

A crucifix about the right to contraception

The crucifix is a sculptural outcry for the right to contraception and unprejudiced sexual education. It is an artistic comment to the Bible fundamentalists’ crusade against contraception, and their grotesque claim that ‘the Bible allows only unprotected sex’.

The copper sculpture created by Danish artist Jens Galschiot is titled In the Name of God. It depicts a pregnant, crucified teenager. It will be cast in several copies to be displayed 2007 in Kenya, the Vatican and the US among others places.

The Cathedral of Copenhagen - The first sculpture was put up in cooperation with the Cathedral of Copenhagen on 1st December 2006, the International AIDS day. Dean Anders Gadegaard said: “We join this art manifestation to emphasize that we do not wish the Bible to be used to preach against contraception.”

Bush and the Pope – a powerful alliance - The Roman Catholic Church, the Christian fundamentalists in the US, and the Bush government, form a powerful alliance where they advocate sexual abstinence until marriage as the only way to avoid HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancy. They think that information on contraception encourages voluptuousness. They are trying to force a change in the contraception policy in Africa, Asia and Central America. This has already had fatal consequences in form of more HIV infected people, unwanted pregnancies and dangerous abortions – especially in Africa.

Misinformation of the Vatican - As a link in the Catholic Church’s crusade against contraception they give birth to doubt about the efficiency of condoms as protection against HIV. You can find articles on the Vatican’s homepage (www.vatican.va) claiming that the HIV virus can go through the latex material of the condoms. So many uneducated, poor people refrain from using condoms against the recommendations of medical science.

Sex has come to stay - The sexual life is a natural part of our existence, regardless of our way of life and whether we want children or not. The sexual policy crusade is a frontal assault on the rights of both women and sexual minorities, in the West as well as in the developing countries. If we do not wish the fundamentalists – regardless of their religious beliefs - to set the agenda, our policy has to be founded on the thinking of enlightenment, so we avoid using religious arguments in the political area. If you argue from a religious standpoint, you put yourself in God’s place. Therefore it is important for progressive Christians to make clear that they do not wish for ‘their’ God to be abused in a rigid and conservative interpretation of the Bible.

Basic facts

At the UN conference in 1994, 179 countries, including USA passed the proposal that sexual and reproductive health is a human right, which also means the right to sexual guidance and free access to contraception.

43% of the world's development aid for family planning and fight against STDs comes from USA – they are a very powerful contributor.

For ten years, up to 2001, the number of HIV infected in Uganda fell drastically because of information campaigns and free condoms. But because of the pressure from the Bush government, sexual abstinence is now preached. This caused the yearly number of HIV infected to double up in only 2 years, 70,000 in 2003 to 130,000 in 2005.

The double status of the Vatican as both state and religious authority means that their lobbying has a privileged status in both the EU and the UN. Although non-voting, they often have as much influence as the member countries.

No scientific studies prove that abstinence-only programs are efficient against teenage pregnancy. Instead Family Health International concluded in 2001 that information about safe sex and the use of condoms doesn't increase sexual activity – but it is an efficient method to reduce high-risk sexual behavior.

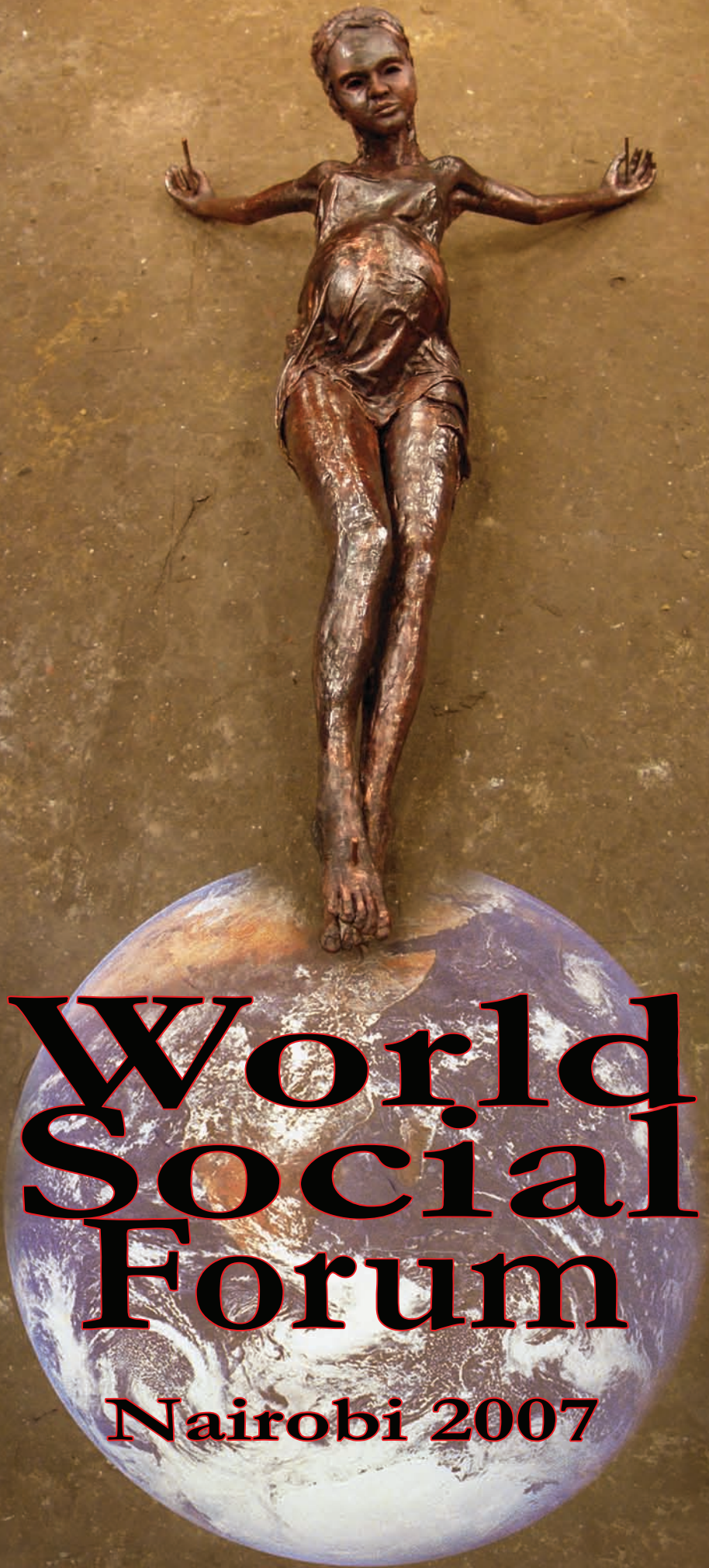
Source: <http://www.aidoh.dk/Education>

From ABC to AB: USA has prior used the well-known ABC-strategy to fight HIV/AIDS: Abstinence–Be faithful – Use Condoms. But because Bush wishes to tone down the use of condoms the strategy has now been reduced to an AB-strategy. Bush's sexual policy in Texas has made it one of the states with the highest per capita number of HIV-infected and teenage pregnancies, in all of USA. In November 2006 Bush appointed a vice minister of family planning, who is against contraception and sex before marriage.

Source: <http://www.advocacyone.org/actup.html> and <http://www.aidoh.dk/Texas>
You'll find a collection of links with basic facts at: <http://www.aidoh.dk/GlobalGag>

In the Name of God

In memory of the victims of fundamentalism



World
Social
Forum
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The artist Jens Galschiot says: “The sculpture is not a global accusation against Christianity. I acknowledge those Christians, who take the Gospel’s claim of charity seriously – and act accordingly. But it is intended as a harsh criticism against the extreme fundamentalists’ interpretation of the Bible, which creates more suffering among the already exposed groups. The sculpture is not a comment on the issue of legalizing abortion or being pro or con chastity, but it does comment on the right to contraception and unprejudiced sexual education.”

The World Social Forum - We will bring two sculptures to the World Social Forum in Nairobi on 20th January 2007 to present the happening to the world and to the African continent. Together with theatre groups from Uganda and Kenya we will perform debate theatre and hold conferences about the problem which is very relevant in Africa because of the AIDS situation.

**Appeal for co-operation about
Crucifixion of pregnant teenager**

We need helpers and collaborators to get this art happening manifested globally. Collaborators who will defend the right to contraception and unprejudiced sexual enlightenment. The project does not take a stance to questions such as abortion and stem cell research.

Help: We imagine that non-fundamentalist congregations, women’s organizations, AIDS organizations, art groups, family planning associations, political parties, theatre troupes, art galleries or museums, individuals and many others will be interested in helping with this visual sculptural outcry.

Economy: We are a private art workshop, completely independent of religious and political circles. The funding of our art manifestations is mainly provided through sale of Galschiot’s sculptures to art collectors. We have limited economical means, so we need co-operators with their own organisational framework and network.

The sculpture will be staked as the focal point of the debate. There will be cast various varieties in copper, to be displayed in several places simultaneously. The crucified teenager has the natural size of a 13-year-old girl, 1.5 metres high. She is fixed on a cross with a height varying between 2 and 5 metres.

A poster is made with a big colour photo of the sculpture on the front page. On the rear side there will be a presentation of the basic facts about the consequences of the fundamentalists’ sexual policy.

Sites of exhibition: So far the art installation has been displayed in front of the Cathedral of Copenhagen. Next stop will be the WSF2007 in Nairobi. Future sites might be London, Texas, Poland, Italy, and the EU Parliament and some other places.

You can constantly follow the state of events at:

<http://www.aidoh.dk/InTheNameOfGod>
You can also join our info list, contact aidoh@aidoh.dk

Symbolism of the sculpture

The sculpture contains various layers of possible symbolic interpretations. Here are just some suggestions:

As a symbol of Christianity, the cross immediately associates to the Christian faith. Due to a fundamentalist interpretation of this faith a shift in contraception policy has been enforced in many places in the world. The consequences have been disastrous, especially in Africa.

Crucifixion was a public and protracted mode of execution. The agony could last several days. Likewise the death process of the HIV contaminated is protracted and painful. The sexual offence is tabooed, hence extramarital pregnancy often leads to social exclusion, stigmatizing (cp. the holes in Jesus’ hands and feet).

The pregnant teenager symbolizes innocence. The child that has been lead astray due to ignorance, impulsiveness or maybe is the victim of rape is mercilessly exposed to the ultimate punishment. The association to Jesus as the innocent sacrificial lamb is apparent.

The female body symbolizes that women are those bearing the brunt of suffering. They display the apparent proof of the sexual act. Often the woman has become the HIV contamination through rape, or from her husband who has been infected through extramarital intercourse.

Jens Galschiot, born 1954, Denmark, sculptor. He’s especially known for his many art happenings, that puts focus on the consequences of the global imbalance. He works independent of financial, religious and political interests. His most known sculptures are 'My Inner Beast' (European cities in '93) and 'The Pillar of Shame' (Hong Kong, Mexico and Brazil). The projects are financed by the sale of Galschiot's cobber sculptures to art collectors, and contributions from individuals, NGOs' and trade unions. He lives in Odense, where he has his several thousand square feet workshops with a gallery, foundry and school.