

The Metro Section

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The New York Times

Blushing, Then Brushing, Artist Covers Nude Christ

By SUSAN SAULNY

Several strokes of paint in the form of a loincloth have quieted the latest furor over controversial religious art in New York, this time in a new terminal at Kennedy International Airport.

There, in an 8-by-10-foot relief depicting a store selling religious items — part of a 300-foot-long mixed-media mural of New York street life — was a 12-inch sculpture of Jesus on the cross. Naked.

The image apparently left several construction workers at the terminal aghast, even though it was not anatomically graphic. One worker called the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, the national group that has twice protested images it considered insulting at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. (The latest involved an artist's depiction of herself as a nude Christ figure in "Yo Mama's Last Supper.")

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, compared the offense to "going to Howard University and seeing Martin Luther King without his pants on."

Mr. Donohue called an airport official to complain, then several of

the construction workers in Terminal 4 were asked for their advice and the artist was consulted. Within the day Friday, the issue was resolved. The artist added a loincloth.

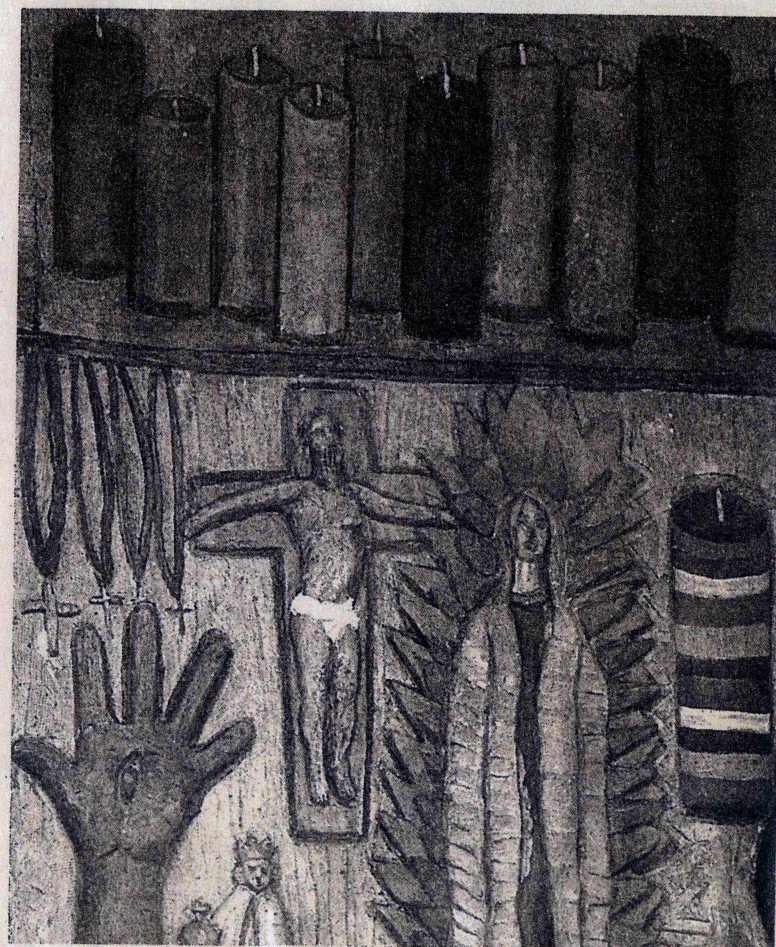
Unlike in previous incidents involving religious images and public art, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani was not involved, nor did his new decency panel weigh in.

The artist, Deborah Masters, said that she had meant to clothe the Christ figure all along, but had just forgotten.

The management company overseeing the construction project, JFK International Air Terminal, released a statement yesterday, saying, "We support the artist's decision to revise her work in this way, and believe that all of the works of art will contribute to Terminal 4 as a passenger-friendly, pleasant travel experience."

Mr. Donohue said the workers, who did not want to be named, were "happy they put a drape on Christ's midsection."

The mural, which was privately financed, will be unveiled May 24.



Associated Press

After complaints about the nudity of this Christ on the cross, Deborah Masters, the muralist, added a loincloth with a few dabs of paint.