

NOMBRE: _____

THE DISTURBING POWER OF THE NUDE

An attack on Gauguin's *Two Tahitian Women* shows the ancient art of the nude still has the power to provoke

The art of Paul Gauguin is "evil" according to the woman who has attacked his 1899 painting



Two Tahitian Women in the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC. Susan Burns pummeled the painting in the Gauguin exhibition that has toured there from Tate Modern. Luckily it was protected by a Plexiglass shield. "I feel that Gauguin is evil," she apparently told police after the incident. "He has nudity and is bad for the children. He has two women in the painting and it's very homosexual."

Attacks on art are always horrible and rarely have any interesting content. What is interesting is that once again, a great work of art has been singled out by an attacker because of its nudity and eroticism. Gauguin's painting joins the *Rokeby Venus* in London's National Gallery, slashed by a suffragette in 1914, and Rembrandt's *Danaë* in the Hermitage, attacked with acid in the 1980s, as powerful examples of the nude in painting that have endured violent assault over the years. Luckily the Gauguin was not damaged as these masterpieces were.

I am fascinated by such disturbing demonstrations of the potency and currency of the nude, a genre of art born in ancient Greece, revived in the Renaissance and still practised currently. If painting is seen by some people today as an outmoded, tame, conservative art, how can a painting of a naked body still enrage to this extent?

I think the painted or sculpted nude's power to shock and offend is proof that high art is still a living force. It is startling that paintings can work on the same level as dirty photographs – that fine art can so provoke and disgust some beholders. The nude troubles people for a variety of reasons, from religious to political. I have no ideological view about it at all; I see no reason to "defend" it. I just love the fact that we can still be troubled and angered, or seduced, by this ancient art.

Photograph: Francis G Mayer/ Francis G Mayer/CORBIS

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QUESTIONS

1. Answer the following questions in your own words using the information from the text. (2.5 points)

a. What did Susan Burns and why ?

b. Which are other examples of attacks on art?

c. What is the opinion of the writer of the article on what happened?

2. Grammar (2 points):

a) Complete the following sentence *"If I had enough money,*

b) Put the following sentence into passive *Somebody attacked the painting "Two Tahitian Women" in the Gauguin exhibition*

c) Join these sentences with a relative pronoun:

I several paintings in the exhibition. They were painted by Gauguin.

d) Fill in with the right prepositions.

Paul Gauguin was born ____ 1848. He was an important figure _____ the Symbolist movement. His experimentation _____ colour led directly _____ the Synthetist style _____ modern art .

2. Vocabulary. Find in the text a word that means (2.5 points)

- a. Hit with her fists: (2)
- b. Travelled (2)
- c. Broken, injured (3)
- d. Get angry (4)
- e. Surprising (5)

4. Describe a work of art that you like (minimum of 150 words) (3 points)