

Facebook's philistines back at it, now censoring art of Flemish masters

By **Monica Showalter**

Are the leftists running Facebook really that stupid?

According to the Flanders tourist authority, they're censoring images from Rubens paintings, unable [to distinguish art from pornography](#).

Someone told them "nude, bad," and not a one of them had sufficient art education to know that these painting represent the pinnacle of Western cultural achievement.

The Brussels tourism officials sent in their protest, via [Brussels Times](#) and Belgian news site [VRT](#):

These Rubens works being censored are amazing – artworks so important that they remain studied today, and in the most cutting-edge places.

I was educated in fine art at Santa Monica College, probably the best community college in the country for this, and you bet we studied Rubens. My professors, who were noted artists in their own right, such as [Marc Trujillo](#), insisted that we go to the Getty Museum and *copy* Rubens (and other masters) in our art notebooks. You want to learn to draw? Your job to start is to go copy Rubens – from the actual drawing or painting itself – and figure out what he was doing, learning every nuance, and doing it over and over to get it down. Because virtually nobody could draw better than Rubens. And man, oh, man, do you learn to respect! Try it! That's

what art students really do. Heck, it's what Velázquez and Delacroix really did. They all do it.

"Bacchus" by Peter Paul Rubens.

So it really disgusts me to hear that the culturally illiterate weasels over at Facebook, bred on a diet of comics, videogames, and Britney Spears pop videos, are making a hash of things by imagining that the Rubens images of the human body, the nude figures, in the masterpieces worth hundreds of millions on the market, are somehow obscene. Is it a matter of fat-shaming? (Rubens's women are completely Rubenesque.) Are they protecting us from kiddie porn because of the cherubs? I don't know.

All of these things show the dangers of not teaching kids any art or regular history in schools. It leaves them literally not knowing how to look at art. Considering all the gangsta rap and pop culture pukery they've been exposed to, it's strange to see these Facebook people engaged in Victorian prudery, comparable to covering the legs on pianos to keep the delicate sensitivities of the ladies intact.

The other thing is, art has become degraded since the days of Rubens and a heck of a lot of other artists after him. As Germaine Greer noted (and I paraphrase), sure, she's praised the rubbishy avant-garde art of the day, but is that all there is now?

To equate Rubens to porn because of nude figures is probably less Victorian prudery than something even grosser: a dead bureaucratic mindset that

suggests minds unable to engage in critical thinking. They just check boxes. They just train to the test.

"The Judgment of Paris" by Peter Paul Rubens.

Now, maybe I am just being critical of something that isn't happening. Maybe there is so much content for Facebook to monitor that machines did this, not ignorant Millennials still rapping to the latest Rihanna video. If so, it's faulty programming, or programming that remains so underdeveloped that it cannot distinguish.

If that's the case, then it shows that content is un-monitorable, and maybe Facebook ought to get out of that business altogether, ending censorship on the grounds that it's more like the phone company than an edited content platform. It certainly would make life better for conservatives, who are censored by Facebook all the time.

Would Facebook's recognition of this reality really be worth not censoring conservatives as part of the bargain? Or are the people running the company more comfortable being philistines? Let's see how this plays out.