

## **“Only he who loves can sing”**

~ St. Augustine

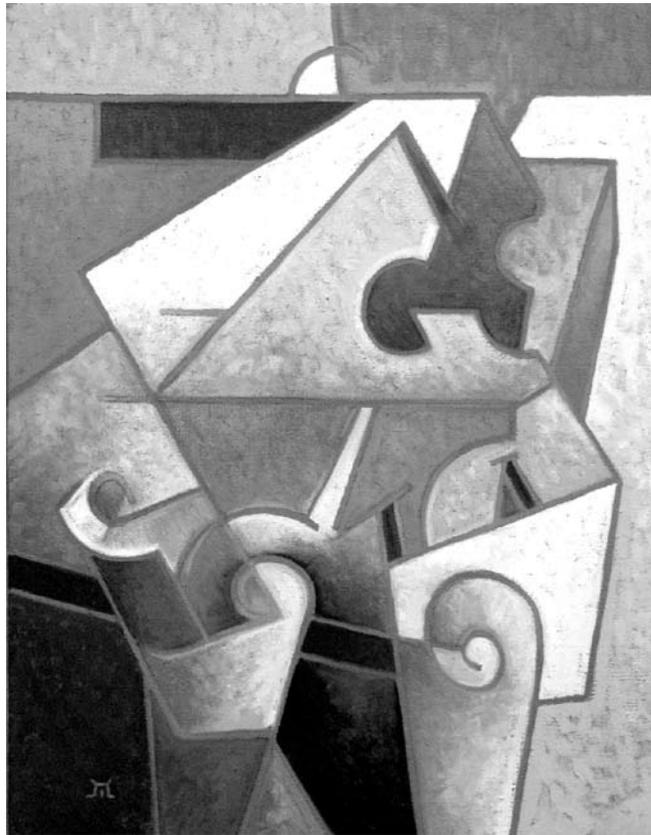
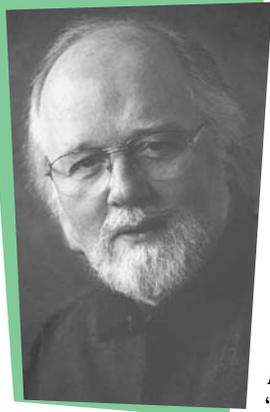
I have been thinking about thinking. Though I value its importance I am wondering if the attention we give it is in need of some balance. Two books – one old and one new are the occasion for my taking up this topic once again. Though not much can be said in the space available here perhaps a few brief comments will generate some of your own reflection about this matter.

*Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* by James K.A. Smith explores the question of human identity.

He argues that how we answer the question concerning who we are has implications for worship, education and spiritual formation. It has been typical for members of western culture to see themselves first as “thinking beings”. One immediately recalls Descartes’ “I think therefore I am”, a short sentence that has carried a very pervasive influence. The legacy of this notion of humans as thinking beings suggests that ideas have primary importance. Others have contended that we are oriented to the world as believers where not just logic, but myth and story play an important part in our self understanding. Smith appreciates these two options but finds them still incomplete. What

is missing he suggests is attention to “desire” as an essential feature of the human person. In taking up this theme it is but a short step to understanding humans as lovers. As Smith puts it “To be human is

to love and it is what we love that defines who we are.” (p.51) *continued on page 4*



## **Sundial IV (Festina Lente) by Philip Mix**

Robert Henri, the inspirational artist and teacher of the Arts Students League, New York, spoke to an experience which has been part of my journey; “There seem to be moments of revelation, moments when we see in the transition of one part to another the unification of the whole. We may call it a passage into another dimension than our ordinary” (*The Art Spirit*, 1923)

Since 2005 I have been exploring a theme. The theme began as the collage of places remembered. Eventually it emerged as a landscape of symbols, imagery for documenting singular significant events. Sometimes these events are sublime, even strangely quiet. At other times they define radical transforming moments in our lives wherein suddenly everything takes on an

immense clarity. The question I asked myself was this; can one use the symbols of landscape to record our emotional and spiritual journey? Not simply the memory of Places but the place (or landscape) of Memory. Can the employment of color and objects, set in distinct arrangements evoke a sense of wonder, anticipation, longing? Does a ray of light always represent hope or can it cast an uncertain disquieting doubt instead? A majestic mountain a distant future, or a dissolving dream?

I further realized it is memory that threads our experiences together, but memory is fragile and influenced by time. It disappears altogether or re-emerges in a reinvented

version. Throughout centuries these themes have been revisited through metaphors and archetypes. Mountain, watershed, crossroads, crux are all words or images to which metaphorical meanings may be attached.

In his book *Space, Time and the Beauty that causes Havoc* author Arthur I. Miller describes Cezanne’s importance as being “his brave new manner of producing spatial ambiguity, which he accomplished by merging foreground and background in a way that fused planes and integrated objects and space”. The term “passage” in French was coined to define this new direction in interpreting the visual. This was a great leap but it was Picasso who freed it from its nineteenth century roots. As Miller further

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## Pinhole Houses

Taking a photograph with a pinhole camera is a spontaneous and serendipitous experience. The lack of viewfinder, the crafty quality of a homemade camera and the simplicity of the process all contribute to a sense of wonder at the resulting image. The hallmarks of a pinhole image (a general fuzziness, infinite depth of field and often some crazy distortion) can infuse the photo with an emotional content not easily achievable with other methods. As old as photography itself, the pinhole process has a deep connection to the history of art and yet its potential to speak in a contemporary voice has been made evident through the works of artists like Bethany de Forest (pinhole.nl), Eric Renner (pinholeresource.com) and Dianne Bos (diannebos.com).

As a practicing photo-based artist, my goal is to join this luminous history by working contemporarily using pinhole cameras. For a number of years, I have explored themes of language and metaphor in my work, specifically attempting to broaden definitions and understandings. A series entitled "Divine Interventions" grew from a challenge to see the divine interactions that occur all around us (even in particularly unremarkable settings) rather than where we generally seek them during miraculous events. My work as an artist emerges out of a belief system that acknowledges a holiness in all things and a desire to see it more clearly.

*Wenda Salomons is an Alberta-based professional visual artist working in photo-based media. She works primarily with pinhole cameras and produces small, black and white silver prints. She has lectured and led workshops on pinhole photography, as well as pursued the development of her own studio practice. Her prints are held in private and public collections across North America. You can contact her and view her work at [wendasalomons.com](http://wendasalomons.com).*

## Milton Acorn: Christian Poet of the People

*The Acorn picture I want to convey is of a maverick and outsider, a man who speaks out at the wrong time, asks embarrassing questions of human society, and will not be satisfied by evasions. ~ Al Purdy*

Milton Acorn (1923-1986) was, when alive, one of the most controversial Canadian poets, and since his death, there has been a growing interest in his life and poetic vision.

Acorn won the People's Poetry Award forty years ago (1970) for his incisive and evocative missive, *I've Tasted My Blood*, and he was awarded the Governor General's Award thirty-five years ago (1975) for *The Island Means Minago*. Both books of poetry walk the attentive reader into the white heat political vision of Acorn.

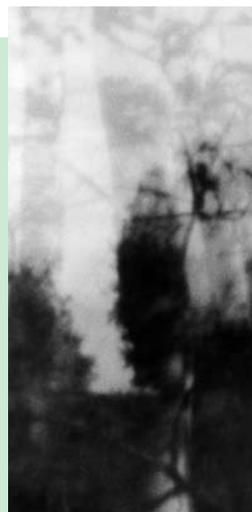
The fact that Acorn is one of Canada's finest poets has meant that biographers have been keen to track and trace his unusual life and poetic journey. *Out of This World: The Natural History of Milton Acorn* (1996) and *Milton Acorn: In Love and Anger* (1999) tell the tale well of Acorn's hard and demanding journey, but both tomes fail to properly deal with Acorn's deeper Christian commitment.

Acorn was both a political and prophetic poet, and, as such, he could not be fitted into the partisan politics of the political

left, right or centre. He was fond of George Grant and C.S. Lewis, and Acorn's High Church Anglicanism was at the core and centre of his being. Acorn sought to live and write in such a way that his poetry embodied and reflected the voices and concerns of those on the margins. In short, his faith and his sense of ecology, justice and peace were integrated at a demanding and profound level.

The fact that there is growing interest in Acorn yet once again means that three books are in the womb on Acorn that should be published in 2010-2011. These books will cover some of his finest poetry and critical essays on his poetry, science fiction, plays and prose. Acorn can be, for those that are interested in the artistic journey, a guide into the troubled waters of faith, poetry and prophetic politics. There have been few Christian poets in Canada of Acorn's stature, and we still have much to learn from this acorn turned oak.

*By Ron Dart, author, poet and professor of Political Philosophy University of the Fraser Valley BC.*



*Spirit*, 12" x 6",  
Gelatin Silver Print,  
2009



*City II*, from the Divine  
Intervention Series,  
12" x 6", Gelatin Silver  
Print, 2007



*Houses 7*, from the Divine  
Intervention Series, 6" x 6",  
Gelatin Silver Print, 2008

## TranscendArts



The arts are amongst the languages that human beings have created in order to communicate their thoughts and feelings with one another. The better we grasp a language, the better we articulate and transmit our ideas. If we don't understand the language that is spoken, we'll not understand what is being said. Montreal is a city where the languages of the arts are varied including their numerous dialects. From dance to visual arts, from music to cinema or from theatre to the circus, we all participate, each in our own way, in this vast arts languages school that Montreal has become.

Through festivals (TRANSFORMATION: arts, Christ & culture in 2004 or the IN VIVO Multi-Arts Festival in 2005), conferences (Colin Harbinson, Nigel Goodwin), special events (Arts and Faith evenings at Café Le Placard) or the support of certain artists (such as the Montreal pianist, Simon Sloutsker), Youth With A Mission seeks to nourish, in the heart of Montreal, reflection and dialogue concerning the arts and Christian spirituality and an appreciation for the mutual roles of each in the development of our common urban life and culture.

YWAM has now gone a step further in wanting to bridge the gap through the creation of TranscendArts. TranscendArts will promote arts projects that have as their goal the transformation of what is normally considered to be the domain of the sacred or religious and reinterpret these with artists of varied disciplines into contemporary art forms just as accessible to the secular, post-Christian culture of today.

Our first project, launched on March 25 at the Café Le Placard, is called *A Pilgrimage Through The Stations*. During Holy Week in April 2011, the works of 14 artists representing the 14 stations of the Scriptural Way of the Cross will be exposed in up to 14 different Metro stations of Montreal. It's an ambitious project but the organizing committee has already begun meetings with La Société de transport de Montréal (STM). For more information, please visit [jemmontreal.ca](http://jemmontreal.ca). A separate website will be up and running sometime in May.

Pierre LeBel, Director, YWAM, Montreal

## Photography As Theatre

Instead of a thousand words, I take a photograph. It tells a story by distilling an idea into one frozen moment in time. It is direct, unchanging and undiluted.

Photographs capture the spontaneous – life as it happens. But photographs can tell another story – a deliberate and compelling idea. This is photography as theatre. It leaves nothing to chance. It is deliberate and planned in every visual detail. It is the staging of a photograph in the same way a film or theatre production constructs and stages a scene to tell a story.

Several years ago I came across a documentary about the purges Stalin undertook in the Soviet Union of the 1930's. It featured photographs of victims – men and women who were executed during Stalin's terror. They were perceived as a threat to the State or a threat to his personal power. But so deep was his paranoia that it was not enough that they should die. Their very memory must be erased. Photographs of their faces were either "painted" over or scratched out. In some cases, those talented in early photographic techniques were employed to make people "disappear." There are some interesting photographs of Stalin with those who worked for him. As they fell out of favour they simply disappeared from photographs in which they had originally been present. No record of them must remain. It was as if these people had never existed.

I felt in small way I should tell their story. This was the reason for *Revisionism*. It is part of a series that will be called "The –ISM- Collection."

Originally *Revisionism* was conceived as a single raw looking photograph to mimic those from the 30's. The first in what is now a series of three. The man holding the erased portrait in the first picture is the son of Soviet dissidents. The photograph in his hands is of a man who was executed in the Soviet purges. In the second photograph, the man holding the victim's picture becomes a victim himself. The third photograph completes the work of the revisionist. Any record that they ever existed disappears.

For obvious reasons, the idea of revisionism translates well into photographic form. Unfortunately, this cannot be said for many abstract ideas. This is the challenge of photography as theatre. Constructing an image to capture a complex idea, in a clear and concise way, can be a daunting process.

When it works, photography as theatre has a power that an incidental, spontaneous image cannot. The passive art of photography as record keeper, as a witness to history is replaced. It is not a matter of documenting a moment in time. It is a matter of creating it. It is taking a thought, an idea in the mind's eye and giving it a vision that everyone can see.

Paul Williamson is a Television Producer and Photographer living in Hamilton, Ontario ([pwilliamson@cogeco.ca](mailto:pwilliamson@cogeco.ca))



R E V I S I O N I S M

## Sundial IV *continued from page one*

states “because Einstein and Picasso sought realities beyond appearances, each accomplished something entirely new”. The discovery of relative time and the innovation of fragmenting spatial planes in painting to record the transitory nature of visual references struck me as the perfect spring boards for this quest. At the same time I wondered if the exquisite transcendent quality that was inherent in stained glass windows, could somehow be imitated in painting. Travel forward in time briefly to the present and hence begins my playful interpretation of time and space through the metaphor of the sundial. In this series of paintings, the Gnomon (meaning “one who knows”) casts or reflects shadow over the roman numeric concept of time which we continue to follow. The sundial itself precedes this convention, as does the sun the sundial and before the sun, the Creator of light and time.

Philip Mix, Chemainus (philipmix.com)

## Only he who loves can sing

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If we can accept that desire is significant for our identity, it opens the question about how our desires are shaped, by what are they nurtured and directed. Smith’s answer to this is that it is the rituals and practices in which we participate that give shape to our imaginations and determine our orientation to the world. The upshot of this line of thought is that we are “*homo liturgicus*”. We are liturgical beings. Liturgies according to Smith are found not just in sanctuaries – but throughout the culture. What is needed is a discerning eye to understand what practices we participate in and what they mean for the shaping of our desires – what they call us to love. Surely our consumerist society should give us pause as we consider the liturgies of consumption.

The second and older work I have been reading is a small book of essays written in the 1950s by Catholic writer John Pieper titled *Only the Lover Sings: Art and Contemplation*. Both Pieper and Smith are indebted to St. Augustine who was deeply aware of the importance of human desire and its centrality in enabling us to worship. Pieper speaks

## Young Artists Are Our Future

Since John Franklin, Phyllis Novak and I toiled over the Lausanne paper, “Redeeming The Arts”, in Thailand 2004, we have each been continuing to apply the clear mandate of that unique global meeting of Christian advocates for the arts.

For my part, this has meant finding ways to build a better support system for artists in our own spiritual community, in our churches and in our schools. It has meant sowing seeds in the minds of young talented visual artists in particular, who clearly lack sufficient encouragement from knowledgeable church leaders, high school teachers and yes parents. By encouragement I mean a commitment to supporting the idea that artists are valued members of the faith community, and that they can have viable paid careers in broad variety of career paths that go far beyond traditional fine art. We

cannot allow these gifted students to simply disappear and give up on being artists.

It also means, in working with churches, children, high school students, college students and international groups that my focus has been on “Art as Language”, rich in aesthetics but also potent in communication, no matter how subtle.

One recent facet of this work, has occurred in the ongoing fine art program at Redeemer University College, where I work as adjunct faculty. Our figure drawing students this year completed a project which I believe breaks fresh ground in re-interpreting the metaphor of “Taking Up One’s Cross” in a project called WINGSPAN. Shown below is one of the drawings, this one completed by Denise Bentum.

James Tughan (perigeo@cogeco.ca)



of those experiences where we “touch the core of all things” which for him is a divine foundation. Such activities he describes as meaningful in themselves. Two conditions are essential. First an attitude of receptive openness and attentive silence, and second the ability to celebrate a feast. Art lends itself to both of these conditions and for many is one way to “touch the core of things”. Also art, as it engages our affective side, speaks our desires, both those of the artist and those who experiences the art. Might we say that art has a liturgical character and points beyond itself to a divine source sometimes hidden sometimes revealed.

*John.*

John Franklin, *Executive Director*  
133 Southvale Drive, Toronto, ON M4G 1G6  
416-421-8745 imago@rogers.com  
[www.imago-arts.on.ca](http://www.imago-arts.on.ca)

## Imago Evening

Thursday June 10, 2010 at 7:30 to 9:30

Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity St.  
(just east of Parliament and King)

### Featuring

**Mike Janzen**, jazz piano, composer

**Ins Choi**, actor, performing a new piece

**Brad Woods**, story teller with  
*The Great Wooden Trio*

**Kevin Morse**, guitarist, songwriter

**Trevor Dick**, of *Flying Bow*,  
playing electric violin

**Sylvia Woods**, visual artist

Come and bring a friend...

Reception to follow...

**Admission is free** – there will be an opportunity to donate to Imago.