

**MORAL ARTISTRY:  
HOW ART CAN FACILITATE REVERENCE**

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## ABSTRACT

### Reverence in Art: Moral Virtue, Awe, and Respect

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This presentation will explore the practice of reverence in artistic planning and production, especially as it applies to the feeling of community. Reverence is defined as the capacity to feel awe, respect or shame, when these are the right feelings to have. It is exercised in moral choice and comes alive when we are reminded that there is something larger than a single human being, when we recollect that human understanding is limited. Tyranny and *hubris* are the opposites of reverence. Artistic reverence reminds a community or society of their common humanity, and reminds leaders of their proper place. Although reverence is often associated with religious belief, this presentation is not about religion. In fact, reverence is more properly about community and politics. With respect to the artist's work and intention, this presentation will examine ways in which the artist and artwork can create space and occasion for reverence. I will articulate this claim by considering how artistic reverence is about community feeling, and how art can engender reverence through ceremony. Maya Lin's *Vietnam Veterans Memorial* is the main extended example, though other contemporary artists and artworks are mentioned. I conclude with reflections on the self-awareness of social role and head-hand skill of the artist in artistic reverence.

The definition of reverence above and the articulation of it throughout the presentation is inspired by Paul Woodruff's *Reverence: A Forgotten Virtue* (2001), though he does not apply the concept in the way this presentation does. By pairing Woodruff's work with sociologist Richard Sennett's *The Craftsman* (2008), I integrate philosophy and sociology to illuminate the concept of artistic reverence.