

# imago

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**The creative gift** has a way of speaking to us in a language that reaches beneath the surface and communicates at a deeper level than we normally experience in a consumer culture. Art humanizes and has the capacity to point us to the transcendent, freeing us from the confines of our temporal engagements. Art is able to unmask our falsehoods, disclose our blind spots and nudge us in the direction of redemption. Art can be a bridge over the chasms of broken relationships, ethnic division, and religious difference. I don't mean to suggest that art by itself is a redeemer, but only that it may serve as a vehicle of grace in crossing the difficult terrain that separates us. Where common discourse fails, artistic expression comes to assist us in the form of poetry, dance, drama, painting or music.



This season of Advent should be understood as a time of waiting, something we find difficult to do in our fast paced culture of instant gratification. However, that waiting is not passive, or inactive, but a preparation that calls us to action, action that is consistent with the One for whom we wait. It is more a time for self-giving than self-indulgence, more for compassion than consuming. Advent is also about 'arrival,' the coming of the promised One who brings healing, redemption and – something much less palatable – judgment.

The events of this fall have cast a dark cloud over us and we are now, more than ever, inclined to be on tiptoe trying to glimpse how present circumstances will shape our future. In its wake, terror brings fear into the ordinary places of our lives and inflates the small uncertainties we

have grown accustomed to. Where are we to look at a time like this? We are bombarded with images that vie for our attention. Advent directs our gaze to the One who brings light into our darkness and hope that diffuses our despair. To keep hope from falsity we must face honestly the reality of our moral and spiritual failures.

It was for this reason that the prophets of old spoke so forcibly about the serious shortcomings of God's people. Hope is not just a call to look ahead to a day of deliverance; it entails imperatives for change in the present. We are not only to promote change around us, but within us.

Humanity's great temptation is self-sufficiency. We nurture the belief that we know best what to do and how to do it. The coming of Jesus discloses the hollowness of our ill founded self-reliance, and judges its negative consequences, whether personal, social or global. If we are to receive the full impact of the good news of His coming, we need a proper understanding of who we are and what we are capable of. Pointing to the 'other' a finger of exclusion is all too easy, often expressing more about our fears than our insights.

In our conflict-ridden world we need the wisdom to act with justice and the courage to name evil for what it is. Miroslav Volf, in his compelling book, *Exclusion and Embrace*, describes sin as "the will to purity". It

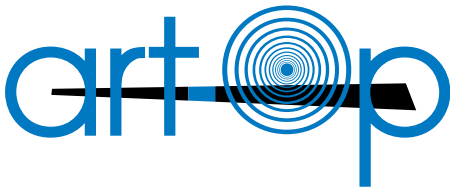


## Jim Paterson, *visual artist*

It is hard to talk about an event like 9/11 without appearing to claim some ownership over it. In reality, I was not affected in a direct way. I grieved and mourned with the people of NYC. I cried out in horror as I was praying aloud for God to hold the second tower up only to see it collapse minutes later. But for all my identification with the people there, the reality is that I live in Oakville and I didn't lose anyone or anything.

What I found that I had to do, however, was to deal with the tragedy in a way of my own making. The media, I concluded, was making assumptions about the various levels and layers of meaning that this event held for me. In response, I "painted" my way through the events of 9/11. I made a couple of paintings so that I could, in essence, report on the happenings to myself and put it in the context of my own world-view. Since then I have not dealt directly with it except to include it in the background of a few pieces as a hinge point connecting that day to everything that comes afterwards.

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## Art and the Act of Vulnerability

By James Croker

I am a dancer. I am one with the actor, the singer, the musician and the visual artist. I have always been; since humans crawled up from the bog, sat at fires and told stories. I always will be. No matter how techno the world becomes, how disjointed, how branded or pop. No matter how narrow-minded.

I am the silent partner to great and small works of art. I am a performer whose skills enhance and heighten the quality of what is seen, or heard. I can be laughter or tears, joy or despair. I weep in a corner when I am rejected by those who have studied too much and learned too little. But I know my place. And my nature is not to intrude, but only to enter when I am invited. Then I leap forward with enthusiasm, and weave unseen threads from artist to audience and back again. My performance is only fully realized when I am not there. I am vulnerability.

The pursuit and study of art is a highly complex procedure. Years of training, learning, watching, designing and failing. Submitting one's mind, will and body to a regime that both enhances and compliments a vision. Then there is presentation or what I call "the act of art." Few of us go to see art just to see the skill presented (that's why we have the Olympics, Sunday sports). Of course, skill will always demand attention. But what keeps us there? Or sends us home with more than the immediate thrill?

I believe that art should assist the audience to see their world differently. It should, or at least honestly attempt, to put into some physical form what we all recognize intuitively to have meaning. Yet before the artist can inspire, we must connect. First with ourselves and then with our audience.

My view of vulnerability puts the pursuit of skill and knowledge into a perspective that can both lead and inspire. That in turn can lead us to question our outlook and the assumptions of others. This openness to questioning is the threshold of vulnerability. I believe that this is the fundamental starting point of our art, our religions and our humanity.

*James is a member of Motus O Dance Theatre, Markham*

## November 3 with the transparent Jeanine Noyes

By Warren MacDonald

I knew we were in for a special evening when I heard that Juno Award nominee Blaise Pascal would be playing the opening set for **imago** artist, Jeanine Noyes' CD release concert. It was a feather in Jeanine's cap and a nice show of support on Blaise's part.

The concert was great from the first chord, and much was missed by the many latecomers who straggled in during Blaise's performance. Even a snapped string on her accompanist's guitar, which took him off stage for a hasty repair, turned into a lucky break for the audience, for it was then that Blaise shared with us a little about her music and her motivation. She told us how her next radio-play song had been shelved in the aftermath of September 11. Her radio promotion people decided the song was too harsh and replaced it with a more upbeat number. They said that the people want to hear light, pop songs these days. She then started into the questionable

## I see paintings everywhere.



My vivid imagination and heart are always fully engaged, as it appears that God gave me an extra dose of sensitivity to my surroundings.

My faith is very much an integral part of my work. I do not paint apart from God's Holy Spirit leading and teaching me. I do my learning "on the job". This connectedness to God helps me to portray a gospel that in its fullness embraces all aspects of life. Whether I paint flowers, land and seascapes, children, or the Holy Family – I feel God's pleasure. Presently, I have been experimenting with landscape expressed in a simple abstract form with an emphasis on depth through the layering of colour. I call these canvases my "Glory" series as I attempt to depict God's glory permeating the land.

With the start of each new canvas, whether my inspiration comes from the scriptures, music, words from a book, different people groups etc., etc., I approach the canvas with a sense of "play", exploration and expectancy. This wonderful journey often finds me trying to catch my breath as I struggle to keep up with the life of the unfolding work.

*Janet Cummings, Vancouver*

song, and I thought, yes, this song is harsh, but it is telling the truth, it is real. But such is the conundrum for artists seeking a place in the entertainment industry. It is an industry and it makes money by keeping people amused, and it seems they can only do that by helping people forget reality. Welcome to our Brave New World.



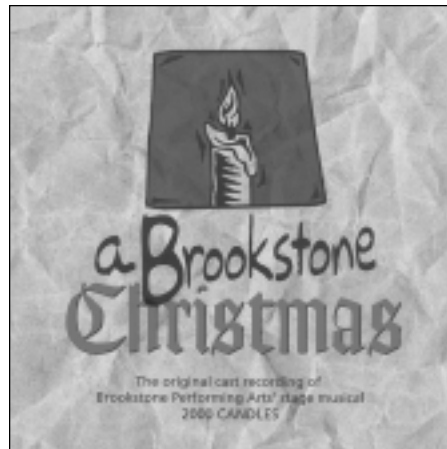
It was a fitting set-up for Jeanine. Her debut CD is entitled “transparent”. She opened the concert with the title track. It was just her and her piano, as she sang, “if you want to see me”. She was real, and even though we saw her, she never got in the way of the songs. She was just up there singing and playing, communicating in music, some of the things she has seen and learned along the way. And she did it wonderfully.

The success of the evening was also due in large part to Jeanine, the music director. She had planned out the whole event with the aid of a theatre director. The stage was nicely dressed by a set designer. The lighting was creatively varied to match the mood of each song. And most importantly, she had assembled a very talented group of musicians to back her up. A couple of times she stepped out of the spotlight and allowed the band to really cook on their own. It was a real treat. I also appreciated Jeanine’s obvious admiration of the band and her on-stage recognition of their efforts. Though Jeanine was the star, and her name is on the CD cover, the concert felt like it came from a band, not a soloist.

There was a nice flow to the set list and a good balance between a few impromptu moments and Jeanine’s well chosen interesting stories which she used to introduce and illuminate the songs.

The songs ran a range of musical styles as was appropriate for the many different ideas expressed. From soft pop to folk to jazz and blues with some great guitar solos worthy of any decent rock band. Some of the songs put me in mind of Joni Mitchell, some of Holly Cole, but that was in retrospect, while listening to the CD at home. At the concert it was all live, in person, Jeanine and the band, and some great songs played real well with lots of conviction.

Jeanine’s subject matter covers many bases, from love and romance to personal introspection to theological musings. Both the positive and the negative. The song “My Love” starts with “my love is like a river to the ocean, and i know you are sailing to me” and the song “i don’t see how” ends with “i would give anything to be rid of the



memory of you”. The contrast is polar, yet both seem to spring authentically from Jeanine’s experience and you get the feeling that they all somehow fit into the larger picture of her life. You believe her when she says in the title track “transparent”, “i want to be clear, i want to be open”.

Jeanine closed the concert, and the CD, with “abide with me”, a traditional, simple request for the One who changest not, to be her guide and stay, and to abide with her. It came as a reminder that all her songs spring from a perspective which is shaped by the Lord who desires to abide with us all.

The packed house called her back for a rousing encore which brought everyone to their feet. The standing ovation was well deserved.

A big round of applause also goes to **imago** for supporting Jeanine and, in many ways, helping to make this concert possible.

Hopefully we will see, and hear, more evenings like November 3.

**Postscript:** Visit [www.jeaninenoyes.com](http://www.jeaninenoyes.com) to get a copy of her CD or to find out more about Jeanine. You can also catch Jeanine in Brookstone Performing Arts musical production, *2001 Candles*. This show, which Jeanine helped put together last year, and for which she is the musical director, and in which she also performs, is a wonderful exploration of the themes of Christmas using stories and songs, both old and new. It is at times outrageously funny and then disarmingly poignant. And Jeanine’s musical direction holds it all together. It is a highly recommended Christmas experience. The show is on tour in the GTA from November 16 to December 23. Check out [www.brookstonetheatre.com](http://www.brookstonetheatre.com) or call 416-922-1238 for dates, times, locations and tickets. If you miss out this year I am sure it will be back next year as *2002 Candles*. In the meantime you can get a CD of the original cast recording from either Jeanine or Brookstone.

## ...in a Blaise of pink hairspray

I came to Blaise Pascal’s debut CD, “hairspray” rather late. I first heard about it as an **imago** project. Then I caught a short article in the March 5, 2001 issue of Maclean’s magazine entitled, “Juno’s longest long shot”. Maclean’s said, “Blaise Pascal may be a virtual unknown but she keeps good company. This year, Pascal is nominated for a Juno in the best songwriter category alongside the Barenaked Ladies, Bryan Adams, Nelly Furtado and Snow. While her competitors may have the advantage of being household names, Pascal has the upper hand when it comes to winning songwriting awards. In 1996, she beat out 4,000 entries to win Canada’s sixth annual National Songwriting Competition... The next year, the Torontonian placed second in the inaugural John Lennon Songwriting Competition from a pool of 34,000 entrants.”

I decided to stop procrastinating and get some “hairspray.” Even before I slipped the disk into my player I was enjoying the CD.

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## CD Review

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The album graphics are great. The cover photo has caught Blaise with an enigmatic, wry expression. With head slightly tilted and eyes wide open she appears both all-knowing and empty-headed in a quizzical, Mona Lisa sort of way. The effect is innocently punky. And the music is like that too.

Instrumentally, the CD sounds like the best of the current pop rock bands but vocally it is unique. Production wise, the album is well crafted and nicely recorded. Blaise has plenty of support from fine musicians. But it is her distinctive and expressive voice that is front and centre.

The opening song sets the tone. It has all the licks, hooks and bounce necessary for radio play but sounds like a manifesto. "I want to live in colour, I want to live out loud." For her, it is the "Only Way". On an intimate note, songs like "10 feet high" have a twist on love and romance that hint at a slightly skewed view of life. Her sense of humour doesn't take either the ways of this world, or herself, too seriously.

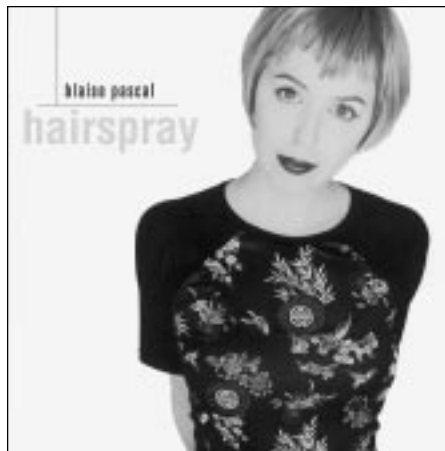
The music is spunky and fun with an underlying tone of earnestness. Her songs evoke feelings through phrases and images. There are no real ballads or story telling, but there are strong and pointed messages. Her social commentary is not snide, but sympathetic. It sounds like she cares. Blaise recognizes that life is tough, but suggests that this miserable life is not all there is to our existence. "We live in a

world," Blaise sings, "that's cracked at the seams." She goes on to sing, "it's ok to hold my hand 'cause we know that love is free." A couple of the songs from this CD have already seen air-play, and another one is on the way. This is great because her songs are a welcome relief to the depressive fare served up by pop radio.

And about the hair, well, I have got to think that all the pink (the hair, the cover spine, the CD itself) is a sort of feminine anti-feminist personal rebellion banner. Hair is a statement-making fashion device and I think Blaise pulls off the attitude charmingly.

The Maclean's article also noted that: "Despite industry buzz ... there is a lack of money and support for independent releases like Pascal's" So once again **imago** gets a congratulatory nod for helping Blaise get her "hairspray" of the ground, into the stores and onto the airwaves.

**Postscript:** For Blaise Pascal info, etc., visit [www.blaisemusic.com](http://www.blaisemusic.com)



### The creative gift... *continued from page 1*

is this will, "... turned away from the spiritual life of the self to the cultural world of the 'other'.." (p.74) that gives birth to a politics of exclusion. As we seek to move out from under the dark shadow of recent events we would do well to keep in mind another observation Volf makes; "From a distance the world may appear neatly divided into guilty perpetrators and innocent victims. The closer we get, however, the more the line between the guilty and the innocent blurs and we see an intractable maze of small and large hatreds, dishonesties, manipulations, and brutalities, each reinforcing the other." (p.81) The vulnerable babe of Bethlehem, whose arrival we await

and celebrate, comes to judge and to redeem, to heal and to bring justice and to embrace humanity with a love that transforms the sinful heart. He comes to make the crooked ways straight and the rough places smooth. It was and is a transformational coming. We who are Christians call it 'incarnation,' Emmanuel, God with us. In these uncertain times, knowing that God is with us, that God has stepped into the dark realities our sinful world, provides us with a ground for hope, and calls us to be a hopeful presence amidst the buzzing confusion that circles "Ground Zero."

Art, at its best, also signals hope. It draws out of the deep well of human creativity and gives us a glimpse of that image which we

## Upcoming Events

### Every Blessed Thing

– **January 31 & February 1, 2002**, Yorkminster Park Baptist Church (Yonge St. just north of St.Clair), Seasoned Scottish Actor, Tom Fleming – one of the great stars of Scottish stage – will perform the one-man show about the life of George McLeod, a founding member of the Iona community. Tickets for the play are available by calling the church at 416-922-1167 x221 (\$20 or \$15 for students and seniors). The author of the play, Rev. Ronald Ferguson of St. Magnus Cathedral, Orkney, Scotland, will preach at YPBC on Sunday, February 3, 2002.

### ART-TALKS 2002

– **May 3 & 4, 2002**, Bill Romanowski of Calvin College, will take up the topic of contemporary film. Romanowski is well known for his thoughtful work on popular culture. There is a lecture Friday evening, May 3, at St. George the Martyr Anglican Church, Toronto, and a Symposium on film Saturday morning at the Institute for Christian Studies. **Imago** is pleased to once again partner with the Institute for Christian Studies for this special event. Watch for more details in the spring newsletter.

### Imago's Vancouver Arts Network

– **Imago Evening**, Sunday, February 10, 2002. Phone: 604-987-7931

all bear. It humanizes, calls us to a fresh perspective and lifts us, if only for a moment, out of the shadows of our immediate circumstance. It is this good artistic gift that **imago** celebrates and seeks to nurture. Now in its 30th year **imago** continues to look for ways to give a voice to people of faith in the arts. We are grateful for your ongoing interest in the work of **imago** and trust that you will continue to stand with us in this time of growth and change.

John Franklin, *Executive Director*  
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