

Serrano shows students his photography

Photographer Andres Serrano discusses his controversial works

By Andrew Brackensick
Photographer

Andres Serrano showed no surprise when people began walking out in the middle of his slide show. It is something that he has come to expect and even hope for.

"I don't think that the show would be successful if people didn't walk out," Serrano said after his show May 2.

About 10 people left Serrano's slide show when some of his more graphic and controversial photography was displayed.

"Piss Christ," a piece in which Serrano photographed a crucifix submerged in a plexiglass container filled with his own urine, is probably Serrano's most well-known works because of the criticism it received from Sen. Jesse Helms. Helms questioned Serrano's use of government funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to produce photographs that made commentaries about God and religion.

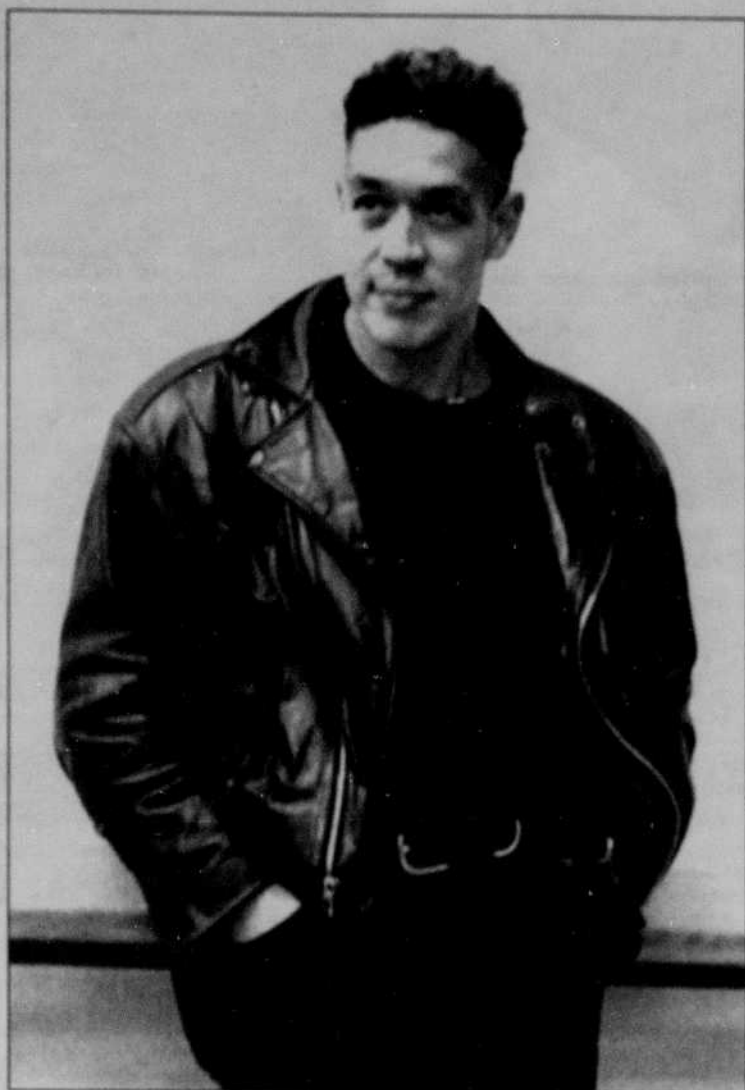
But there was more to Serrano's slide show than bodily fluids and complaining senators.

Serrano invited the audience to comment on and ask questions about the show and his photography. After Serrano told the audience that he has been labeled an anti-Christian bigot, an individual asked him how he felt about these and other negative responses to "Piss Christ."

Serrano said that when artists create their art, they are not aware of how people will interpret it.

Several of Serrano's photos, taken before the infamous "Piss Christ," involved other bodily fluids. "Blood," "Milk" and "Blood and Milk" were the titles of three of his photographs, which contained nothing but the fluid mentioned in the title. To create these photographs, Serrano used real blood that he got from a butcher.

When he was asked why he did not use paint instead of actual blood, he said that paint did not satisfy him and did not



Controversial photographer Andres Serrano hosted a slide show of his photography for University students May 2.

create the effect that he wanted.

The simplicity of the titles of Serrano's photographs is continued in Serrano's more recent series, in which he photographed corpses from a morgue. One photo, titled "Congenital Heart Failure," is of a dead man whose face is half-covered and whose eyes are hidden. The title comes from the fact that the man in the photo died of such a condition.

Each of the photos in this series is named after the subject's cause of death.

Portraits also make up a large part of Serrano's more recent photography. Serrano received criticism for taking photos of KKK members in full robe.

Being of Hispanic descent, Serrano admitted that meeting with them was intimidating at first, but he did enjoy photographing them.

The slide show also included a series titled "Nomads," in which Serrano photographed homeless people who lived in the New York Subway. Serrano said that he was inspired to do this series by photographs taken of Native Americans in the late 1800's.

Altogether, the slide show, sponsored by *Two Girls Review*, revealed some of the reasons behind the controversy surrounding Serrano. Those who didn't leave were subjected to the power of his photography.

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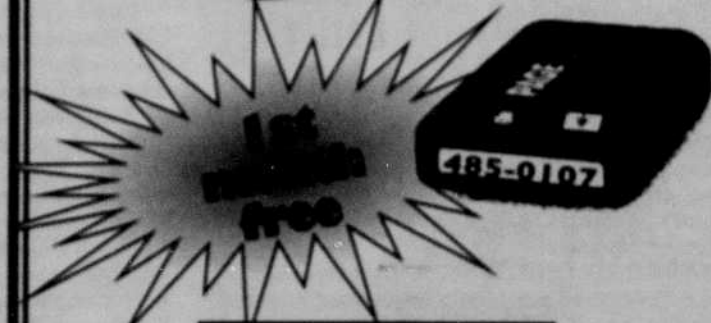
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