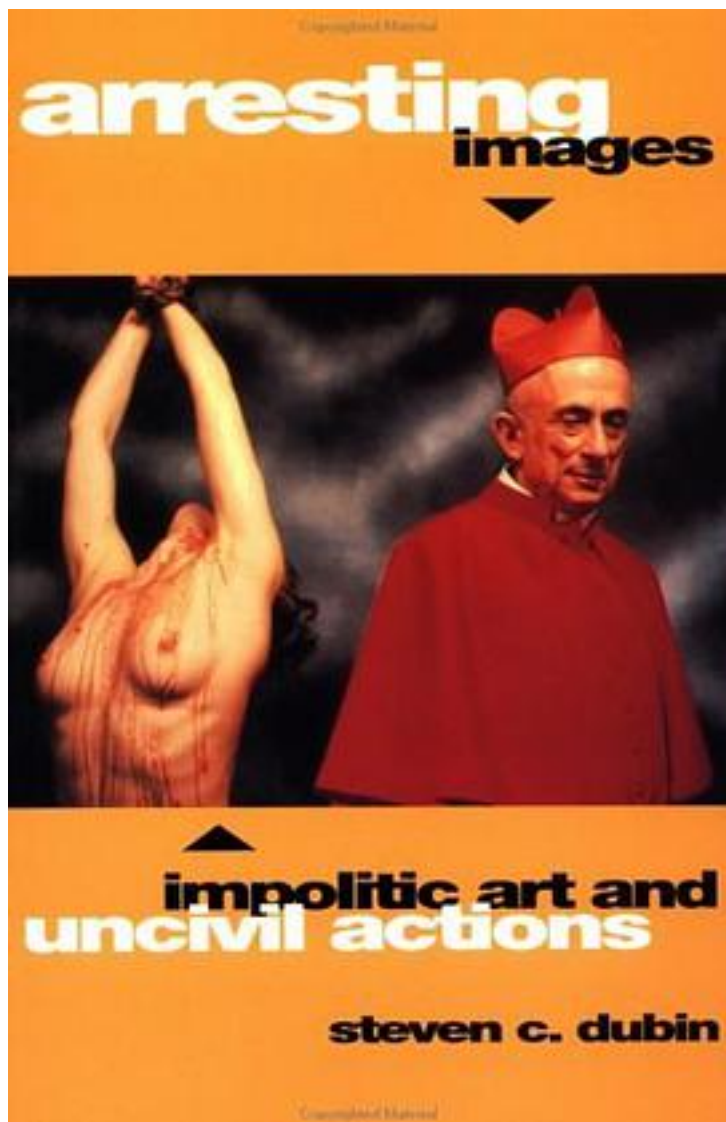


# Arresting Images



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Although art may sometimes shock us, so do many recent attempts to regulate it. Contemporary art displays new values and beliefs that may stun, disturb, or even frighten. In Chicago, a painting of the late Mayor Harold Washington in women's underwear was seized by outraged politicians and the police. The National Endowment for the Arts rescinded funds it had pledged to a New York City exhibit confronting the devastation of the AIDS epidemic. The Corcoran Gallery balked at mounting a retrospective of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, some of which depicted homoerotic scenes or nude children. In Florida, a music store owner and 2 Live Crew were prosecuted for the alleged obscenity of a record album. Topical, informed, thought-provoking, and often discomforting, Steven Dubin guides us through the opposing artistic, cultural, political, and social issues bared by events such as these. Drawing upon extensive interviews, a broad sampling of media accounts, legal documents, and his own observations of important events, Dubin surveys visual art, photography, and film, as well as artistic upstarts such as video and performance art. He examines both the nature of art work which disarms its viewers and the social reaction to it - the dual meaning of arresting images. Dubin combines the eye of someone familiar with art and the rigour of a social scientist with insights about contemporary society and politics. Many of today's cutting-edge artists represent the beliefs and aspirations of marginalized groups such as women, gays and lesbians, African-Americans, and Hispanics. Dubin argues that what they convey through artistic expression often threatens the status quo. Their work commonly smudges the boundary between such conventional distinctions as private and public, masculine and feminine, sacred and profane. Defenders of tradition - whether they are religious fundamentalists, conservative politicians, or neoconservative cultural critics - routinely take offense and push back, defending their own interests. Battles over art highlight important demographic, attitudinal, and social shifts. Arresting Images aims to capture the dynamics of these disputes. Arresting Images explores many of the hot' news items such as racial polarization, AIDS, gay-bashing, and sexual inequality, and makes sense of them by examining the battles which erupt when artists depict particular types of people and activities. Arresting Images takes society's moral pulse, assessing the charges of immorality, irreverance and subversion which have been directed against so many recent creative expressions. It will interest all those concerned with the convergence of contemporary art and politics.

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