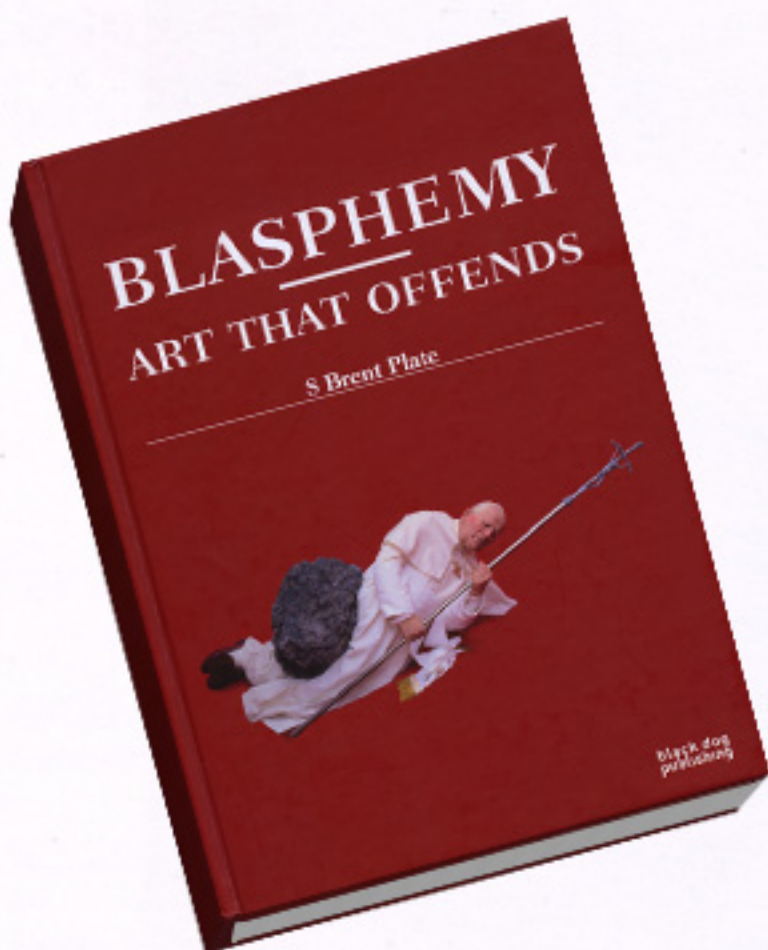




Finally, in another direction, artists have articulated points of resistance in their work by critiquing crass commercialism, showing the ubiquity of advertising and its incessant profanations of religious tradition. Along these lines, one of the more clever recent critiques of consumerist religion is the short film *The McPassion* by Rik Swartzwelder and Benjamin Hershleder. Increasingly sceptical about the commercialisation of religion, and about product tie-ins for ‘religious films’ (the official website for Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* sells nails formed into a cross, a ‘tear catcher’ bottle, and ‘official shirts’), they created a little film that hits the issue head-on. Like an extended advertisement for McDonald’s, the film tells how kids can get their own McPassion Happy Meal (comes with stigmata stickers or a simulated leather cat-o-nine tails), the McLoaves and Fish Sticks meal, or the Gethsemene Garden Salad. Swartzwelder and Hershleder made the film available for public access during the Lenten season in 2006, and viewers from all over took a look and most had a lot of laughs. Nonetheless, a number of people saw it as sacrilegious or blasphemous, while failing to see the critical commentary. As with Monty Python’s *Life of Brian*, the artists’ intentions were not about making fun of sacred figures, but of satirising the most base, profane human impulses.



Excerpted from:

“*Blasphemy: Art That Offends*” by S. Brent Plate.

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Rik Swartzwelder and Benjamin Hershleder, *The McPassion*, stills, courtesy of the author