

Art and Artifice

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A South African gallery accepts not to exhibit Jacob Zuma's portrait, while Berlusconi is displayed in Rome in a glass coffin?



Vandals deface Brett Murray's painting "The Spear" at Goodman Gallery in Johannesburg on May 22

The controversial painting, titled "The Spear" depicted the black President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma with his genitals hanging out. The portrait, made by a white South African artist called Brett Murray, was recently vandalized in the Goodman Gallery, which was displaying it.

The African National Congress has described the work as "*rude, crude and disrespectful*". Furthermore, this exhibition brought more than 2,000 protesters in Johannesburg, showing the ongoing debate existing in South Africa about whether white South Africans are insensitive and to what extent black South Africans still feel they are treated as second class citizens, even though the country is governed by Zuma's African National Congress. The President's party, the ANC, led the fight against apartheid before becoming a political party.

Zuma has asked the High Court to rule that his constitutional right to dignity was violated, when the gallery put the painting on display earlier this month. The ANC is also demanding the City Press Newspaper to remove a photograph of the painting from its website.

President Zuma has sued local media companies 11 times for defamation; the most famous case is a 2008 suit against one of the country's most important artist, Zapiro, after depicting Zuma about to rape a female figure representing justice. Mr Zuma was cleared of raping a family friend in 2006.

Two years ago, the ANC condemned another artist, Yiull Damaso, for painting the body of Nelson Mandela undergoing an autopsy, saying it violated the anti-apartheid icon's dignity.



"The Dream of all Italians" a waxwork figure of Silvio Berlusconi

The debate on Murray's painting is happening, while a Rome gallery is currently exhibiting an artwork called "the Dream of all Italians" created by an artist duo, Antonio Garullo and Mario Ottocento, the first ever married gay couple who tied the knot in Amsterdam in 2002.

The name of the installation refers to what Berlusconi apparently called himself on the phone to one of his young girlfriends, according to Italian media. Berlusconi's figure, lying on a red velvet carpet, is wearing giant Mickey Mouse slippers and has one hand inside his unzipped trousers. The artists said they put Berlusconi into a glass case to underline and criticize the personality cult he has been creating for years