



**Lisa Kljaich:** In the religious world, two forces at the opposite end of the spectrum are having an effect on the arts. With increased globalization and information sharing, religious beliefs outside the Judea Christian viewpoint have increasingly found their way into the art world since 1960. This includes a wide spectrum from Santeria, the beliefs of aboriginal Australians, native Americans and many religions from the east.

On the flip side, Christian and Islamic fundamentalism have been questioning artistic content and censoring art. Film and television have been easy targets for censorship just like theater was in previous centuries. However, there has also been a push to censor the visual arts. Then the direction of Senator Jesse Helms, who drove a great deal of financial support for the Evangelical Christians, the National Endowment of the Arts saw their budget slashed.

Just before the turn of the century on 2000, a controversy erupted over a depiction of Madonna at a government-funded museum, The Brooklyn Museum of Art. This was due to the media that was used by an artist which included elephant dung.

Muslim countries have had a long history of limiting the arts to their religious beliefs. Fundamentalism in Islam over the past 30 years has saw increasing crackdowns on secular art forms deeming the many artistic pursuits as being indecent. I watch underground censored music on a weekly basis. My in-laws are from Iran. In Iran, there is very tough music censorship laws due to the religious beliefs.

Persians, who are living abroad are heavily involved in music and the music industry creating pop music outside of the country for consumption in Iran. They do a lot of this through the internet, as well as satellite TV. That's how I can sit back and enjoy Iranian music from California.

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