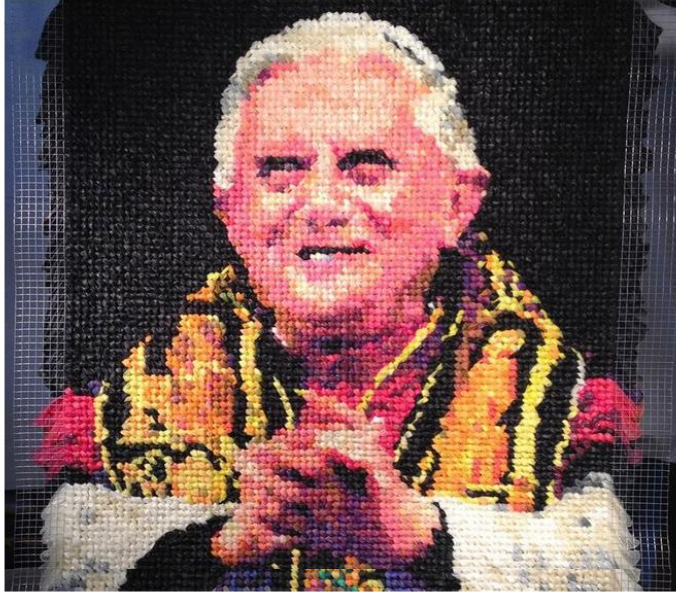


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13,000 sign petition opposing display of pope condom portrait



Courtesy of the artist

Niki Johnson's artwork, "Eggs Benedict," a portrait of the Pope made from condoms, was acquired by the Milwaukee Art Museum. The artist is from Shorewood.

By Annysa Johnson of the Journal Sentinel

July 15, 2015

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Rick Wood
Niki Johnson of Shorewood created Eggs Benedict, a portrait of Pope Benedict made from condoms.

More than 13,000 people have signed an online petition calling on the Milwaukee Art Museum not to display a newly acquired portrait of retired Pope Benedict XVI fashioned from 17,000 colorful condoms.

The petition was circulated by CitizenGo.org, a conservative Christian advocacy site based in Madrid.

"The Milwaukee Art Museum's decision to display this offensive piece of art exposes a double-standard when it comes to offending religious groups," Caroline Craddock, the Boston-based U.S. campaigns director for CitizenGO, said in a news release. "They would never dare insult Mohammad or other religious leaders the way they demean followers of Christ."

The site does not identify signers of the petition, and it is not clear how many live in Wisconsin. Craddock said by telephone that she would attempt to determine that information. Efforts to reach the museum Wednesday were not successful.

The art museum confirmed in June that it had [acquired the controversial piece](#) by Shorewood artist Niki Johnson and would display it when it completes the renovations of its permanent collections gallery in the fall.

The news drew [condemnation from local Catholics](#), including Archbishop Jerome Listecki, many of whom vowed to cancel their memberships. Museum officials defended the acquisition, saying it has an obligation to "present art and ideas on a broad range of subjects ... that challenge and engage." And they said they've heard from an equal number of patrons who voiced interest in seeing the piece.

Johnson has said that the portrait, titled "Eggs Benedict," was a commentary on the then-pontiff's comments during a 2009 visit to Africa in which he suggested that the use of condoms could exacerbate the spread of AIDS. Many have derided Benedict's remarks as irresponsible, especially in Africa, where the majority of the world's AIDS deaths are attributed and where the church is growing dramatically in membership and influence.

About Annysa Johnson

Annysa Johnson is an award-winning reporter covering faith and spirituality in southeastern Wisconsin.

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