

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

June 2, 2019

Monika Bickert
Head of Global Policy Management
Facebook
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Ms. Bickert,

Instagram and Facebook have dramatically increased artists' ability to reach audiences and have opened new possibilities for artistic exploration and expression. Artists who lack access to traditional distribution channels can reach global viewers as never before. Museums and art institutions are able to broaden access to their collections and promote exhibitions on an unprecedented scale.

Yet Facebook and Instagram, while permitting nudity in sculpture and painting, ban photographic representations of the nude body. The nudity ban is punishing for photographers and particularly harms artists whose work focuses on their own bodies, including queer and gender nonconforming artists. It also affects museums and galleries that have difficulty promoting photography exhibitions featuring nudes.

Facebook has the legal right to impose content restrictions. Yet, as a company with over two billion users, and one billion on Instagram, Facebook's actions impact culture on a global scale. The company's extraordinary expansion and success has made it a worldwide power serving a large diversity of communities with different, and often conflicting, values and beliefs.

We acknowledge that moderating content for billions of users with diverse values presents unprecedented challenges and that drawing the line between art and images that are not art is notoriously hard. But this challenge does not justify banning all photographic images of the nude body, a ban that imposes the beliefs of some Facebook users on the entire world, stifles artistic expression, and enforces gender discrimination by permitting images of male nipples while prohibiting female nipples.

Over twenty U.S. and international arts and free speech organizations and hundreds of artists have joined us in urging Facebook and Instagram to become welcoming platforms for the arts (ncac.org/we-the-nipple). There are many possible solutions to the challenges of serving diverse communities, including allowing individuals the ability to block all nudity and creating filters to screen nudes that may appear unexpectedly in users' feeds. Such mechanisms would allow user control, rather than forcing Facebook to judge what content is permissible.

NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association
AICA-USA
American Association of School Administrators
American Association of University Professors
American Association of University Women
American Booksellers for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee
American Library Association
American Literary Translators Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists & Authors
Americans United for Separation of Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
The Dramatists Guild of America
Dramatists Legal Defense Fund
Educational Book & Media Association
First Amendment Lawyers Association
Free Speech Coalition
International Literacy Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of the Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
National Youth Rights Association
The NewsGuild-CWA
PEN America
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Project Censored
SAG-AFTRA
Sexuality Information & Education Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ
Office of Communication
United Methodist Church, United Methodist Communications
Women's American ORT
Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

As a commitment to changing its policy on photographic nudity, we propose that Facebook convene a group of globally representative stakeholders including artists, art educators, museum curators, activists, as well as Facebook employees, to develop guidelines that transparently balance the competing interests of the many different communities Facebook serves.

By engaging with relevant stakeholders who share a commitment to change, Facebook and Instagram can implement a policy that recognizes the value of one of their core communities: creative artists.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Finan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship