

Session title: Plenary Conversation: What Were You Thinking? Inside the Dangerous Mind of a Political Cartoonist

Moderator/Panelists :

Marc Murphy of the Courier-Journal in Louisville, Kentucky

Darrin Lin, Program Committee Co-Chair, Darrin Lim

Date and time: Monday December 9 2013, 12 pm

Rapporteur: Isabelle Giroux

Session Summary

During a lively plenary session, the editorial cartoonist Marc Murphy shared his ideas and perceptions of his cartoons with convention participants. Though he is an attorney by profession, Mr. Murphy publishes five cartoons a week in the Louisville *Courier-Journal* and they are also distributed throughout the United States.

Marc Murphy is a prolific artist whose inspiration comes from political current affairs, controversies and scandals. Gun control, tragedies like the Newtown massacre, poverty, homophobia, religion, the American army, the budget, and government paralysis are all subjects which have inspired the cartoons that he displayed during the plenary session. For each of the drawings, Mr. Murphy shared with participants the context from which his ideas and opinions emerged, as well as his impressions and emotions at the time he created the cartoon images.

Mr. Murphy's creative process unfolds in several stages. While certain ideas come to him spontaneously and force themselves upon him, others are more difficult to come by. Whenever an idea comes to him, the cartoonist evaluates it according to several criteria. First of all, though an idea might be of interest to him, he asks himself whether there is a chance that it would interest anyone else. He then makes sure that his idea is indeed "right," i.e. that it contains a truth and that is based on facts, at the very least as far as he can see at the time. Coming up with the idea is the most difficult part of the process. For him drawing is the pleasant part.

Mr. Murphy prefers to have the smallest amount of text possible in his cartoons. The perfect cartoon, which he has never yet created, will not include any text at all; there will only be an image. Indeed, he is motivated by a desire to communicate his ideas by way of images. For him, cartoons are a powerful medium for conveying emotions, and he is often inspired by basic emotions such as anger, fear, joy and hope. He wishes to participate in public debates, or even to trigger them, by way of his drawings.

Mr. Murphy's cartoons are sometimes perceived as being controversial. He is aware that at times he chocks certain people, especially when it comes to

subjects related to children and religion, as well as to people's beliefs and personal values. He nevertheless believes in the importance of launching these discussions.

Marc Murphy concluded by insisting that it is wrong to believe cartoonists are uniformly evil, grasping, passive-aggressive and cynical; in his view, this is a litany of falsehoods.