

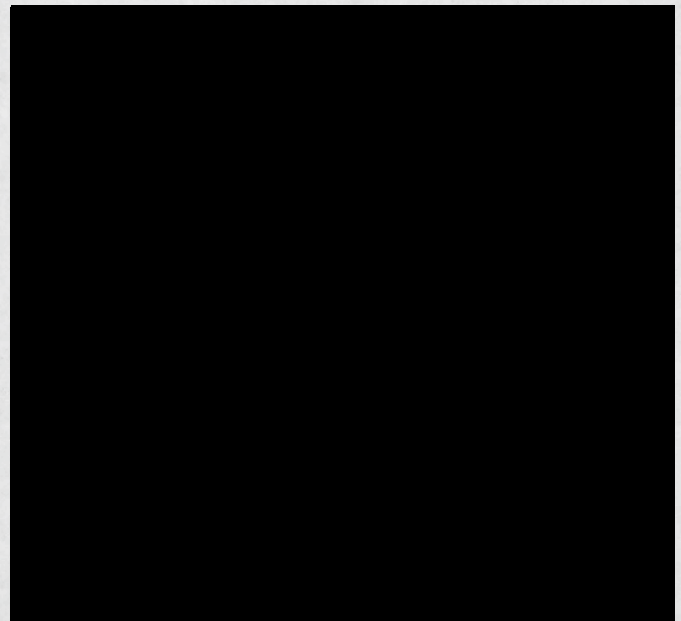
Religion, Sex and Shame

By
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Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art

Chapel Hill

2003



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To Mike

If repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the Classical Age, it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at considerable cost.

-Michael Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1 (1976)

Photography

Fig. 1. Triptych

Fig. 2. Family Portrait

Fig. 3. Gay Marriage

Fig. 4. Mary and Joseph



My work is an attempt to explore and understand bigotry and the fear of diversity. Whether or not we are cognizant of it, we live in a culture, and most important to my work, a visual culture, that is heterosexist, puritanical and patriarchal. This climate gives no support or guidance to any kind of expression outside the "norm." I am well aware of the effects of the prejudice. What I chose to record parallels my own exploration of these issues, specifically my upbringing, surroundings, friends and partners. My work is autobiographical. I am, literally at the center of this work. I am flanked in this triptych by an image representing love and juxtaposed by an image representing a location for unhealthy sex. In Paul Monette's book, *Becoming a Man*, he states, "Without role models, the Condemnation of religious leaders and the silence that surrounds being queer, many men

cannot join together love and sex.” Convinced that our sexuality is shameful causes some to seek sexual gratification in potentially demeaning locations and situations. The smaller images record societies ideals versus my reality. Ultimately this work serves as a vehicle for me to celebrate my own diversity.



The next time you have the to say, “I love you” to someone, say it to yourself- and see if you believe it.
-Harvey Fierstein, *Torch Song Trilogy* (1982)

My self-portrait is located in the center because this is my story. I am asking the viewer to respond and not look away, to study these images and question and examine their relationships. My work parallels my exploration of bigotry and its effects. My first photographs were safe, starting first with how the Bible has been misused against all minorities, then specifically gays. I chose not to be too personal. As I began to understand how the Bible has been used to oppress minorities I found I had more confidence in

defending myself against those who used the Bible to condemn my life style. This confidence was reflected in my photography. The more research I did the more I wanted to push my work. I started to understand the relationship between religion, sex and shame.



I was raised on the good book Jesus / till I read between the lines.
-Laura Nyro, *"Stony End"* (1966)

The foundation of Christian theology is the story of the original sin in Genesis. Since man was perfect before the sin in the Garden of Eden, and it was only by woman's disobedience to God that man became imperfect, Jesus of Nazareth was sent by God to redeem man from the fall and return him to this state of perfection. Christianity required the story of the fall, for without it there was no need for a savior. Women were labeled the sinful ones, the first to sin in the Garden of Eden, who then seduced Adam into

disobeying God. Christian theology continues to perpetuate the notion that man should be dominate over woman; this is the "natural" order of Humankind. This kind of thinking is the foundation of patriarchy and heterosexism, and the basis of the original laws of the western hemisphere.

There is a clear intention to legally separate church and state but the fact remains that the two are intertwined. Christian morals continue to influence many laws. A disturbing example of this phenomenon is the rapid rise of a men's movement devoted to injecting conservative religious values into the social bloodstream. The most recent issue of *Montreal Campus* (October 15th 1997) discusses these Promise Keepers, whose numbers, according to some estimates, top two and a half million. The Promise Keepers platform is their concern for violence against women. Promise Keepers founder Bill McCartney has stated that women should obey their husbands, that men should take control of their families, and that homosexuality is an abomination. The Promise Keepers are implicitly anti-feminist, dreaming of a return to the "good old days" of a supposedly kinder and gentler patriarchy. The women's liberation movement is blamed for rising violence

against women, for according to Promise Keepers ideology “if women would only stay home, where they belong then they wouldn’t get raped so often,” Promise Keepers leaders have worked closely with anti-queer and anti- abortion groups. Right-wing movements in the United States can count millions of members, are well organized, and are growing rapidly. Although the separation of church and state is, in theory, being upheld, laws based on Christian morality, such as anti-sodomy laws, remain on the books in many states.



Sex: In America an obsession. In other parts of the world a fact.

-Marlene Dietrich, Marlene Dietrich's ABC (1962)

Last year I did a project on secret sex spaces that touched on the issue of anonymous sex. One of the components of sexual addiction is the shame associated with sex and the need to keep it secret. There is a relationship between the shame gay men feel in general and sexual addiction. I started to understand the scope of this problem while researching anonymous sex places and sexual addiction. "The issue of why a person is addicted is a complex one. A multitude of factors may relate to the cause of a person's addiction. There are psychological, social, and even biological factors that result in the initiation and maintenance of an addiction. For example, the compulsive sexual behavior may relate to relationship problems, past sexual abuse, mixing up sex and love, the use of sex as a way to escape negative emotions, and many other factors. It is important to note that the causes of an addiction include factors unique to each individual and there appears to be no one factor that is true for everyone." (NCSAC web site)

I am exploring the place I am in now, documenting and recording this moment for me. I choose to work in color because I feel it is more of a snapshot of the now. I am part of these images. I understand the entanglement of religion, Heterosexism and shame and the result of these forces on my friends and me. There is a complex union of love, sex and shame in the

queer community, which is deadly. My uncle, who was gay, committed suicide because of this shame; I have dear friends who have knowingly engaged in unsafe sex because of low self worth. I have had years of therapy and struggled with depression. The narrative of my work is a comfort to me, a kind of "Art Therapy".

What right have they to judge? To judge you they must have the capacity to feel as you feel. And who has? One in a thousand. You alone know how you have felt. And you alone know how unequal the battle has always been that your will has had to fight.

-Terence Rattigan, The Deep Blue Sea (1952)

DATE:

ASSIGNMENT:

FILE NO:

David Antle
Church Window
11x14
Black/White Photography
2000

David Antle
Church Window
11x14
Black/White Photography
2000

David Antle
Marriage
11x14
Black/White Photography
2000

David Antle
Church Window
11x14
Black/White Photography
2000

David Antle
Detail from Autobiography
30x40
C Print
2000

David Antle
Detail from Autobiography
30x40
C Print
2000

David Antle
Installation of Autobiography
20 feet x 10 feet
C Print
2000

David Antle
Installation of Autobiography
20 feet x 10 feet
C Print
2000

David Antle
Mary and Joseph
30x40
C Print
2000

David Antle
Mary and Joseph (Detail)
30x40
C Print
2000

David Antle
Family Portrait
Grid of 14 19x19
C Print
2000

David Antle
Family Portrait (Detail w/Shoes)
Grid of 14 19x19
C Print
2000

David Antle
Detail from Anonymous Sex series
40 20x24
C Print
2000

David Antle
Detail from Anonymous Sex series
40 20x24
C Print
2000

David Antle
Three disparate realities
30x40
C Print and confessional
2000

David Antle
Three disparate realities
40 20x24
C Print
2000

David Antle
The Bible
Grid of 18 11x11
C Print
2000

David Antle
The Bible
Detail
C Print
2000

David Antle
The Bible
Detail
C Print
2000

David Antle
The Bible II
Grid of 24 11x11
C Print
2000