), was a publically funded instillation, which was placed in the middle of a public plaza near a Manhattan government office building in 1981. Serra’s work, which was meant to force people to interact with the artwork and
with the rest of their surroundings, including other people and the plaza itself, instead
induced a feeling of outrage. People felt that the placement of the large sculpture was not
only in the way, but unsightly within the context of the plaza.\textsuperscript{98} It was removed in 1989
after a long legal battle.\textsuperscript{99} The \textit{Vietnam Veterans Memorial} (Figure 2.4), is now among
the best known memorials in the United States.\textsuperscript{100} However at the time of its creation
(1981-1984) by artist, Maya Lin, the memorial galvanized the general public and veterans
activist groups, who viewed its positioning below ground level as disrespectful.\textsuperscript{101} It was
not what the public was used to seeing in their war memorials, yet its design seemed to
capture the contemporary reactions and perceptions of the war almost perfectly, which
resulted in a later change of heart. The work of Andres Serrano was famously protested in
the United States, France and Australia, when his 1987 photograph \textit{Piss Christ} (Figure
2.5), raised the ire of religious organizations, who considered it blasphemous and
sacrilegious.\textsuperscript{102} The image captures a crucifix suspended in glowing amber liquid
(revealed by the title to be the artist’s own urine), and raised theological questions
regarding the commodification of religion through the presentation of an image that is
composed beautifully with vivid colors that give the image an otherworldly feel.

Each of the previously mentioned artworks could be considered obscene, Serra’s
because it was in the way (excessive to the point of offense), Lin’s though reason of
cultural taboo (acknowledging the shame of the Vietnam war), and Serra’s through direct
and purposeful disregard of moral and religious values.\textsuperscript{103} Still, the majority of artworks
came under fire, because the public, or at least a vocal minority of it, found the presented,
image, subject matter, or theme to be obscene in the way they related to or depicted the
human body. This is the main concern of public activist who decried art as obscene; this
is also the category which the works of Mapplethorpe and Spence fall into. Given the rise
in visibility of the art world, it is no wonder that public funding of the arts became a battleground which reflected the larger culture clash.

With works of all scales, mediums and subject matters being targeted, no artwork seemed to be safe. That said, one medium and subject matter saw the most consistent and vocal rejection from public interest groups. That medium was photography, and its unfortunate subject was the human figure. In order to fully understand why the works of artists like Mapplethorpe and Spence were targeted more fully than others, it is important to understand the history of both the medium and the subject within the art world, and how they were perceived in context of the art debate.

2.2: On Photography and the Human Form

Photography as a medium, holds an interesting place in the art world, due in large part to its age. Where painting and sculpture have had artistic traditions dating back to pre-history, the predecessor to the modern camera was only invented in 1827.\(^{104}\) The youth of the medium would seem to discredit it as an artistic medium; however, photography found a place for itself which allowed it to quickly adapt the traditions of previous mediums into an artistic tradition of its own.\(^{105}\) By the twentieth century photography was in wide use, utilized by both commercial photographers, who made a living by catering to middle-class families, and budding artists who sought to capture the beauty of the world around them.\(^{106}\) Where novelty had initially captured the attention of artists and the public, the ease of use and diversity of application for cameras solidified their place in public use. The artists of the 1980s were building off of two traditions: Documentarian techniques, which tried to reproduce reality, and artistic techniques, which were concerned with the creation of beautiful images.
The public interest in photography helped boost the medium’s reputation, and was probably steeped originally in a fascination with the capabilities of new technology. Meanwhile, artists found the applications of the new medium which could mimic the aesthetic standards of older art traditions in far less time appealing. The camera is not the same as the paintbrush or the chisel, which depend on the artists’ vision and skill alone to render an understandable image. Suddenly, portraits were not limited to the rich and powerful; everyday people could record the likeness of their loved ones for perpetuity; eventually, the technology reached a point where anyone could document any aspect of their lives they thought to be worth saving. Not only was the medium egalitarian, but it also changed the relationship of the viewer to the images they were seeing.

Unlike older art forms, the rendered subject of a photograph had to, at some time, have occupied in the same space as the photographer. The photograph is a form of physical evidence, wherein, there is truth inherent in the existence of the subject. At the same time, most photographers can and will manipulate the subject matter if it suits either aesthetic or thematic goals, especially among those who have artistic, rather than documentary goals. In her essay On Photography, Susan Sontag goes to great lengths to analyze the role photography plays in the distribution of information through images. Through her analysis, we can differentiate between two types of perception that photography can produce in an audience: “True expression” and “Faithful recording.”

Faithful recording is what most audiences want to assume photography does. Once the ability to capture life in motion became available, other mediums of fine art began to explore expression through means that did not depend on realism and the ability to mimic life. This meant that audiences, critics and artists alike wanted to look at photography as the medium through which reality was captured. While this is true to
the goal of most documentary footage, when it comes to photographs produced with the intention of distribution in the art world, other factors tend to impact how completely ‘true to life’ an image is. Even documentary images generally seek to present their subject in the best (or worst) light possible.

What most artists actually seek to produce are images which Sontag would call “true expression.” While documentary photography can produce exact replicas of the seen world, it does little to capture the experience of living in that world. Different artists are interested in different aspects of life and existence, some in tangible ways and others in the intangible. Good artists would seek to manipulate their work to present new aspects of world, presenting images as more than simply frozen moments of life. Artists could utilize technical techniques or manipulate the initial scene through posing the subject(s), affecting lighting, manipulating the background, or simply staging the scene in its entirety. The line between what elements of the image were true to life and what elements had been fabricated or exaggerated to fit the artist’s intent is not always clear to viewers. The point of photography’s use as an artistic medium is that it looks real, which is in part what results in the perception of images that are either “true expression” or as “faithful recording.”

This assumption by audiences, that photographs record life faithfully, is definitely a contributing factor as to why photography evoked such strong reactions in viewers during the 1980s. The Human form has always been a favored subject of artists, with representations being found in the art historical and archeological records well into the depths of prehistory. In western culture, the human nude (particularly that of the female body rendered by male artists) has exemplified ‘Art’ and its successful rendering the sign of a master artist. The human figure, in spite of its pervasiveness, is not a neutral
subject matter in art. As Lynda Nead, discusses in her book, *The Female Nude*, historic representations of the nude figure were seen to play a balancing act that utilizes an inherently erotic subject (the nude female body, as created and viewed by a presumed heterosexual male audience) and turns it into something sublime, productive and beautiful, but non-threatening and under control.\(^{115}\)

By the 1980s, society had in some ways evolved away from the notion that the naked female was specifically inherently erotic. The feminist movement (which had been active since the 1920s, but gained significant traction during the 1960s and 70s), had brought a multitude of challenges to both the male domination in art institutions and the presumed role of women as subject rather than maker.\(^{116}\) Many feminist artists fought actively to reclaim the human figure and the female form.\(^{117}\) Sometimes controversial performance artists, such as Carolee Schneemann, executed viscerally involved performances, which actively confronted the viewer’s perceptions of sex, privacy and the female body. By the 1990s, the feminist movement had not only crossed lines previously untouched by male artists; they broke down the barriers to allow for artists working in more traditional medias to confront conceptions about the human body that had been similarly taboo.\(^{118}\) It was in these conditions that Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence were able to access exhibition spaces that displayed their non-traditional representations of the human form.

At the same time, some might argue that the barriers were taken down too quickly. A lack of consensus among critics and artists alike regarding the merit of art that took sexual liberation as both theme and form left artists who utilized the human figure open to criticism from outside the art world. This became especially true as the atmosphere of conflict that arose from the ongoing culture war grew in intensity. Artists
of the 1980s engaged with themes that were considered obscene, not to generate interest through outrage, but as a means of subversion and transgression of rules that the artists considered outdated. They were looking for new ways to advance Art, it’s techniques and it’s messages to reflect the changes they saw in the world around them.

Why would artists choose to engage with subjects and themes that they must know are bound to incite public outcry? In a 1994 essay, “Role Taking, Role Commitment and Delinquency,” sociologists Karen Heimer and Ross L. Matsueda, analyzed what constitutes delinquent behavior, and why individuals might choose to partake in delinquent behavior. They conclude that delinquent behaviors offer a functional benefit to the so-called delinquent. The breaking of rules, and subsequent self-identification by an individual as a rule-breaker offers something satisfying to the rule breaker. The second aspect of delinquency which might entice individuals to break societal norms is that it offers a social role to people who do not fit easily into conventional society. For someone to qualify as a delinquent, their behavior must be considered by the greater population to be incorrect in some way.

For artists, the benefit of rule breaking may simply be a better form of expressing themselves, a way that leaves their creative desires satisfied in a way that simply advancing the technique or subject matter initially developed by their predecessors cannot. Simultaneously, by stepping away from social expectations, individuals who already defy one social expectation leave themselves open to find a community who better represents them (a community of artists, feminists, or gay men for example). The emergence of subcultures offers people who do not fit into a prescribed societal role somewhere to belong, even if it means turning back on society at large. Artists wanted to create art that reflected their experience in these sub-cultures and the ideals born from
them. However, because their behavior was already considered delinquent by society at large through their participation in these sub cultures, they were left particularly vulnerable to the scrutiny of the general public when it fell upon them.

All of the factors discussed in the last two sections, contributed to the context of the 1980s, and the artists who sought out the mode of expression that best suited their life experience and artistic aspirations. Through case studies of Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence, we can apply their specific biographies to understand how they adapted a traditional art medium into a mode of expression that suited an evolving world. We can assess their works for their artistic merit, through the lens of the art world, while also seeing how institutional acceptance and public reaction shaped the memory of these artists. Their legacies in the art world have been solidified from an art historical context, let us now assess how and why.
Figure 2.3: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc* as seen from the side, (1981). Steel panel sculpture, 12 x 120 ft. Federal Plaza, New York City (Deinstalled), Photograph: Tate, London. Copyright: (Photo) Susan Swider (Tate), and Richard Serra.
Figure 2.5: Andres Serrano, *Piss Christ* (1987). Andreas Serrano. Photography, 5 x 3 ¼ ft. Copyright: Andres Serrano.
CHAPTER III: ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE VERSUS
PERCEPTIONS OF THE OBSCENE

Robert Mapplethorpe was a prominent photographer who experienced both the height and the end in the 1980s. His works utilized highly stylized, traditional photographic methods to capture models and scenes that were generally marginalized by the art world and society at large. His legacy is synonymous to the obscenity debates of the 1980s, as many of his works were targeted incorrectly as ‘pornographic’ when they saw wide-spread public display in 1988 and ’89.

According to his biographer, Patricia Morrisroe, Mapplethorpe identified two sources of inspiration in his upbringing, which would punctuate his later life: Catholic schooling and a yearly trip to Coney Island. From religion, Mapplethorpe seemed to gain a sense of order; it was consistent and harmonious in a comforting way, in spite of the fact that Robert frequently bristled simultaneously at the restraints of the religion. The yearly trips to Coney Island provided something slightly different: Not only were the trips an experience of the world outside of Floral Park, but the resident freak-show was Mapplethorpe’s first glimpse of things that are hidden and taboo. He believed heavily in the idea that nothing made something more desirable than being told you couldn’t have or see it. This dichotomy of what is sacred and what is profane, would influence him for the rest of his life.

Mapplethorpe was young, still in this phase of discovering himself and the world when he discovered his penchant for art. With traditional parents, but a creative spirit that often drove him away from classically masculine interests, Mapplethorpe’s upbringing was marked by a split. On one hand, Mapplethorpe desired to emulate his older brother Richard and appease their father’s expectations of athletic, masculine men; on the other, he also desired follow the creative passions which seemed to be his outlet for frustration.
and self-expression. By 1963, Mapplethorpe seemed to find himself stuck in his hometown of Floral Park, helping his mother and father with three younger siblings (fourteen-year-old Susan, and his youngest brothers, who were toddlers at the time) with intentions of attending his Father’s Alma Mater, the Pratt Institute, instead of going away to college as he had initially desired.

3.1 The Emergence of an Artist

It was at this time that Mapplethorpe was first, indirectly introduced to homosexuality, through the discovery of gay pornographic magazines that he was too young to buy, but which he saw sealed and censored at magazine stands. When asked about the experience, and his eventual use of sexual imagery in his photography, Robert seemed to link them back to that same sense of excitement in dealing with the taboo that he had first felt towards the Coney Island freak show. Alongside this secret curiosity, Mapplethorpe seemed to strive to maintain a sense of normalcy as he enrolled in the ROTC at the Pratt institute, an association which would provide the bulk of Mapplethorpe’s social circle at the time. Simultaneously, Mapplethorpe rejected his father’s desires for his son to attend the engineering program at the Pratt Institute; he instead pursued a degree in art. Most of his college career would be marked by an inability to fit in with the traditionally masculine crowd of ROTC engineers who Mapplethorpe surrounded himself with.

Mapplethorpe dropped out of the Pratt institute in 1969, and the 1970s saw him remake himself, embracing the artistic parts of himself and rejecting the notions of traditional masculinity that he had previously strived for, ultimately being happier for it. A large part of this period included what his friend Patti Smith described as
Mapplethorpe’s “Sexual awakening,” although evidence points to the the experience being one of acceptance rather than realization. His embrace of his sexuality would eventually lead Mapplethorpe to the S & M scene, which would invade his work with the symbols and paraphernalia of the Gay BDSM scene.

By the 1950s and 60s, homosexuality had been thrust into the public view, due in part to the surrounding influx of social movements which were concerned with sexual liberation and exploration; increased visibility in the art world was also due in part to artists like Andy Warhol and Jasper Johns providing a label to what would become known as male homosexuality through the themes and messages of specific works.

Mapplethorpe build his career in the 1970s, in the wake of this new recognition and amidst the rising tide of conservative backlash that had begun to build. Through a series of personal connections, particularly to notable art curator Sam Wagstaff, Mapplethorpe began to find success in galleries around New York and California during the early 70s. His works were displayed almost exclusively in private galleries, with some of his early patrons including the Light Gallery and Holly Solomon Gallery (Both in New York). His photography would develop into a distinct style with four preferred subject matters: formal (often celebrity) portraits, the BDSM scene, male and female nudes, and still lives of flowers. His work was highly formalized, adhering to art historical traditions for his lighting and compositions.

3.2 Opinion, Reaction and Debate: “The Perfect Moment”

It wouldn’t be until 1988, that a comprehensive exhibition of Mapplethorpe’s works would display all of his preferred subject matters together. The exhibition was entitled The Perfect Moment, and began its tour in December, presented as a retrospective
in honor of the artist. Mapplethorpe himself, died in the middle of the exhibition’s tour on March 9, 1989 from complications related to AIDS, and missed the bulk of the controversy. Janet Kardon was the curator who organized the exhibition with Mapplethorpe’s assistance.

Kardon’s exhibition came amid a surge of interest in Mapplethorpe’s works, (a similar exhibition was also going to be featured at the Whitney in 1989). An increase in interest from the art world is not unusual leading up to or following the death of an artist, due to the fact that their works increase in value shortly afterwards. This is often reflected by an increase in exhibitions, which both raise the visibility of the artist before works go to auction, gauge the interest of audience, and inform institutions as to whether they should seek to acquire the artist’s works. However, even with this expectation, Kardon’s exhibition attracted far more attention than anticipated, because of the controversy that erupted around The Perfect Moment, and dragged Mapplethorpe’s works into the limelight of the obscenity debate. The attention was in large part a side effect of Kardon’s home institution, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (ICA), being a recipient of funds from the NEA. While the ICA itself is an academic institution, the Mapplethorpe exhibition had been conducted in large part through a grant by the NEA. Once paired with the increased scrutiny from Mapplethorpe’s death and the fact that the retrospective traveled to a wide range of institutions (primarily public and private) attention to Mapplethorpe’s works, and the subsequent concern seen in conservative activist groups was magnified.

While the first part of the exhibition’s tour commenced with little incident, the controversy around Mapplethorpe’s art became clear in June of 1989, when a scheduled stop at the Corcoran Gallery, Washington D.C. was canceled before opening.
Corcoran Gallery was a private gallery, however it had been experiencing financial instability since the 1970s, which left organizers sensitive to criticisms that threatened funding. The cancellation was a reaction to outcry by North Carolina Senator Jesse Helms, who threatened to cut NEA funding if the show opened. The conservative Republican was outraged by the inclusion of images from what Mapplethorpe titled the X-Portfolio, which consisted primarily of his BDSM Scene photography, as well as the inclusion of an image titled Rosie (Figure 3.1), which depicts a toddler-aged girl sitting in a manner that reveals her genitals to the audience. Either way, it is clear that his perceptions of the works were that they were obscene, due to the fact that the subjects depicted images that were taboo (particularly images of the gay BDSM scene) or abhorrent to social morals. In response to Helms’s concerns, Kardon arranged for the exhibition to go on display at a smaller nearby gallery, Project for the Arts (a public, non-collecting institution), where it attracted nearly 50,000 visitors in the 25 days that it was open.

From an institutional standpoint, Helms’ concerns seemed to have the opposite of the desired effect, as this turnout made the Project for the Arts one of the best attended galleries which displayed The Perfect Moment. That said, while Senator Helms’ method of threatening the Corcoran Gallery’s funding was somewhat underhanded, the concerns which his actions reflected were not completely without merit. On May 18, 1989, thirty-six senators had signed a letter indicating the need for a reevaluation into NEA funding standards. Presumably, these senators would have been acting in reflection of their constituents’ concerns. In the letter they say they are concerned with funding going to “undeserving” artists, although it is likely that this was a mask for political and social concerns regarding the recognition of homosexuality.
For many of those who opposed his works, Robert Mapplethorpe’s art reflected parts of society that they were uncomfortable with, and did not want legitimized through the approval of institutions; it was a question of identity. Many groups who opposed Mapplethorpe did so from a point of bigotry: citizens were caught in a moment of political shift as the gay liberation movement and the general public alike had been galvanized by the spread of the AIDs crisis. Others disagreed with his works on less malicious grounds, either questioning the aesthetic merits of his chosen subject matter, or debating whether or not his works were pornographic rather than simply obscene. Robert Mapplethorpe wanted to present his experience in his artworks, but to the audience who did not share that experience, his works were a threatening symbol of social change they did not want and were not ready for. The concerns of Jesse Helms and other Senators, were in part, a reflection of those more general concerns regarding homosexuality, AIDs awareness and the shift in American society.

October of 1989 saw a second attack on the exhibition, this time by a conservative Reverend named Pat Robertson. In response to the exhibition (though it is again unclear if he visited the exhibition himself or had simply heard about it in the press), Robertson sent out a direct mail letter, which informed the public of “Homosexual erotic photographs that were funded by [the recipients’] tax dollars.” Along with the letter Robertson also sent a red envelope which he warned recipients contained “graphic descriptions of… the vile contents.” His language makes it clear that he found the works obscene from the standpoint of being abhorrent and crass with regards to morals and virtue. The list of images was as follows:

1. A Photo of a man with a bull-whip inserted in his rectum. This piece of “art” is listed as a self-portrait of the photographer.
2. A close-up of a man with his “pinky” finger inserted in his penis.
3. A photograph of a man urinating in another man’s mouth.
4. A photo showing one man holding another man’s genitals.
5. A photo of a man’s arm (up to the forearm) in another man’s rectum.
6. A photo of a young pre-school girl with her genitals exposed.
7. A photo of naked children in bed with a naked man.
8. A photo of a man in a suit exposing himself.
9. A photo of a man with his genitals laying on a table.  

Robertson’s descriptions of the images were an incredibly biased account of the show that was clearly aimed to discredit both Mapplethorpe as an artist, and the exhibition which had showcased him. The problem with his presentation, is that it was misleading on several accounts.  

Firstly, the exclusion of images, and the inclusion of only their descriptions prevented audiences from reaching conclusions about the artistic and aesthetic merit of the images on their own. This allowed Robertson to present too-brief descriptions which failed to capture the thematic and artistic goals of Mapplethorpe’s work to present the images in the worst possible light to the general audience. This can be seen in images such as the previously mentioned Rosie, (number 6 on Robertson’s list). Looking at the actual image, the viewer can see that there is nothing nefarious about the portrait, it is simply a photograph of a young girl, who happens to be sitting in a way that reveals she is not wearing any underwear.  

While Mapplethorpe’s photographic interests in the gay BDSM scene were entwined with this sexuality, very few of his works were inherently sexual. His photography sought instead to formalized the subject matter, and make these marginalized subjects recognizable from a photographic and artistic standpoint. The fact that many of his adult nude figures had sensual undertones is more the result of art-historical tradition than Mapplethorpe’s intent. Rosie, is not considered in the same way, because children, even when nude, have been the exception to an art historical tradition that imparts sensuality upon nude figures for hundreds of years. Mapplethorpe’s
subject is very clearly too young for the act to be deliberately sexual, and to imply an erotic undertone in the work is a misrepresentation of Mapplethorpe’s image. However, by utilizing the language “with her genitals exposed,” Robertson has implied that something darker is occurring in the image, as if she is being forced to ‘expose’ herself. In reality, Mapplethorpe’s intention was simply to create a beautiful photograph which captures a moment in the life of a young girl. Even if the image does hold a possibility to cause some discomfort due to the way Rosie is seated, to imply a malicious intent behind the photograph is misleading.

Numbers 1 and 3 on the list also present similar cases for where the subject matter is described in a matter that is technically a correct narrative of the scene, but misconstrues the artist’s intended meaning behind the image. Number one, is talking about Mapplethorpe’s, *Self Portrait with a Bullwhip* (Figure 3.2). In the image Mapplethorpe does have the whip inserted into his own rectum, but the meaning behind the portrait is not simply a depiction of an auto-erotic act, as the description implies. Instead, Mapplethorpe turns to face the camera, aware of the fact that through self-photography he is objectifying himself, but denying the camera (and therefore the viewer) the ability to turn him into a submissive or passive element within the image. He is in complete control of the situation and the image of his own body that will be rendered. The cord of the bullwhip is held in his hand and snakes along the bottom of the image towards where the camera is known to lie, mimicking a capture cord, as if the artist were manually capturing the image (rather than using the delayed shutter, which was his actual technique). The image subverts viewer expectations of the body in art, and gives Mapplethorpe control over the image and his perception within it.

Number 3 on the list is Mapplethorpe’s work *Jim and Tom Sausalito* (Figure 3.3).
Again, the description is technically arcuate, but its brevity purposefully fails to capture the artistic meaning behind Mapplethorpe’s work. The image utilizes stark lighting, reminiscent of the dramatic chiaroscuro technique found in painting. The highlight creates a direction that the eye can follow between the dominant and submissive partners, highlighting both the power play between them, and the intimate act which unites them. This intimacy is the very thing that made some audiences uncomfortable – whether it was because of the homosexual nature or the relationship, the implications of the BDSM dynamics that were clearly visible, or some combination of both depended on the viewer; however, that dichotomy seems to be what Mapplethorpe was seeking to depict in his work. How could something as beautiful as the deep interpersonal connection between two persons in a relationship be depicted in the same image as something so culturally taboo? The same social conventions which had pushed the gay community out of sight from mainstream society were the same conventions that gave Mapplethorpe’s work the dark, secretive undertones implicit in dimly lit back alley in which the scene appears to take place.138

The Second way Reverend Robertson’s red envelope mislead his readers was through the inclusion of number 7 on his list, “A photo of naked children in bed with a naked man.” Simply put, no such image existed in the entirety of Robert Mapplethorpe’s portfolio, let alone the images featured in The Perfect Moment. The inclusion of this accusation was slanderous. When juxtaposed with the misleading descriptions of Rosie, and Self Portrait with a Bull Whip, the addition of number 7 seems to have been included with the intent of painting Mapplethorpe as some kind of sexual predator. To imply that Rosie’s skirt was lifted against her will, and the knowledge that Mapplethorpe frequently utilized himself as a model combines with the description of number 7 to suggest it
would be Mapplethorpe in the bed. The insinuation played into harmful stereotypes about homosexual men. Anti-pornography coalitions often initially got involved with the pornography debate out of a desire to prevent either the exploitation of children in pornography, or the exposure of children to pornographic images.  

The Inclusion of description number seven suggests some combination of three things about the Reverend to be true: either he was misinformed about the exhibition’s contents and was passing judgment about work he had not seen himself, he was trying to appeal to the sympathies of his audience, or he was playing into stereotypes as a means of presenting Mapplethorpe in a slanderous way. Only Robertson knows the true reason why number 7 was included among his described images when in fact no comparable image had ever been produced by a publically funded artist.

The third method through which the Reverend misrepresented the exhibition and his complaints: The red envelope letter was signed by Robertson as the representative of a conservative interest group dubbed the Christian Coalition. While it is certainly true that religious conservatives found the works of Robert Mapplethorpe obscene, and many targeted the works of Mapplethorpe and other gay artists on the grounds of their religious values, Robertson seems to have formed his Coalition with the intent of giving credibility to his outrage. The Red Envelope letter was signed and dated October 25, 1989, only a week after the Christian Coalition had been founded. The amount of misrepresentation in the letter, certainly suggests that Mapplethorpe’s work was not being judged at all on its artistic merits in this instance, but instead on a fundamental objection to his person and the subject of his photography. This distinction sets the complaints of Reverend Robertson apart from those of Senator Helms, who at least might have been acting on behalf of his constituents’ concerns. While religious art has played a key role in
development of art, modern society (especially in America) distinguishes between church and state, so religious objections do not stand on their own as a valid reason to limit state sponsorship of artworks.

As the show continued its tour, The Perfect Moment would face a third and final controversy, this time in Cincinnati, Ohio, where the exhibition was scheduled to appear at the Contemporary Art Center, a publically funded gallery, starting in March of 1990. Upon arrival, Cincinnati Police seized many of the photographs under the accusation that they were “criminally obscene,” taking the images into evidence for trial. Dennis Barrie, the Center’s director was arrested on charges of pandering and the use of a minor in pornography (again, probably due to misconceptions regarding Rosie which circulated among the general public). During the trial, it was decided that each image would have to be proved to stand on its own artistic merit as a work of art, rather than being judged as a whole exhibition, because each image had “a visual and unique image permanently recorded.” Ultimately, the charges against both Barrie and the Art Center were dropped, much to the relief of Mapplethorpe’s supporters and of Kardon, who continued the exhibition to its end without further incident.

3.3: Legacy after Controversy and the Stagnation of a Legitimate Debate

The case study of Robert Mapplethorpe offers us a unique view, as there is perhaps no other artist whose career has been so thoroughly defined by a single show or controversy. In the realm of art history, his body of work is still studied today for both its artistic merits and as the prime example of censorship in the art world and controversial exhibitions. However, in the public memory the controversy is what stands as Mapplethorpe’s legacy, forgetting the images in favor of the story. While nearly every
article on Mapplethorpe discusses the controversy of the *Perfect Moment* exhibition and it’s resulting court cases, the images themselves are almost never addressed. Institutions seem to have found a way to balance this rift in recollection. Exhibitions which feature his work have occurred with relative frequency since his death because the recognition of his name makes it a draw for both critics and the public.\(^{141}\) However, his most controversial images – those from the *X-Portfolio*, and *Rosie* in particular – have been continuously excluded from exhibition.\(^{142}\)

In this instance, institutions and audience have formed a compromised image of Mapplethorpe and his works, which defines his role as a cultural icon and artist within the context of art history and society. Institutions that were willing to present his works at the end of his life were faced with an incredibly charged debate regarding obscenity, which risked public funding for the institutions. In the long run, it seems his works have been classified as important, and his legacy (whichever version it may be) as worth remembering; the very outrage that sought to destroy him not only changed what he was remembered for, but also helped to solidify his place in the art historical record. The consideration his works were being given at the end of Mapplethorpe’s life was tentative, typical to what is seen at the end of artists’ lives. It was the degree of attention from activists and media made Mapplethorpe a household name by the time *Perfect Moment* closed in 1989. However, the unwillingness of contemporary institutions to present the very works which roused the controversy he is remembered for seems to me to be disingenuous to Mapplethorpe’s memory and to those who fought so determinedly in the debate over his works. By neglecting to show the images at all the institutions are validating the misleading representations of Reverend Robertson, who sought to shut down Mapplethorpe’s Art without consideration of it’s merit.\(^{143}\) Effectively ignores both
proponents of Robert Mapplethorpe’s work and those opponents who levied legitimate concerns about the artistic merits of Mapplethorpe’s work and what it reflected about our society.
Figure 3.1: Robert Mapplethorpe, Rosie, (1976). Gelatin silver print, 25 ¼ x 24 ¼ in. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, Gift of the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Copyright: Estate of Robert Mapplethorpe (Los Angeles County Museum of Art).
CHAPTER IV: JO SPENCE AND PHOTOTHERAPY
EMBRACING THE OBSCENE

Jo Spence was a British artist who was heavily involved in the feminist movement and utilized photography as a means of transgression. Her photography embraced aspects of the human body that were typically marginalized by the beauty standards of both her society and the contemporary art world. The aging, sick and deformed human body have not been typical subjects for artists, but they were the subjects that Spence preferred, using her own body to capture the person and mental state behind a less than perfect body. Born in 1934, most of her formative years were spend amidst the chaos of World War II, an era she spoke and wrote little about. For Jo Spence, her life story seems to begin in 1949 at the age of thirteen, when Spence left school having failed the exams which would allowed her entrance into what she called “the tech.” Her parents sent her to secretarial school instead, and so from 1951 until the mid 60s, she worked as a secretary at a variety of jobs. She seemed destined for the occupational path that thousands of girls her age would eventually follow.

However, durring her time as a white-collar secretary, Spence became interested in photography. She was introduced to the medium while receiving training at Kodak, which intended to help her become a useful shop assistant. This training would blossom into a lifelong fascination with the medium that lead her to desire work in that field through the rest of her secretarial years. That dream would not be realized until 1967, by which time Spence had gone through a series of personal tragedies that lead her to leave everything she had known and move to Germany. It was here that Spence would begin a burgeoning photography career, wherein her abilities build off of experience as a hobbyist photographer and her earliest clients acted as guinea pigs. Her photographic technique was entirely self-taught through experimentation, but it is this trait that gave
her works their unique edge, as she had was very well versed in the method of photography, and had an acute understanding of both it’s mechanics and Theory as a result.148

4.1 From Commercial to Critical:

The transition from secretary to photographer would prove to be a defining moment in Spence’s life. Living in Germany, Spence built a career that would lead her to discover new social interests that were increasingly involved in her artwork and artistic expression.149 As a commercial photographer, she specialized in weddings, family portraiture and actor portfolios. However, the 1970s saw a shift in her focus and career. Her time documenting the idealized moments of life with her commercial clients had offered Spence access to people of all walks of life.150 She found herself increasingly interested in their stories and considered the interactions to be educational ones, which helped to form her political beliefs. Her earliest works reflect a desire to simply capture the world and preserve it, almost in the sense of Sontag’s “faithful recording,” although she would grow critical of traditional documentation styles later in life.151 Works like, *Adventure Playgrounds* (Figure 4.1), show lives in motion as they existed day to day, not the idealist portraiture which had facilitated the first part of her career.

As she progressed along the path of documentation, Spence would find herself further and further occupied with questions of meaning and with her newfound political awareness. In 1974, Spence met a man named Terry Dennett by chance, who would become a life-long collaborator and friend and who helped to encourage Spence down the path of documentation while helping her hone her craft and find new subjects. Alongside her evolving political career, Spence found herself heavily involved in academic spaces,
in spite of not having gone to college. Spence became known as a writer, educator, organizer and broadcaster, whose unique perspectives on photography offered new modes of looking at the medium to her colleagues who had formed careers via the traditional route of schooling. It was during this time, that Spence became involved with the Feminist movement. She helped to found the Hackney Flashers, also in 1974, which was a collaboration of feminist artists and writers based out of London. The collective was interested in themes of subject and photographer, the relationship between the female subject and the viewer, all subjects which were typical to the Feminist movements of the time, they organized exhibitions and press releases to these ends.152

Spence had found a community in which not only her political opinions, but also her artworks, self expression and self-exploration would begin to thrive.153 She made a name for herself as an activist and writer, to which her artistic career sometimes seemed secondary. Spence’s work from the 1970s saw her stylistic transition, wherein she began to experiment with less traditional documentary forms that better captured “true expression,” as a means of portraying the emotion of situations she photographed.154 Now grounded in self assurance of her own opinions, and having found a place where she felt she belonged as both an artist and an activist, Spence would have to face her hardest challenge yet.

4.2: Cancer Shock: Phototherapy and Transgression of the Body

1982 is a year that would define both Spence and her body of work for the rest of her life, as this is the year that she was diagnosed with Breast Cancer.155 At the time, a cancer diagnosis was still viewed as a death sentence, one which was fraught with pain and suffering along the way, and which any person could get. A 1981 article from the
Washington Post, captures the disillusionment that many patients felt quiet well.\textsuperscript{156} One woman reported that she was depending “more on God than on drugs.”\textsuperscript{157} Another patient, who had been made incredibly ill by an experimental drug reported that he was determined to beat it, and seemed to be optimistic, only for the report to confirm his death within ten months of being interviewed. This was the world that Spence had been thrust into upon receiving her diagnosis.

She describes a tumultuous relationship with her own emotions upon learning the truth. The news had left her her simultaneously robbed of her “feeling of expectation” and faced with the consequence of disease.\textsuperscript{158} Spence refused to become another passive statistic. Art is, at its core about expression. Spence began using her photography to express her feelings about her own experience within the British healthcare system, and her relationship to her own treacherous body.\textsuperscript{159} She viewed the camera as a tool, which she could use to explore the topic of cancer – her own cancer – through two lenses. First, it was an exploration of her own relationship to her body and her health. Second, it was a form of documentation, done in collaboration with Terry Dennett and others (sometimes including ward doctors and nurses). Spence’s photography took on new depth trying to record her mental state in relation to the disease by capturing her physical one\textsuperscript{160}

Spence dubbed the work, “Phototherapy,” and for her it acted as a collaboration between the academic considerations of art and the photographic medium, and her own need to regain control in her life following the diagnosis. Spence had begun utilizing herself as the subject in the late 1070s. Images such as, \textit{Colonization} (Figure 4.2) were her way of expressing a balance between public and private, and the way the body can reflect both a person’s mental state and their environment. In the example of \textit{Colonization} Spence literally occupies a space between public and private, the doorway between a
home and the street. Dressed only in a skirt and standing in a controlled posture, Spence is in some ways emulating traditional depictions of the female body. However, the way her expression betrays a stoic disposition instead of a graceful one, and the broom clutched in her hand are far from the half nude statues of old, or the figures of Robert Mapplethorpe and other contemporaries, carefully composed and presented in the best light. Her posing seems instead to reminisce on what society would say her place as a middle aged woman should be: out of the way, useful and utilitarian. Spence’s body did not belong as the center of attention, certainly not in a society that valued youth and a particular body type that Spence herself stated she’d never had. Spence wanted to challenge those expectations in her work, while finding away to emulate the psychology of the sick and the marginalized.

During her course of treatment, the questions which Spence began to tackle seemed to be ones that were more specifically geared to considering the world as she and other women related to it. “Given that women are expected to be the object of male gaze, are expected to beautify themselves in order to become lovable, are still fighting for basic rights over their own bodies, it seemed to [Spence] that the breast could be seen as a metaphor for [women’s] struggles,” Spence stated in her autobiographical photographic survey, *Putting Myself in the Picture*. Works such as *Entering a New World* (Figure 4.3) from her photo-novel, *Cancer Shock*, document her health and her mental state during the time of her diagnosis. She consented to the removal of the tumor from her left breast, but then rejected orthodox medicine, which she had seen wear away at people. She opted to follow a homeopathic route offered by Chinese medicine, and rigid control of her diet and lifestyle instead. It seemed to work, and Spence was able to continue living in remission for about a decade.
After achieving remission, Spence’s work did not lose the contemplative and direct documentary edge which had come to mark her artistic style. Her artworks continued to be transgressive in two main ways. First, by utilizing herself as both subject and photographer, Spence had subverted the art world expectations which classified woman as subject as opposed to maker, and the subject as passive in the creation of art. Simultaneously, she was raising questions of the body beautiful. Expectations had been established for the human figure in the art world to subscribe to a certain aesthetic. In society at large particular body shapes had been idealized as perfect, it was a body type that Spence had not had before her diagnosis, and was unlikely to achieve. After her diagnosis, she was left scarred as a side effect of the surgery which had contributed to her successful remission. Her body was one in crisis, one which had left her feeling uncomfortable and out of control.

The image *How Do I Begin to Take Responsibility?* (Figure 4.4) captured both Spence’s contemplative mental state, and the bridge between political motivations, documentation and art that her work sought to achieve. In it, Spence’s body is captured in fragments, a part of a phototherapy session which allowed Spence to see and come to terms with the state of her body in a series of close ups. In the images the details of her body, which in many ways were considered flaws, are rendered visible, undisguised by makeup, clothes or by the figure as a whole, and further marked by the pen which writes out the words of the title. In a full body image, Jo Spence sits with her back to the audience, looking in a mirror with her hands clasped in front of her, perhaps in worry or perhaps in a mimicry of prayer. Her body is on display, but her main concern are her own perceptions, as she views herself in the mirror, lost in contemplation of her own figure. The image mixes Spence’s interest in the documentation of her own life and disease, and
the emotional toll of disease on herself and the public. The image captures the boundaries between public and private perception of her diseased body, simultaneously criticizing traditional documentation, which sought to capture the emotions of disease, but not the actual trauma to the body, the ugly parts of that disease in a ploy for sympathy.

As Spence’s work continued, her series entitled *Narratives of Dis-ease* (Done in collaboration with Dennett and their friend Dr. Tim Sheard), would become both her best known, and most transgressive work. This series is most representative of Spence’s legacy, as the mid to late 1980s saw her draw the greatest amount of public recognition and criticism for her artworks. In this series, Spence sought to give shape to the inner thoughts which plague both our perceptions of and reactions to our outer bodies. Images such as *Greedy* (Figure 4.5), and *Included*, (Figure 4.6) point to the assortment of mental struggles which are reflected on our bodies or which are reflections of our bodies. The works are at once social and personal, and employ the camera not as a method of preserving the perfect image, but as a means of finding the most unflattering angles of the human body and chaotic experience of life housed within.

*Greedy* was noted by Spence to be a part of a phototherapy effort in which she confronted her unhealthy dependence on a sugary diet. The image is very forward in its presentation, depicting Spence nude, hoarding chocolate bars with the titular word scrawled across her stomach. Spence’s hair is unkempt and she has chocolate smeared across her face: it is unattractive, but it is supposed to be. The phototherapeutic element was a dissuasive one. It was meant as a deterrent, to remind Spence of the negative effects overeating sugary foods had on both her physical body. The image shoves all the worst aspects of Spence’s body into her own face. The image highlights a weakness, and
problematizes it, but it also humanizes it. By standing bare in front of the audience for judgment Spence is acknowledging that people will view her body and her weakness negatively, and challenges viewers to consider the image’s wider implications and not to pass judgment on her, the subject, at face value.

*Included* is an image which takes on a more internalized battle. In it, Spence unapologetically displays the emotions of insecurity she felt throughout her cancer treatment. The image utilizes visual cues to create an image of someone who is not only vulnerable, but who is aware that they are vulnerable, and scared by that fact. Her nude form is hunched defensively, and the distraught look on her face speaks to the overwhelming nature of a cancer diagnosis. She clutches a teddy bear in her arms. Frequently given as a gift after traumatic events, the stuffed animal also covey’s further vulnerability. Spence is very clearly a grown woman, but the way she clutches the teddy bear is reminiscent of a child. Not only does this image help to enhance the image of someone who is defenseless against their will, vulnerable to circumstance, but it also seems to highlight the overly gentile way that the sick and dying are treated. They are tended to in a manner that tends to exceed simple bedside manners; as doctors and nurses feel sorry for their patient they may go so far as to treat them like a child, unable to fully understand full breadth of a situation that the patient alone has to deal with.

4.3 Cancer Perks: Critical Response to a Dying Woman

Spence’s work seemed to skip over a phase of discovery, wherein most artists attract private patrons to gain acceptance in private galleries before they are considered by the art world at large. Throughout her career, Spence’s works were exhibited almost exclusively at academic institutions; if they were presented in public or private
institutions, it was almost always in the context of either a feminist retrospective, or exhibitions which were accompanied by artist talks that discussed the themes Spence frequently explored. She had a well founded academic reputation, and other feminists as well as curators who were close to the movement were interested by her. I believe the odd trajectory her career took can be explained by a simple matter of association. By the time Spence was seriously producing artworks for an exhibition context her contacts through other artists and the feminist movement likely pushed her to spaces that were most willing to work with her ideals. Among first her friend group and then the rest of the art world Spence had built a reputation as an academic first and then as an artist.

She was incredibly well regarded in academic fields. The scholar and student based audiences that academic institutions were catering to generally seeming to understand the thematic reasoning behind her works, even if the confrontational nature of the images themselves were sometimes hard to swallow. This can be seen most clearly through critiques of her work that came from art critics, and journalists who specialized in art world reporting. If nothing else, her frequent and continued featuring at institutions of this type shows that the organizers of academic shows felt that her work provided a unique and legitimate interpretation to the the modern world’s preoccupation with the human body, and themes of Feminist art. For example, Spence’s work was reviewed by Robert Clark while on display at the Ikon Gallery (a public, educational gallery) as part of an exhibition on feminist Art. Clark’s a reputable critic of the art world and cultural events in London, who was writing for the Guardian until early 2017. He praised Spence’s work for it’s “courageous honesty,” in the themes she addressed and in the way her work delivered it’s massage “with more than a hint of rebellious humour.”

Other critics, who viewed her work from a level of aesthetics first and academics
second tended to understand what she was trying to convey, but found the method of her photography to be “obtrusive or heavy handed,” in their presentation. These are the words of William Packer, a painter and critic who viewed works with a critical eye that was informed by his own practical experience as a painter. His words simply capture the major complaint of art-world critics that was leveled against Spence’s work. Her delivery of the images was obscene, excessive to the extent that the aesthetics of the work almost undermined the meaning because it was so direct. Interestingly, few critics were openly hostile in their assessment of Spence’s work, even though the in-your-face nature of her works clearly crossed lines of body image and discussions of disease into a realm of obscenity. Her reputation and the fact that her works offered a unique viewpoint to the body-focused concern that feminists had with female reputation seemed to balance out the concerns of many within the art world and academia.

Outside of the academic and art worlds, Spence’s work was not as well received. The fact that her work rarely appeared at public and private galleries on it’s own is the first sign that the general public was not very interested in her works. Responses of the general public to Spence’s works are difficult to find, however there were times that her work was reviewed by individuals who were not specialized in the art world. These reactions can offer us an insight into how the general public might have reacted to her works. William Holmes offered what is perhaps the most scathing review of Spence. He was not an art critic, but a television critic, and responded to Spence’s work when he first saw it televised on the BBC. After seeing an interview which showcased some of Spence’s photography, and a live performance, wherein Spence dumped sugar over her naked body. Holmes’s article was short, but his tone was simultaneously harsh and dismissive: “You cannot ask the question whether [Spence’s photographs] are good art,
since they are justified by being good therapy. Their Value is the effect they have.”

Holmes’ tactic, in which he willingly engaged with the therapeutic aspects of Spence’s but dismissed the artistic and documentarian commentary they provided as unimportant is not an unusual interpretation. Many critics who viewed Spence’s works from outside of the art world lenses expressed discomfort with the works. Interestingly, Holmes’s review, with it’s harsh dismissal, is quite mild as a critique, a pattern that was seen somewhat regularly in regards to Spence’s works. This is perhaps a result of what one might call ‘cancer-perks,’ or more broadly ‘illness-perks.’ Spence’s works could certainly possess deep meanings, but they were intentionally abrasive upon first glance, especially when both the subject matter and photographic style seemed to defy audience expectations for what was considered to be ‘Art.’ It is likely, that Spence would have received harsher criticism, had her works been in wide distribution before she fell ill (or had she never been sick at all).

Holmes’ reaction was not unfounded and he was not the first to criticize the nature of her photographic presentation, but perhaps his forgiving tone was because he did not want to be remembered as the critic who was mean to a dying woman. Robert Mapplethorpe’s biographer, Patricia Morrisroe, remembers a similar easing of the harshest criticisms against him in the last year or so of his life, when his battle with AIDS was both most publicized and most visible. The public has great sympathy for illness, as it is the common factor to which we are all equally vulnerable. However, that same sympathy is likely the spawn of a fear of our own demise, which means that while dying artists had the public’s sympathy, the audience did not necessarily want to see the evidence of the artists’ slow deaths. Spence’s disregard for this discomfort, and confrontation of its origins was both the element of her work that made her stand out
most in the areas she was recognized, and the most significant factor that prevented her work from reaching widespread recognition in the general public.

4.4 Legacy and the Contemplation of Dying Artists

Spence’s work was unconventional take on the body-positive feminist movements, and public reactions offer an interesting insight into the way that the public can choose to interact with artworks that they have a hard time appreciating as Art. It is a radically different approach than the response to Mapplethorpe’s photography. Spence died in 1992, two years after being diagnosed with Leukemia that was far more aggressive than her initial bout of Breast Cancer. Her works have continued to be recognized in exhibitions of Feminist Artists, and photographic commentary and documentation. The primary outlet of her works still remains academic institutions, although Spence herself is now unavailable to speak.

Her reputation in the art world is that of a woman who was not afraid to break down barriers and redraw the guidelines for what can be considered art. However, her lukewarm response in the general public suggests that the value of Spence’s body of work is primarily academic and holds less social value than the works of other feminist artists whose work resonated with the public. The very evident holding back of criticism to her photographic method suggests that perhaps a greater discussion of societal responses to illness should be undertaken, but the art world is not the place for those discussions to be presented. Unlike other movement’s in the 1970s who’s artistic endeavors emboldened and enhanced conversation, Spence’s work instead seemed to make many of those who opposed her chosen subject matter more determined to ignore
her. The response to her work speaks to the power of public interest as a driving force behind institutional selection, as her work had never gained popularity in public institutions, where demand for her work and subject matter has not been voiced.

I believe that Spence was perhaps ahead of her time, and had she been alive today her work might be better received. More recent body-positivity social movements have increased awareness for a wide range of body types that fall outside of traditional beauty standards. Additionally, as medical research has advanced, discussions of the sick and dying have eased into the general public consciousness through mass media. Perhaps there will come a time when Spence’s works will be revisited and resonate better with the public, increasing their social value. For now, her work is likely to remain as primarily important within the academic world.
FIGURES FOR CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

This analysis of two specific artists’ works offer us insights into the ways in which audiences and institutions interact with one another to determine the value of artworks as Art. The photographic works of Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence were both dedicated to investigating areas of society that were generally left unexplored by the public at large, and the art world offered them a platform upon which their messages could be heard. The intensive negative response to Robert Mapplethorpe is wholly indicative of the heightened emotions that surrounded much of his preferred subject matter during his lifetime. This showed the relevance of his works in the context of the 1980s, and amplified their social value as a part of the wider debates regarding obscenity and the human form in Art. Meanwhile, the mixed response to Jo Spence’s photographs indicates both the prevalence of her subject matter in society and the nature of that subject matter as something that people were either unwilling to confront during her time. Her unique outlook made her work an important viewpoint within the academic debates of the art world, but her work was not as important socially, where the general public was unwilling to engage with her subject matter through artistic mediums.

It is clear that the audience plays an essential role in determining the value of art by providing interest in the artists, works and subject matters presented. This interest can be expressed in a variety of ways, but the reactions of the general public are incredibly telling with regards to the relevance of an artists’ works in contemporary culture. This response helps to inform institutions which artists will be remembered into perpetuity (increasing both the material value of individual artworks, and the social value of that artist based on reputation and name-recognition going forward). Ultimately though, it is institutions who have control over how artists, their works and legacies will be
remembered moving forward.

Institutions cater to different audiences within the general public: Academic institutions to young students who are new to the art world and to academics who are most interested in the theoretical aspects of art. Public institutions cater primarily to a local community, providing a space that serves to educate and stand as a testament to the reputation of the community it represents. Private institutions cater to the public that is more closely tied to the art world and market, to which they are more closely tied and provide a pace for a private collection to be displayed as a means of reputation. All three of these institutional types can have access to public funding in different degrees, and it is this factor which helps to determine how invested they are in designing their exhibitions as a means of giving back to the general public through service of the Public Interest.

Institutions that seek to benefit Public Interest through education must take the interests of the general public into account when designing exhibitions. At Public institutions this is especially important, as the community will not want to continue supporting a museum or gallery that consistently presents exhibitions about art movements, themes or eras that the community doesn’t find interesting. The same principle effects Private institutions to a lesser degree depending on how much of their funding is derived from public sources. Academic institutions have education as a foremost concern, however because their audience is more specialized, the types of exhibitions they put together might not hold the same appeal to the general public at large.

The museums and galleries which seek to benefit the Public Interest by providing access to arts education take this role very seriously, and benefit from the collection of experts which comprise their staff. However, in order to perform this duty to the highest
degree, institutions cannot be constantly preoccupied by the threat of pulled funding. After private institutions identify new artists, public and academic galleries have a difficult job in identifying the ways in which artists will remain important into perpetuity. They need the freedom to present exhibitions that fully encapsulate an artists’ body of work or a subject matter that has received extensive attention by a section of the art world so that they can properly gauge the response of their respective audiences. Threats to funding can limit said freedom by forcing institutions to make curatorial decisions that are not decided by the importance of works to the subject at hand, but by the potential for the general public to take offense because the work is potentially obscene in some way.

These types of threats to funding are problematic because they prevent the advancement of art history and artistic expression. The general public is welcome to voice disapproval for artworks that they find obscene, or which are not up to a standard that they are comfortable classifying as Art. However, that voice should never go so far as to try and take on a curatorial authority, especially through the threat of cuts to funding which will impair the ability of an institution to do its job moving forward. The general public may not always understand what makes a piece significant to the progress and evolution of art, but they can determine what is relevant to their concerns and bolster the reputation of an artist through either ardent approval or ardent protest, such as in the case of Robert Mapplethorpe. Just as easily, a lack of interest in the subject or presentation of artworks can speak to a limitation in the social value of an artists. The work of Jo Spence acts as an excellent example of this phenomenon, but her importance in the academic realm of art also shows us that the expertise of institutions is needed when making value judgments about such a specialized field.

Both of these artists have been accepted into the art historical record. Their works
have been classified as Art through a collaborative effort between art institutions and their respective audiences that identifies why these artworks maintain value in our society. By interacting with artistic themes that were separated from what was typical to the art world during their lifetimes both Robert Mapplethorpe and Jo Spence have solidified an artistic legacy that plays in the gray area between the beautiful and the obscene. Now, it is the job of institutions who validate their memory and legacy to present their artworks in a way that is as wholly representative of their person and artistic interests as possible.
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These concepts and the interplay between institution and audience will be covered more in depth in the first chapter. For overviews of museum economics, and audience see:


5 Ibid.


Roxana Modreanu, “The Audience of Contemporary Art: Between Influenced and Influencer.”


13 Commercial galleries’ concern with the resale of art affects the audience, by prioritizing collectors and buyers over visitors who cannot afford to purchase art. Their access to profit from the resale of art also completely limits the access of commercial galleries to public funding. Commercial galleries are more concerned with the material value of artworks than the social value, and this concern aligns them more closely to the art market than with the concerns of the general public or art historical importance of works within the art world. For more information on the types of profits and funding available to different types of institutions and the different audience types that these institutions appeal to see:

Frey and Meier, “Cultural Economics.”

Modreanu, “Audience of Contemporary Art.”

14 Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” 78-80


18 A comprehensive overview of different institutional types access to and use of different types of funding can be found in Frey and Meier, “Cultural Economics,” (this particular statistic sites page 405). It is widely used during this portion of chapter 1 as a reference.

A brief history of federal funding for arts museums was also referenced in:


Information for Audience-based patronage also came from:

Modreanu, “Audience of Contemporary Art.”

20 Frey and Meier, “Cultural Economics,” 405.

21 It is true that a large-scale donation of artworks by a private donor is the foundation for many public institutions as well. The difference between public and private collects is the degree of financial responsibility that is assumed by this donor after the relinquishment of his or her artworks.


24 In cases where the gallery space is not free to the general public, Academic institutions nearly always
grantee free entry to students and staff of the affiliated university, and maintain low ticket costs for everyone else, similarly to public institutions. This can act as a draw for future students, providing a level of incentive to academic institutions to keep as wide an audience as possible.

33 Ibid., 324.
34 Modreanu, “The Audience of Contemporary Art.”
35 Frey and Meier, “Cultural Economics,” 405-406
It should be noted here, that some museums and galleries do not have permanent collections, only maintaining the space for temporary exhibitions, while other institutions might maintain a permanent collection, but not permanent exhibitions, rotating through what portions of the collection are on display.

38 Modreanu, “The Audience of Contemporary Art.”
39 Frey and Meier, “Cultural Economics.” 410-411
40 Ibid., 405-6.
41 Ibid. 407-9.
43 Ibid. 406.
44 Ibid. 404-5.
52 Johnson, “Accumulation and Collecting,” 76-78.
53 Hammond et al., “The Role of the University Art Museum.”
54 This can include the subject of contemporary art.
55 The discussion of audience response to exhibition space is discussed primarily from the work of Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” 75-90.
56 Visual mediums are understandable in a way that is egalitarian, compared to other forms of communication. Unlike those which depend on mathematics or language, viewers do not generally require a particular skill to decipher an image placed in front of them. While they may miss culture specific cues in gesture or symbolism the subject and aesthetic beauty of works can be judged though the image alone.
57 Ibid., 398
58 Johnson, “Accumulation and Collecting,” 76-78.
60 Frey and Meier, “Cultural Economics,” 398.
63 This is especially true in national museums, or those which bare the name of their host city in the institution’s name, where associations to the public are strongest. It is also why exhibitions that are funded through tax dollars can fall under such heavy scrutiny by the audience. Modreanu, “The Audience of Contemporary Art.”
This may seem counterintuitive in recent years, when direct visitation to art institutions has been in decline. However, in this instance I am only referring in part to the aspect of galleries which might inform national or local identity through education and validation of artworks. Here, I am referring more specifically to the reputations of institutions and their works on a wider scale. The more reputable a country or city’s museums and galleries are, the more cultured that country or city appears on a national or international level. Even if members of the general public are not directly visiting museums regularly, they will likely still care about the reputation of that institution, and how that reputation reflects on their community as a whole.

This is a somewhat self fulfilling perception, as it is the act of acquisition which legitimizes artworks and the ability to do so which legitimizes institutions, but it is a perception associated with institutions nonetheless.


71 O’Neil, The Culture of Curating, 87-90.

The globalization of the art world is best reflected in the increase of so-called ‘blockbuster’ traveling exhibitions and biennales which spread on an international level. This trend had begun in the 1960s and 70s, but saw a new peak in the 1980s, which saw the coining of the term ‘glocal’ to describe the new relationship between local and international art markets, exhibition interests, and institutions (as well as their curators).

72 Jacobs and Welizer, “Comment: Swinging Too Far to the Left.” 689-690.
73 For information on the increase in conservative action, and the voice of political activists as debates evolved between the 60s and 80s see the following:
Jacobs and Welizer, “Comment: Swinging Too Far to the Left.”

74 For information on how activism in the art world evolved along side these political shifts see:

75 In the 1980s, few laws (at least on the national level) limited obscenity, but many were in place to limit the production and distribution of pornography. Articles such as the following show how many of these regulations began as a concern regarding the safety of children, and protecting them against either exploitation in, or exposure to pornographic images. The original intent of these laws was not malicious, although frequently their application to the art world, was.

76 This will be discussed in greater detail later, utilizing the case study of criticisms leveled against Robert Mapplethorpe.

77 Mesch, Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945, 1-5.
78 For two interesting opinions that are useful in summarizing the art vs pornography debate specifically see the following two sources, written in the same magazine, one as a response to the other:

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76 In the 1980s, few laws (at least on the national level) limited obscenity, but many were in place to limit the production and distribution of pornography. Articles such as the following show how many of these regulations began as a concern regarding the safety of children, and protecting them against either exploitation in, or exposure to pornographic images. The original intent of these laws was not malicious, although frequently their application to the art world, was.

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77 Mesch, Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945, 1-5.
78 For two interesting opinions that are useful in summarizing the art vs pornography debate specifically see the following two sources, written in the same magazine, one as a response to the other:
regarding how the feminist movement should treat the female body. On one hand, the sex positive feminist movement sought to liberate the female body from male control and give women the right to control it’s display and perception, including it’s sexualization. On the other hand, anti-pornography feminists viewed any sexualization of the female form as negative. For more information, refer to the following:

Mesch, *Art and Politics*.

83 Ibid., 7-11.
84 Meyer, *Outlaw Representation*, 159.
85 Ibid., 160.
87 Ibid., 222
89 Jacobs and Welizer, “Swinging Too Far to the Left,” 689-691.
97 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 211.
101 Friedman, “Public Things in the Modern City,” 64-66.
102 Ibid., 372-3.
110 Ibid, 118.
111 Henry M. Sayre, A World of Art, 506-514
112 Susan Sontag, On Photography, 115-120.
113 Ibid, 115-120.
115 Ibid., 12-14.
116 Mesch, *Art and Politics*, 99-100
117 Ibid., 112-114.


Ibid., 28-37.

Ibid., 47-55.


Ibid., 3.

Ibid., 3-5


This same interest, paired with Mapplethorpe’s artistic choices, where what ultimately generated the controversy which surrounded his artworks. However, they were also the aspects of Mapplethorpe’s artwork which made his work accessible to his artistic community, and what made his work relevant to the social conversations happening during his time.


This conclusion is drawn from a survey of museum websites (to determine if his works were on display in institutions which owned them) and a survey of reviews of, photographs from, and catalogues for exhibitions that have featured Mapplethorpe’s work since his death.

In this line, I do not mean to imply that Reverend Robertson needed to critique the work on an artistic level himself. Whether or not he chose to engage with the works that offended him is a decision he has to make. The problem with the Reverend’s criticism was the way in which it attempted to disallow any discussion of the aesthetic merits of Mapplethorpe’s photography, including by art critics who were more qualified to do so than the Reverend himself.

Jo Spence, *Art and Feminism*, 293.


Ibid., 14-26.

Ibid., 26-28.


Ibid.


Spence, *Putting Myself in the Picture*, 66-67

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157 Ibid.
158 Spence, *Putting Myself if in the Picture*, 151.
159 Ibid., 150-171.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid., 155.
162 Ibid., 153-154.
164 Spence, *Cultural Sniping*, 137-139.

168 Ibid.
171 “Biography,” Jo Spence Memorial Archive.