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Chapter 1 : Leo Steinberg - Wikipedia

Acknowledgments THE SEXUALITY OF CHRIST IN RENAISSANCE ART AND IN MODERN OBLIVION () EXCURSUSES () I. Whether the subject exists II. Whether the subject ought to be publicized.

Contact us for rights and issues inquiries. The crux of it came in the sentence: Which is why he could also write: They were moved by faith, and they acquired these pictures because they were devoted to the Virgin. Separation of piety from theology was not all that easy in 15th-century Florence. For that matter he might also think of the great popular devotion to the Santo, St Anthony of Padua, who is usually represented with his vision of the Incarnation as the infant Jesus; or the images of the Child-Salvator Mundi, as in the London and Washington Mantegnas or the Schongauer print. However, that the Virgin with a naked as against a swaddled or draped child is something of a novelty in 15th-century painting Mr Hope concedes. But the representation of the Circumcision is also very rare before that time, and that also does not seem in question. Mr Hope might recollect that one such recent preacher, Cardinal Wojtyla, rose to some prominence, in part as a result of the sermons he preached in that chapel before Paul VI. That from about the middle of the 16th century insistence on that genitality was found offensive is shown by Steinberg in a number of examples where the genital zone was overpainted with a cloth of some kind: Of course the relation between the Circumcision and the Incarnation was a familiar theme. The holy foreskin was the subject of several cults and some disputation. But the insistent nakedness of the infant Christ was a new subject in the devotional painting and sculpture of the 14th and 15th centuries: Changes in devotion and the appearance of new icons are problems for any true historian, who will inevitably consider ways in which they may be connected; the consistent obliteration of old icons may also present him with a real problem. The new emphasis on the Incarnation in the 15th century is familiar stuff to literary historians and the historians of ideas: Strangely, it has not really been considered by the historians of painting. Leo Steinberg has shown a way in which it might be. In his book Steinberg principally does two things. He draws attention to a change that occurred in European, and particularly Italian, art from about the middle of the 14th century — namely, the increasing tendency of artists to show the infant Christ with his genitals exposed; and he suggests an explanation of this phenomenon, relating it to a new interest in the doctrine of the Incarnation. In my review I argued both that his characterisation of the phenomenon is tendentious — a point on which Mr Rykwert does not directly comment — and that his explanation is unconvincing. The reason it failed to convince me is simple. Unfortunately, Steinberg does not produce any significant evidence that they actually did so. In other words, we are being asked to believe that for well over a century Christians all over Europe subscribed to a particular idea which was illustrated in countless paintings, but which was never mentioned, to the best of my knowledge, in any theological or devotional text. This seems most unlikely, given that the surviving written evidence about Christian belief in the Renaissance is nothing if not abundant. The penis is the source of the blood: Likewise, the blood that Christ shed on the Cross has an immense theological significance, which is unrelated to the fact that the wounds from which it issued were in his hands, his feet and his side. None of the points that Mr Rykwert raises, in fact, seem to establish the crucial equation of genitals and humanity — unless he is suggesting, in a passage whose significance is obscure to me, that this was a doctrine maintained by certain heretical sects. But if angels have genitals, how can anyone have regarded these as a peculiar mark of humanity? He also takes me to task for not discussing the overpainting of religious pictures. It does not explain why the practice was more widely accepted in the Renaissance. In this context, it is worth noting that the one Renaissance theologian whom Steinberg cites as discussing representations of the naked infant Christ, Johannes Molanus, asks rhetorically, in a work first published in The fact that there has always been a strong current of prudishness in Christian art merely confirms that some explanation of the appearance of images of the naked Christ is obviously required. Since the phenomenon first occurs in paintings of Christ and his mother, I suggested that the answer was to be found in changing attitudes to the Madonna. Let me therefore try again. Christians in the

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Renaissance were taught to have an intense personal devotion to the Virgin, just as they are encouraged to do so today by the present Pope. In any number of devotional texts, her humility and the fact that she experienced all the human feelings that a mother has for her child were constantly stressed. In showing her with a child who looks like a real baby, small, naked and vulnerable, the artists of the Renaissance were surely trying to emphasise that she is not just the Queen of Heaven, as Duccio, for example, had shown her in his Maesta, but was also a real mother. The child was represented in a new way because this enabled artists to enrich and modify the traditional image of the Madonna in accordance with new aspects of her cult. This hypothesis obviously implies that the principal subject of these paintings is the Virgin, rather than the child. I suggested that in such images he is essentially her attribute, as the keys are the attribute of St Peter, or the Christ child himself of St Christopher. Mr Rykwert is at a loss for comment about the Peter analogy, presumably because he thinks that I equate Christ with a couple of pieces of iron. But the reference to Christopher which he does not mention should have reassured him. The problem is that our notion of an attribute is misleadingly restrictive, and carries associations principally with material objects, like keys. But in Renaissance art figures are identified by people as well as by things. Mary has various attributes, relating to different aspects of her cult. Most frequently, she is shown as the Madonna, with the infant Christ, because her importance resides in the fact that she is the mother of God. The modern habit of giving devotional images narrative titles therefore obscures their real character. And anyone who still has any doubts about the real subject of paintings of the Madonna and child need only recall a point that I made in my review – namely, that many of them contain inscriptions, which, to the best of my knowledge, are almost invariably about the Madonna, and never about Christ alone. However, even if it is accepted that such images are a product of the cult of the Madonna, there remains the point made by Mr Rykwert in his first paragraph: This is obviously true, and I said as much in my review. In the same way, people prayed to St Christopher because they believed that he would protect them on journeys; and they believed that he would do so because he had once carried a child across a river who turned out to be Christ. In the case of Christopher, the infant Saviour is the attribute, reminding the faithful why he will help them. Likewise, the presence of the child reminds us why Mary will heed us. In any case, no such reminder is necessary to anyone familiar with Renaissance art, because the mere fact that Christ is shown as a baby is in itself indicative of his incarnate nature: The essential point to grasp, though, which both Mr Rykwert and Professor Steinberg seem to overlook, is that the vast majority of Renaissance images in churches and private houses were representations of saints, of whom the Virgin is the most important; and they reflect devotion to saints. Just because I believe that the focus in most of the images discussed by Steinberg is the Madonna rather than the Child, I would not wish to deny that there was a devotion to the infant Christ in the 15th century, even though the Franciscan examples cited by Mr Rykwert date from an earlier period. The other two are by Mantegna, who was not only responsible for the earliest known large-scale depiction of the Circumcision, but also frequently showed the genitals when he painted the Christ child with his mother. The popularity of his shrine in Padua is surely a reflection of the cult of St Anthony, not the cult of the infant Christ. And of course Franciscan devotion to the child was accompanied by an equally fervent devotion to the Madonna: The patron, the bishop Jacopo Pesaro, is represented kneeling before the Virgin; she holds the child, who has turned away from Pesaro to direct his attention to St Francis and St Anthony. The bishop displays his devotion to the Virgin, the Franciscans to the child. Mr Rykwert is quite right in supposing that I am out of sympathy with the whole enterprise of worshipping holy pictures. I hope that he is too, since this practice has been universally condemned by Christian theologians of all periods and all persuasions. Mr Hope Letters, 24 January does protest a lot. His letter seems to hang on his last paragraph, so I will start with it: But sir, by worship I did not mean the latria, which must be given to God alone, but the dulia, worship by kissing, incense and lights that the Fathers of the Second Council of Nicea usually counted as the Seventh General Council maintained, pace Mr Hope, was an inalienable part of the tradition of the Universal Church. This decree has been reiterated many times by popes, councils and synods. However, he brushes aside the edifice of evidence which Steinberg has constructed from images and texts as in some way insubstantial, or as

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he says, not significant; and sets up instead his own hypothesis that the innovation shows a change in attitudes not to the incarnation but to the Blessed Virgin. I suspect that he will not be able to do so. The reason is simple: Mr Hope need only think of the Vladimir Icon, which was the palladium of Russia. There is no reason why the child in such pictures should be naked. Let him look again at the Madonna by Nardo di Cione which Steinberg shows his pl. But even that will not quite do. I must confess, sir, that I am a little embarrassed at having to make this very elementary point in your columns.

Chapter 2 : Early meditations on Christ's circumcision

Art historian Leo Steinberg is Benjamin Franklin Professor Emeritus at the University of Pennsylvania. His books include "Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth-Century Art, Michelangelo's Last Paintings, The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion, " and "Encounters with Rauschenberg.

Contact us for rights and issues inquiries. This version of the Resurrection is constructed on the presumption of the complete, individual, mortal humanity of Jesus: The approach to this demythologised consummation is a piece of characteristic Lawrentian lyricism. The climax, however, appears directly to echo some of the iconographic examples cited by Steinberg, when the man identified with Jesus felt the blaze of his manhood and his power rise up in his loins, magnificent. It may be asserted that in this story Resurrection is reduced to narrowly personal terms: It would indeed be a particular miracle, supposing the story of the Virgin Birth to be literally true; for the fruit of parthenogenesis could only be a clone of the mother " and therefore female. Otherwise, whence came the human Y chromosome to provide male characteristics? Hardly from a bodyless spirit appearing in the form of a dove. Very nearly, but not quite. She states that if the Virgin Mary had undergone parthenogenesis a sort of spontaneous self-cloning , then the offspring would always be female, since Mary would not have possessed the Y chromosome which defines maleness. However, there is a very rare mutation which can produce individuals who are chromosomally XY, but look like completely normal females. They are usually sterile, but not necessarily so. Hence, it is not completely impossible to imagine Nature producing a mutant XY virgin with working female sex organs, who also undergoes parthenogenesis and gives birth to a male child. There are several other related possibilities, discussed in a recent article in Science and Christian Belief, but the point is that the Virgin Birth is genetically plausible without calling on the miraculous. The point is surely that there was great interest in the holy genitalia in iconographic terms, and this goes far beyond establishing the humanity of the historical Jesus. That the child was circumcised according to the rites and practices of the Jews is beyond doubt. This being so, why are we only given images of the uncircumcised penis by Renaissance painters? I would be interested to know if Frank Kermode, Leo Steinberg or any readers can cite an example of a painting that shows the infant Jesus with-out the tell-tale gentile foreskin. It seems the Church has never come to terms with Jesus the Jew. Phillipson Letters, 5 June requests that Steinberg or Kermode produce for him a Renaissance image of a circumcised Christ.

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Chapter 3 : The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion by Leo Steinberg

The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion 2nd Edition by Leo Steinberg (Author).

So we read in St. And we read in St. Paul that baptism, superseding the sacrament of the Old Dispensation, was to be understood as a spiritual circumcision in Christ Col. This much is Scripture. We have record that the Church Feast of the Circumcision and Naming of Christ was fixed for the first day of January from the mid-6th century at the latest. By this time, most of the major themes in the theological interpretation of the event have crystallized. The sacrament of the New Testament, as of the Old, is a sign - the sphragis, or seal, of a covenant between God and his chosen. Augustine declared it to have been an instrument of grace for the remission of Original Sin. A third constant in Patristic writings is the Circumcision of Christ conceived as continuous with his work of redemption. It is because Christ was circumcised that the Christian no longer needs circumcision. In the words of St. Never did it occur to a Christian writer or painter to think of that operation as imposed on an unwitting child. And one final point. Patristic literature associates the timing of the Circumcision on the eighth day with Resurrection. Here the argument rests on the kind of mystical numerology we no longer take seriously, but it did formerly engage some great minds. The reasoning runs somewhat as follows. Seven is the number of completion and fullness, for the world was created in seven days, and is due to pass through seven ages. But if seven is perfect, then seven-plus-one is pluperfect. Eight, therefore, stands for renewal, regeneration -- whence the architectural tradition of eight-sided baptistries. Justin Martyr in the 2nd century to St. But insofar as circumcision cancels Original Sin, from which Christ is exempt, he needed it not. A logical p 53 consequence never to be forgotten: He who was without any stain of pollution. Firstly, says Bede, "that he might commend to us the necessary virtue of obedience by an outstanding example. Likewise also he submitted himself to the waters of baptism, by which he wished the people to be washed clean of the filth of sin. Purification, both by the law and by the gospel, none of which he stood in need of, the Lord did not despise and did not hesitate to undergo. Bede himself ends on the familiar eschatological note -- the circumcision as the type of that ultimate cleansing "from all stain of mortality. This is prefigured by the circumcision of the little ones in the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem. The time of this most longed-for entrance. Nor can we grasp its psychological complexity without bearing in mind what Origen in the early 3rd century had called "the disgrace which is felt by most people to attach to circumcision. They p 54 resisted the mark of it as an imperfection: Jerome, "when anything is made less, it cannot be called perfect. Bernard 12th century begins his first Sermon on the Circumcision. Already diminished by assuming our flesh, Christ further lessens himself by receiving the circumcision. In an impassioned apostrophe, designed to confirm the conclusion already reached four centuries earlier by Bede, Bernard demands: How could circumcision have been needful to thee, who hadst neither committed sin, nor contracted its stains? Is the physic, then, for him who ails not? Is it the physician in lieu of the patient who requires the medicine? He might, without difficulty, have preserved his flesh in its integrity, he who had issued without doing injury from a virginal womb. It would not have been hard for the Child to repel from his body the wound of the circumcision, since even in death, he easily kept it free from corruption. Bernard discerns, apparently for the first time, a necessary relation between the two events celebrated on January 1; and perceives that their correlation precisely reflects the union of godhead with human nature. Great and marvellous mystery! The Child is circumcised and is called Jesus. What connection is there between these two things. But in this you may recognize him who comes to be mediator between God and man. The circumcision is proof of the true p 55 humanity he has assumed, while the name given to him reveals. He is circumcised as a true son of Abraham, he is called Jesus as a true Son of God. There lived in those days, says the preacher, good men of faith. Bernard represents them as pleading: When I come to recognize that he is truly mine, then I shall feel secure in welcoming the Son of God as mediator. Not even a shadow of mistrust can then exist, for after all he is. His departures from St. Augustine, and from his contemporary St. Bonaventure, need not concern us, but he

does, as usual, set out the entire tradition-dropping nothing and adding much. Moreover, Renaissance Rome honored him beyond any other medieval figure, and his expositions became quasi-canonic at the papal curia long before they were declared normative for the Church. There are three reasons which justify the circumcision of the organ of generation. First, because it was a sign of that faith by which p56 Abraham believed that the Christ would be born of his seed. Second, because it was a remedy for original sin which is transmitted through the act of generation. Third, because it was ordered to the diminishing of fleshly concupiscence which thrives principally in those organs because of the intensity of venereal pleasure. But the figurative reason for the choice of the day points, he says, to "the following mystery: Finally, when Thomas sets forth the reasons "why Christ should have been circumcised," he finds not one, two, or three reasons, but seven: First, to show the reality of his human flesh against the Manichee who taught that he had a body which was merely appearance; against Apollinarius who said that the body of Christ was consubstantial with his divinity; and against Valentinus who taught that Christ brought his body from heaven. Second, to show approval of circumcision which God of old had instituted. Third, to prove that he was of the stock of Abraham who received the command about circumcision as a sign of the faith which he had in Christ. Fourth, to deprive the Jews of a pretext for not receiving him had he been uncircumcised. Fifth, to commend the virtue of obedience to us by his example; and so he was circumcised on the eighth day as was prescribed in the Law. Sixth, that he who had come in the likeness of sinful flesh should not spurn the customary remedy by which sinful flesh had been cleansed. Seventh, to take the burden of the Law upon himself, so as to liberate others from that burden Thomas interprets the Circumcision of Christ as a redemptive act; wherein he follows Bede following Ambrose. And he follows St. One potential objection to the foregoing review must be dealt with before we proceed: Are we to believe that they sat up nights reading Bede, Bernard, and Thomas Aquinas? There are two answers. First, that most of these theological notions were not then as rare as modern oblivion has made them; they were the stuff of the sermons to which all Christendom was exposed, artists included. The theology of the Church Fathers and Doctors resounded continually from the pulpits. Secondly, the gist of the above arguments was broadcast in two steady best sellers of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. I have in mind, to begin with, the *Meditations on the Life of Christ* by the Pseudo-Bonaventure -- a work of naive sentimental piety, composed shortly before and aimed at the common reader. Today our Lord Jesus Christ began to shed His consecrated blood for us. From the very first, He who had not sinned began to suffer pain for us, and for our sins He bore torment. Feel compassion for Him. Today His precious blood flowed. His flesh was cut with a stone knife. Must one not pity Him? The child Jesus cries today because of the pain He felt in his soft and delicate flesh, for He had real and susceptible flesh like all other humans What must be insisted on is the tenderness of the Godman's flesh, vulnerable and hurting. The argument that the Circumcision authenticates the Incarnation is being conveyed to the plebs. The other best seller to which I referred is the *Golden Legend*, compiled in the late 13th century by the Dominican Archbishop of Genoa, Jacopo da Voragine. For nearly three hundred years, the *Legenda aurea* served as the standard compilation of the lives of the saints, and as a source book for every Renaissance painting with a hagiological theme. The structure of the work follows the liturgical year, and the entry for January 1 informs us that Christ allowed himself to be circumcised "to show that he had assumed true human flesh; so as to destroy the error of them who would say that he had taken on a phantasmal and not a true body. We are educated to shrink from such thinking. But it is Christian thinking implicit in doctrine, explicit wherever in Renaissance art Christian teaching is brought face to face with its own metaphoricity. Bonaventure had done, and as two English poets of the 17th century were to do. Henri Bellechose, *Retable of Saint Denis*, Dijon School, *Entombment*, C. Lord in his *Circumcision to his Father*" -- begins: To thee these first fruits of my growing death For what else is my life? These Cradle-torments have their towardness. These purple buds of blooming death may be, Erst the full stature of a fatal tree. And till my riper woes to age are come, This knife may be the spears Praeludium.

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Chapter 4 : Leo Steinberg (Author of The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion)

The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion has ratings and 13 reviews. Andr said: Once in a while I pick up a book that chan.

Riley, from Nudes series, c. Venus pudica” a term used to describe a classical figural pose in Western art. In this, an unclothed female either standing or reclining keeps one hand covering herself. It refers to the way visual arts are structured around a masculine viewer and describes a tendency in visual culture to depict the world and women from a masculine point of view via <https://www.oxfordjournals.org/abstract/doi/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195188639.013.0001>: Orientalism” a concept developed by the cultural critic Edward W. It refers to a way of seeing that imagines, emphasizes, exaggerates, and distorts differences of Arab peoples and cultures as compared to that of Europe and the U. It often involves seeing Arab culture as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and at times dangerous. In the history of art, racial fetishism is related to the concept of primitivism, a European art practice of borrowing visual forms from non-Western or prehistoric peoples, a practice central to the development of modern art. Sexuality has been a recurrent subject in the history of art almost since the beginning of known representations. Typical representations of the female nude in the European artistic tradition were made by male artists, who put woman on display for the pleasure of a presumed male spectator. Therefore, as an object of contemplation that uses nudity to reference mythological or biblical themes, the nude is elevated as a legitimate subject of art. The terms of that offering are subject to conventions calculated to flatter the male viewer and to stimulate his fantasy of sexual domination. The convention of omitting female body hair, Berger further notes, contributes to the representation of female submission by eliminating the hint of passion and physical desire suggested by hairy growth. The nude, like the prostitute, is an erotic commodity. In what follows, we will examine the convention of female nudity established in ancient Greece, and its impact on subsequent art history. Artists in ancient Greece developed focused and distinctive ideals of human beauty and architectural design that continue to exert a profound influence today. Just as Greek architects defined and followed a set of standards for ideal temple design that continue to influence design today, Greek sculptors sought an ideal for representing the human body that became the standard for subsequent representations of the figure. Studying actual human bodies and selecting attributes they considered most desirable”such as symmetrical facial features, smooth skin, and particular body proportions”sculptors combined them into a single ideal of physical perfection. In ancient Greece, athletic competitions at religious festivals celebrated the human body, particularly the male. The athletes in these contests competed in the nude, and the Greeks considered them embodiments of all that was best in humanity. Thus, the Greeks associated the male nude form with triumph, glory, and even moral excellence”values demonstrated in their male nude sculpture. The Greek attitude contrasts remarkably with attitudes prevalent in other parts of the ancient world, where undress was typically associated with disgrace and defeat. The ancestry of the female nude in ancient Greece is distinct from the male. Where the latter originates in the perfect human athlete, the former embodies the divinity of procreation. The Greek goddess Aphrodite belongs to this family, and she too was imagined as life-giving, proud, and seductive. In the mid-fourth century BCE, the sculptor Praxiteles made a naked Aphrodite, called the Knidian Aphrodite, which established a new tradition for the female nude. Lacking the bulbous and exaggerated forms of Near Eastern fertility figures, the Knidian Aphrodite, like Greek male athletic statues, had idealized proportions based on mathematical ratios. In addition, her pose, with head turned to the side and one hand covering her body, seemed to present the goddess surprised in her bath. As such, the nude contained narrative and erotic possibilities. Although the Knidian statue was not preserved, its impact survives in the numerous replicas and variants of it that exist. Such images of Venus the Latin name of Aphrodite as she appears in Roman art adorned houses, bath buildings, and tombs as well as temples and outdoor sanctuaries. The entrenched homoeroticism of ancient Greek society relates to the pre-eminence of the heroic male nude. Comparing male and female depictions in their art, a double standard is evident in large, free standing statuary developed in the

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Archaic period: This term describes a classical figural pose in Western art. In this, an unclothed female either standing or reclining keeps one hand covering her private parts. The double standard between male and female nudity in art persisted from Greco-Roman sculpture right up to modern times, normative in later Western art. After the fall of Rome and the rise of Christianity in the fourth century CE, the portrayal of nudes in western art declined because the values and imperatives of patrons and artists changed. In ancient Greece and Rome, paganism and a culture of public nudity and athleticism led to the depiction of naked divinities and ideal nudes as images of civic virtue. In Christian societies, patrons and artists valued chastity and celibacy, which prevented depictions of unclothed bodies in art. For example, such figures are rare in medieval art approximately CE. When nudity did appear, it occurred in the context of religious art and was used to convey ideas of shame, such as in scenes depicting the biblical story of Adam and Eve. They were the first man and women to discover their nakedness in the Garden of Eden due to sin, and consequently, suffer shame and punishment. Just as nudity was used to convey civic ideals in the classical art of Greece and Rome, in medieval art nudes were used as teaching moments about the dangers of sin. In the Renaissance, interest in mythological subjects increased and artists found new ways to depict nude figures male and female in art by reviving classical nudity. Appearing to be born out of sea foam, she averts her eyes from our gaze and hovers on a scallop shell. Her hands and hair are carefully arranged to hide her sexuality, but again, this posture draws attention to it instead. Her grace and beauty are amplified by the serene composition and the presence of Zephyr with his love, the nymph Chloris, who accompanied Venus to her earthly home, and a person on the right who greets her with an embroidered garment and flowers. Here we see a new image of Venus, as a recumbent figure, lying naked in a domestic interior. As John Berger has pointed out, most nudes in the history of European art are in this reclining pose. Just as Michelangelo drew upon the bodily conventions of classical art but updated his subject for his own time, so too did Titian with the female nude. During the sixteenth century, such paintings of reclining women were commissioned and displayed within wealthy court circles by and for male patrons. This painting, for instance, was made for the Duke of Urbino. Its subject is a beautiful woman who is lying on a bed, modestly yet provocatively covering her body. Art historian Rona Goffen has argued that the subject of this painting has more to do with marriage than with seductiveness or mythology. Orientalism is a term used by art historians and cultural theorists, first devised by Edward W. Foreign women were abstracted and used as rhetorical and allegorical tools to advance the economic project of colonialism. The elongated proportions and lack of anatomical realism of the figure amplify her sensuality and curvature. Additionally, the fan she holds in her hand and the lush blue and gold fabric that surrounds her underscores the sense of exotic otherness that permeates the composition. Edouard Manet is considered one of the most important nineteenth century painters. Typically associated with the school of French Impressionism, his paintings were very influential on the development of modern style in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The black housemaid who accompanies the white prostitute-model in the painting further implicates class issues. Here, the female nude no longer references classical beauty and proportion, but rather reveals the underbelly of society—subverting art historical convention. Just as Manet referenced Titian to create a work of art that was incendiary in terms of both form and content, many artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century confronted the tradition of female nudity to create incendiary modern artworks. Both the figures and their setting appear fractured and angular, in a non-realistic manner. Due to the references of its title, the common interpretation of this painting is that it depicts prostitutes in a brothel. Scholars have interpreted a range of visual sources in the painting, from ancient Greek kouroi to Iberian art to African masks. In this massive nearly eight feet square painting, the women stand tall and seem to disorient traditional representations of female passivity by menacing the viewer, an effect amplified by the incoherent and shallow space of the composition. Although their arms are raised in a traditional gesture of accessibility, their cold stares and hard mouths contradict their stance. In the later twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, artists have continued to engage the classical tradition and its legacies. Morimura is a contemporary Japanese artist currently living in New York, who is concerned with intercultural exchanges between the East and West

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and the articulation of modern identity in the crossroads of cultural and economic globalization. He often appropriates elements of art history as well as popular culture into his work, placing stereotypes in contradictory contexts to challenge the ways in which viewers perceive concepts of traditional cultural identity. Portrait Futago, he has placed himself in the position of the prostitute in Olympia. In so doing, Morimura switches the gender masculine culturally assigned to him by his sex male and takes on the role both of Olympia and the black maid. By taking a foundational work of western modern art and inserting himself within it, Morimura challenges the ways in which western audiences perceive Asian cultural identity; for instance through stereotypes of Asian males as effeminate. However, the artist does not perform seamless drag and viewers remain aware that this is a male figure. This has the effect of calling attention to the social construction of stereotypes as well as gender. Jan Banning is an artist who took on the legacy of Olympia and race, but from a different perspective. Banning was born in the Netherlands into immigrant parents from the Dutch East Indies. He has a background in social and economic history and focuses on issues of geopolitics and power in his photography. Here a Jamaican immigrant of the Netherlands takes the place of Olympia. The legacy of the female nude in art was also questioned after the second wave feminism in the 1970s. The feminist art movement pushed the concept of women as creators of art, not just its subjects. Many feminist artists used their own bodies and embodied experiences as the form and content of their art, contributing to the development of the postmodern practice of body art. Alice Neel was a New York-based figurative painter who only gained recognition for her art later in her life, in the context of the feminist art movement of the 1970s. Pregnant Maria is one of several portraits of pregnant nude women by Neel in which we see a cognitive dissonance between the maternal nudity non-sexual and the sensual pose of the reclining female nude. The steady gaze of the subject and the position of her limbs indicate a measure of self-possession rarely seen in the female nudes of the western tradition. Sylvia Sleigh reverses the paradigm of the reclining female nude in western art history by painting male nudes in the same pose, often depicting herself in the composition as the artist. This amplifies the reversal of traditional dynamics in art: Although these are images of nudes taking self-portraits, Riley blanks out the faces to preserve anonymity—which also has the effect of objectifying the subjects. Some cultural critics, such as Alicia Eler [http: Self-portraiture](http://www.artsandculture.gov/spotlight/self-portraiture) has been a significant mode of representation for marginalized artists to create new, empowering imagery. At the End of Class The intention behind this trend is to create a platform for expression for marginalized young people who typically do not see themselves reflected in conventional canons of art history. What does seeing a POC superimposed over a white man or woman do? What kind of impact does this trend have? What message does it send about exclusion and inclusion?

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Chapter 5 : The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion, Steinberg

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In this case Renaissance art, and one particular feature of it. I guess I am not alone in not having dwelled much on baby Jesus in between all the abundant richness that Renaissance painting has to offer. On the one hand, it took them a long time to be able to paint infants in a convincing manner, and on the other, the notion that a Son of God must have been extraordinarily precocious often made them translate said precociousness. Once in a while I pick up a book that changes how I look at art. On the one hand, it took them a long time to be able to paint infants in a convincing manner, and on the other, the notion that a Son of God must have been extraordinarily precocious often made them translate said precociousness into disturbingly mature-looking baby Jesuses. So when in some paintings the Christ-child is looking at his mother in a less than childlike way it could be a representation of the Infant Spouse that you are being presented with. In more traditional theology the Church is the Bride of Christ, and this was my first introduction to this particular variant, but I am asking myself how this very Oedipal theme has escaped the clutches of art historians eager to enter the bestseller lists. Though we should perhaps be grateful to have been spared a few Freudian extravaganzas. The answer however is probably very simple. As Leo Steinberg shows in his book, art historians have avoided discussing the sexuality of Christ as it was commonly depicted in Renaissance painting, and it is as if some of them have learned to mentally add little sashes and veils, displaying an eagerness in perfect harmony with the spirit of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. This book has convinced me that I am in fact seeing what I had often thought I was seeing, e. They are not being at all ill-mannered in so doing however; they are beholding the Mystery of the Incarnation. Steinberg expresses his indebtedness to John W. His office is to stir men to gratitude and delight. Incarnation theology is at least intelligible, something you can hardly state about this contemporary upsurge of nipple-phobia. Ok, enough digressing, though I appear to have found yet another good reason for my affinity for the Renaissance through it. The prevalence of such symbolism accounts perhaps for the readiness with which Christian theology associated the penis in its circumcision with resurrection. Later the church reconsidered the matter and ended up disfiguring the magnificent sculpture by adding an absurd bronze loincloth. We have now moved on to representations of the Crucifixion, Lamentation, Entombment and Resurrection, where there is a plethora of paintings and drawings that stress the crotch, either through a phallic knot or the fluttering of a loincloth Crucifixion or where the dead Christ conspicuously grasps his crotch with one hand Lamentation, Entombment. Steinberg sees this gesture as a reference to the Circumcision. Or the gesture very well may be meant, as Steinberg proposes, to point to the first wound and first shedding of blood for our redemption. In an ancient text well known to 16th-century authors, the *Oneirocritica*, or Interpretation of Dreams, of Artemidorus, "the penis. Nothing here seems specifically Christian. Yet it is precisely in the Renaissance that this ancient topos surfaces in the most Catholic context - within a sermon on the Circumcision delivered by Battista Casali in , again inter missarum solemniam, before Pope Julius II In common with his audience of prelates and theologians, Casali takes it for granted that the phallus is reasonably equated with power. But the supreme power is the power which prevails over mortality. Discussing the theological question whether or not the circumcised prepuce of Christ was reassumed in the risen body, Cardulus cites opinions both for and against, and reports that those in favor of re-assumption regard the restored member as a signum victoriae-- i. And now a positive answer no longer seems scurrilous: I suggest that here we might have a deliberate play on the idea of "revelation. This God, in other words, is unveiled, revealed, in these scenes as truly and fully man. The member exposed--or touched It is because Christ was circumcised that the Christian no longer needs circumcision. We are educated to shrink from such thinking. But it is Christian thinking - implicit in doctrine, explicit wherever in Renaissance art Christian teaching is brought face to face with its own metaphoricity. The Excursuses in the back of the book fill about as many pages as the text itself, and most of them are just as interesting as the rest of the book, and

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they are often very entertaining as well. Steinberg writes towards the end of his essay:

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