



Juries and Obscenity

Introductory note by Francis Bennion On 1 November 2009 the *Observer Review* published an article by Laura Cumming featuring the famous Bronzino painting *Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time*. My letter below relates to this. The part in square brackets was not published.

Letter in *The Observer Review*

The boundaries of morality

On obscenity in art, Laura Cumming “would like to know, once and for all, what is or isn’t lawful”. So would we all, but the subject is far too subjective for things to work that way. Nor, as she suggests, would it have been useful regarding Brooke Shields “to discover how a jury would have decided the case”. One jury doesn’t bind another, and the next jury might well decide the other way.

[I look forward to the day when people do not fuss about the unclothed human body (in art or elsewhere) because it is a commonplace sight rather than something sensationally unusual. As I said in my book *The Sex Code: Morals for Moderns* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1991), it does great harm to prevent young people from becoming familiar with the sight of naked bodies. Such shame-faced secrecy is unnatural, and can cause psychological damage.]

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