

Newly Public Art

On February 11, 2013, the hacker known as “Guccifer” submitted emails and pictures to *The Smoking Gun* that he illegally extracted from Presidents George W. Bush and George H.W. Bush’s email accounts, including details concerning the latter’s then recent brush with death and pictures of paintings that George W. Bush created himself.

William Bastone, editor and co-founder of *The Smoking Gun*, said, “[The Smoking Gun] decided to use a tiny portion of [the material provided by Guccifer] that was illustrative of the nature of the various incursions and their seriousness.” But others believe that the innocent nature of the material uncovered by the hacker wasn’t worth publishing— and further intruded on the Bush family’s already unjustly exposed private matters.

Richard Wald, professor at Columbia University, declared, “if the hack had revealed malefaction of a great nature, you’d say ‘Thank God they published it.’ But if it’s just [trivial], it injures the notion of civility.”

While the investigation and reading of former CIA director David Petraeus’ emails was later justified because it revealed potential national security breaches, the invasion of the Bushes’ private emails yielded no such national benefit. The material leaked to the press was centered around an ailing father and paintings depicting the former president enjoying showers and baths— nothing of great social or political magnitude.

After being first published by *The Smoking Gun*, the leaked material was further transmitted around the Internet by the likes of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, reaching even larger audiences.