

"Nude Christ" was sold day before police seized it

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THE controversial nude Christ painting which was seized by the police on Friday was sold to an anonymous buyer for R150 the day before.

After the picture was confiscated from a Johannesburg art gallery it was taken to Marshall Square where it was viewed by Johannesburg's Senior Public Prosecutor.

It depends on his decision whether the 30-year-old Johannesburg artist, Harold Rubin, is prosecuted. The Prosecutor refused to comment.

Blasphemy is a criminal offence in South Africa.

The picture shows a naked, crucified Christ with his head thrown back in agony, tortured limbs and gaping mouth revealing a swollen and blackened tongue.

"A Revelation"

Yesterday I spoke to Brother Roger, of the Community of the Resurrection, who opened the exhibition of Rubin's works this week.

He said: "If the human body is obscene—and if protest is obscene—then all Harold Rubin's works are obscene.

"I think that the picture of the Crucifixion is hideous — but then the crime itself was hideous. If one considers what happened, then Rubin's picture is mild.

"The crucified Christ was naked. It is only legend that his mother covered his nakedness with her veil.

"To me the painting has been a revelation of reality of the suffering entailed for our redemption.

Nothing to say

"The picture was shown to me before the exhibition started to find out what my reactions to opening it would be. My own views — and the certainty of the artist's integrity — made it impossible for me to hesitate." When I asked Harold Rubin

about his picture he said he had nothing further to say.

"What I have to say is in my paintings."

Visitors of a type seldom seen at exhibitions have swarmed to the gallery to see the picture.

"Blasphemous," "obscene," "sacrilegious," cried some of the visitors at the gallery on Friday. But what they did not know was that the police had already removed the "offending" Christ and another (showing Christ hanging before two warring "full of hate" characters) had been put up in its place.

● When D. H. Lawrence held an exhibition in England, gallery attendants hung some of his paintings upside down. Police arrested Lawrence for "obscenity," "blasphemy" and "sacrilege."