

## **Smithsonian Stands Firmly Behind "Hide/Seek" Exhibition**

December 6, 2010

The exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, "Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture," which opened Oct. 30, recently sparked a great deal of controversy.

One of the exhibition's 105 works—a short segment in a four-minute video created as a complex metaphor for AIDS—was perceived by some to be anti-Christian. It generated a strong response from the public. We removed it from the exhibition Nov. 30 because the attention it was receiving distracted from the overall exhibition, which includes works by American artists John Singer Sargent, Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Annie Leibovitz and Georgia O'Keeffe.

"Hide/Seek" is scheduled to continue as planned until Feb. 13.

The museum and the Smithsonian stand firmly behind the scholarly merit and historical and artistic importance of the exhibition.

Acknowledging that some visitors may prefer not to encounter some of the subject matter in the exhibit, the museum installed signs at both entrances, reading "This exhibition contains mature themes."