



imago

autumn 2002 **NEWSLETTER** volume four issue three

My involvement in coordinating imago's National Art Competition has led me to do some thinking about the theme – *A New Heaven and A New Earth*. A good deal of recent work in theology has given attention to the topic of eschatology, and books on the end times are regular best sellers. Talk of endings is in the air.

Living our lives as we do in the midst of a world of uncertainty, we scan the horizon for a beacon of hope. Kant the influential 18th century philosopher suggested that one of humanity's basic questions is what can I hope for?. It is this inclination to look ahead, to secure ourselves in a future yet to come that is captured in our theme. Why is it we are so keen to discover what the "end" will be like? Why are endings so important to us? Our passion for endings may lead us to look to the back of a novel to discover what happens, or to speculate about how the world will end. It seems characteristic of humanity to be directed toward the future. This is far too big a topic to tackle in so short a space, but I can at least suggest a few threads that I trust will be of interest.

The end of a narrative can serve to organize the story. It enables us to make sense of the bits and pieces and allows us to see how the parts fit together within the whole. In this case ending brings closure. But endings may also leave things open. Specifically I have in mind the biblical 'ending' of a new heaven and a new earth. In this case it is not that everything is over, but rather something new is beginning. And so what we are given here is not simply closure but openness to a new future found in a heaven and earth changed and transformed. However,



continued on page 4



Raw Targets: Al Groen

Richmond Hill, Ontario

September 11, 2002 left us standing naked in the streets, exposed, vulnerable and wounded. Good, evil and God were heard, felt and questioned together along side our sense of disbelief. As an artist I wrote, sketched, and built for months afterwards.

What had I seen? What shapes had emerged? How did they sound and feel? What texture, density, weight and spirit did they embody? I examined many issues; the nature of sadness, of evil on a beautiful day, the question of how humans feel when they are falling to their death, or how the physical earth feels when it is wounded, and how do I feel when I know I could be a victim of terrorism. From my reflections there surfaced the primitive shape of a target and a series of works called *Raw Targets*.

This series consists of ten large plywood constructed reliefs. Each of the works measures four feet by four feet and about

Hollow
What is this
hallow hollow
gay
that has no
soul or sleep
here
lying in tears
hearing shadows
living yesterday

Detail >



four inches deep. Plywood was chosen because it is layered as we are. Plywood can be exposed, cut, beaten, painted, burned and nailed. The plywood can be wounded as we are then made into something new and unexpected.

My art seeks to show the difficulties we face with our personal and social wounds. In seeing and owning these difficulties I believe we become more human and open the possibility for healing to take place. When we examine our sorrows we deepen our strength.

In my final work I ask the viewer to see the Grace of God that can enter our wounds. It is grace that is direct, strong, and hard as steel mending each layer of our pain. Grace slowly lets us see the spiritual nature of our humanity and invites us to respond to the call to be more like Christ. ▣

Memories of imago Past

By Meg Jordan (née Peel)

In 1969 a group of young people gathered around a young director named Louis Capson to form a community whose mission was to witness to the love of Christ through theatre. It was a summer project called Creation 2. We lived together in a large house at the corner of Bernard and Madison Avenue in Toronto's Annex. We rehearsed in church halls and we performed on the streets and in the city's parks.

Some of us were inspired to continue living and working together after that summer. We had a vision for theatre as a prophetic voice in society and for creative drama as a means of reaching out into the world with transformative spiritual power. I remember when Barbara Sutherland joined the company for a few years. She used to lead us in vigorous ballet warm-ups before the day's work. I was never in better physical shape.

Creation 2 grew into an innovative performance art ensemble who intensely explored the possibilities of bodies and voices within space. We were inspired by such figures as Grotowski in Poland and Peter Brook in England. We performed and conducted workshops in every kind of space—from churches to maximum security prisons, university chapels to fully equipped theatre venues such as the St. Lawrence Centre and the National Arts Centre. Some people loved our work. Many didn't. We were able to persevere because of two things.

We lived and worked in community which enabled us to operate very cost effectively. Every one received what they needed to live. No one was paid an individual wage.

We had a devoted patron and advocate named Wilbur Sutherland who gave us unconditional support both spiritually and financially. We didn't see him as a patron at the time although I now see that is what he was doing. We simply saw him as our loyal friend and faithful supporter. When Wilbur formed **imago** in 1972 as a charitable foundation to pursue his own special calling from God, he offered

Creation 2 the opportunity to work under the auspices of **imago** as well. We became the first of many arts projects which received Wilbur's support in this way. Through our association with him and **imago**, we gained credibility in the arts funding world as well as respect from the church.

Years later I was involved in forming another arts group called Ruah Dance Theatre Ensemble. Again Wilbur and **imago** provided us with the encouragement and support we needed to raise funds for our work. Ruah brought dance and movement into worship and liturgy as well as launching biblically inspired dance works in the public sphere. Some **imago**

supporters may remember a production directed by Lorraine Gregson called "Dry Bones" which was based on Ezekiel's vision in the valley! Others will be familiar with the work of Alexandra Caverly Lowery who is still active across the country as an inspiring performer and workshop leader.

It has always been difficult to be an artist and remain within the church. The arts do not conform easily to prescriptive theologies and restrictive dogmas. So it is wonderful to see how **imago's** mission has evolved. I am sure that Wilbur is pleased that his years of faithful and often thankless work have become the ground for so many creative possibilities. I can hear him quietly and energetically urging us on! ❖

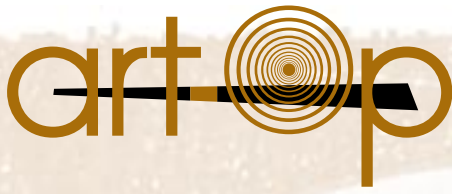
Imago National Visual Art Competition – *A New Heaven and A New Earth*

The deadline for submissions has past and the jury has done its initial round of sifting to select finalists for the art exhibition. Well over 300 artists submitted nearly 800 slides of work to be judged in the competition. The 30 works that were selected for the exhibition will go on show October 30 to November 9, 2002 at Painted City Gallery, 234 Queen Street East. It was exciting to have work submitted from across Canada as well as from the Yukon and Northwest Territories. The competition has served well to heighten the profile of **imago** across the country and to affirm its credibility as an organization serious in its commitment to the arts.

It has been particularly interesting to hear from scores of artists and a number of curators who expressed their appreciation for the competition and what it has meant for visual artists in Canada. Though the prize money has not been our focus, there is no doubt that the handsome prizes drew the interest of many and made a clear statement about the importance of the work of visual artists. I have also learned that a

competition of this sort allows the artist to do their work in a way that connects deeply with their own sensibilities. It is common knowledge that galleries often require artists to conform to specific requirements of clientele or social agendas. The theme of *A New Heaven and A New Earth* was intentionally expansive rather than restrictive. One artist in western Canada has told me that he has been so inspired by the theme that in addition to his entry he plans to do a series of paintings seeking to probe the theme more deeply than his single painting would allow.

The entries engaged the theme not just from a Judeo-Christian viewpoint but from a variety of other positions as well. Abstract, figurative, sculpture, woodcut, mosaic, ceramic, painting, photograph, the show of finalists consists of a great variety of work linking in various ways to speak to a new heaven and a new earth. For those in the Toronto area we encourage you to come out and see the show. The plan is for the exhibition to go to Regent College's Lookout Gallery for a show in January. ❖



Against Blands: Use Oddness as an Antidote

Chlorophyll exits from the stage, biochemicals rummage in the maple leaves and blazing colours signal rot. It's one of those autumn days when summer lingers and we can't quite let it go while at the same time the dew and sharpness in the morning air exhilarates. It's raining mildly and the sun shines through it. Contradictory states experienced simultaneously. The movement towards hope and life coexists with the movement toward loss and death. It's a poet's job to find words which convey the pull in one direction and underneath it, the tug in another.

On my wall I have a drawing of a creek in snow. It's done in that most common media, colour pencil. Marianne Wilke, who is just establishing herself as an artist, has depicted a winter riparian habitat, vermil-

ion osier twigs and bare gold willows. Leading from the foreground right into the middle of the drawing, huge tire marks churn up the pretty scene. A brutal gash of mud and charcoal smears almost dominates the picture. "Oh," one might say at first glance, "why did she ruin the picture like that?" A little part of me wants to mentally erase that gash and restore the scene. Restoration is a universal longing. The truth is that most of us are urbanites; we do not have access to "pristine" Nature, if there is such a thing. The winter wonderland creeks around our city settings are gouged up; perhaps the tire marks are those of our own vehicle. I am drawn to look at this piece again and again. The tension in it resonates with a tension in me. Looking, I am working out at some deep level what it means to live in the creation that is unmistakably sullied and yet respond to the colour of willows in winter.

Artists of faith are not called to depict a world without a Fall as Gregory Wolfe points out in a recent editorial in *Image*. Regarding the work of Thomas Kinkade, the popular American illustrator, Wolfe comments that Christians surmise things about the world before brokenness entered the picture and we know what it is to live in imperfection. Pretending that the Fall did not happen yields insipid art.

As a writer and editor, I read a lot of poetry written by Christians and dislike its blandness. This is especially true when it is overtly religious. I'm not referring to the work of beginning writers. I mean blandness as a defining characteristic. Why so lacking in boldness? It's as if there is an unspoken rule that the things of God must be pretty and palatable. No paradox or enigmas, disease allowed maybe but no despair. Recently I was in a good bookstore looking for a new book by a well-known American Christian poet. "Oh," said the manager, "that's not really poetry is it? We keep it back here with the religious stuff." "Oh", said I, "but I see you have Denise Levertov's work here on your poetry shelf". The manager looked shocked. "Levertov was a Christian?" he asked with surprise. As if such a feisty poet could not possibly be religious let alone Christian.

The faith journey in its fullness encompasses the whole gamut of human emotion. To get to the banquet, we must first pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and both of them are recurring experiences. Mourning with those who mourn does not mean pretending to be sad. If we cannot authentically mourn we can't authentically rejoice either. Why all this meek and mild poetry? Christ is not offended by rawness. He was odd, sparky, controversial and offensive Himself. He descended into Hell and so do you and I at times when we feel we've been abandoned. Inferior poetry goes for resolution. Good writing encourages staying in the dark without rushing to light a candle.

Paradox and unresolved tension elicit interest and energy. Great art invites us to stay in subtle and odd states, waiting.

"All knowing darkens as it builds." writes the poet Tim Lilburn. His ecstatic (and sometimes unintelligible) utterances convey the beauty and necessity of not grabbing, not understanding nor possessing. "You stay in the night, you squat in the hills in the cave of night. Wait."

Hannah Main-van der Kamp is a BC writer. She is the author of several books including *The Parable Boat* (Wolsak and Wynn, Toronto 99). A forthcoming volume of poetry is titled *According To Loon Bay*. ❧

Christian Artist Seminar 2002 in Holland

From August 20 to 25, 2002, **imago's** Executive Director had the opportunity to attend the Christian Artist's Seminar in Doorn Holland. This event was the 22nd annual meeting and it hosted more than 250 artists from all over Europe. Some of those in attendance were directors of arts organizations like **imago** and we exchanged ideas and noted among other things the different organizational models that are active in promoting Christian artists.

In addition to the daily workshops, each evening featured a two hour showcase of performance which included drama, dance, visual arts presentations and a wide range of music. Art work was on display throughout the event and a number of works were created during the five days of meeting.

There was a good deal of interest in the Canadian scene, and a desire to know what is happening among Christian artists in Canada. A number of artists expressed interest to visit Canada. One of those was guitarist Jason Carter who travels the world playing in very diverse settings and engaging what is known as "world music fusion". He has been invited to play in the Montreal jazz festival next July and we are working to arrange a concert next June in Toronto with Jason and some local talent.

Attending this conference was in part an effort to build some bridges internationally and so extend **imago's** network beyond Canadian borders in the hope of fruitful links in the future. ❧

My involvement in co-ordinating *imago's* National Art Competition

continued from page 1

entertaining the idea of a hopeful end is often difficult. This is particularly so when we face some of the dark realities of our social and personal worlds. It is here that imagination is called into play.

The vision of a new heaven and a new earth is subversive. It subverts the social consensus, the propaganda of "the empire", the claims that the world as we experience it is all there is, and the contention that hope rests in human resourcefulness. Hopefulness results from a vision of what is to come and that vision requires imagination. It is

Composer Nick Peros' work performed in Washington National Cathedral

Prayer of Consolation by Canadian composer Nick Peros is a large scale *a cappella* choral work composed as an artistic and scriptural response to the September 11, 2001. The text, compiled from the bible by the composer, forms a dialogue between God and humanity addressing the themes of death, pain and suffering, but ultimately leading to hope and peace. The 40 minute work was created between March 1 and June 30, 2002 and received its World Premiere performance on September 10, 2002 at Washington National Cathedral as part of the official USA first anniversary commemorations. Nearly 1,000 people attended the Premiere, performed by The Palestrina Choir of Washington DC, with conductor Michael Harrison. The work was well received and had substantial media coverage across Canada and the US, including feature articles in major Canadian newspapers (Toronto Star, National Post), The Washington Post, Associated Press (US) and Canadian Press, national radio coverage on CBC Radio 1 and 2, and on CBC TV as part of their day long special commemorative programming. Much hard work that went into making this project a reality in a short time, but it would not have been possible without the support of *imago*. 📺

through imagination that we are able to rise above current circumstances to catch a glimpse of a larger horizon. What we see can then be brought back into the present. The result is that the often dark and difficult realities of the present are seen in fresh perspective. Moreover by imagining the future we are equipped to re-imagine the present. Contrary to what many have suggested looking to a new heaven and a new earth need not lead us to abandon the present as if it doesn't matter, but instead it calls us to engage in transforming the present in a way consistent with the promised future.

Given the idea of a hopeful future that requires the play of imagination, it seems fitting that we involve artists to help us to open our understanding of that future. Here faith and art have common cause in letting the imagination take us beyond present experience to see something not seen before.

It has been a great privilege for me to be involved in the running of the national arts competition. We had over 300 artists from across Canada enter nearly 800 works of art. We are very grateful to those involved with the private foundation that has so generously funded the competition. The finalists have just been selected by our jury and their work will be on show at Painted City Gallery, 234 Queen Street East, Toronto, from October 30 to November 9, 2002. The prizes are to be awarded on Friday November 1, at Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto. As *imago* comes to celebrate its 30th anniversary, we are grateful for the growing network of Christians in the arts in Canada and in the energetic engagement of the imagination in the making of all sorts of art and in linking artistry and faith. We covet your support of *imago* as we seek to be faithful in carrying out our mandate to affirm the arts and to be a kingdom presence.



John Franklin, *Executive Director*
133 Southvale Drive, Toronto, ON M4G 1G6
416-421-8745 franklin@ultratech.net
www.imago-arts.on.ca

Upcoming Events

Bruno Capolongo, Urban Landscapes

– Redeemer University College,
777 Garner Road East, Ancaster, ON,
October 3 to 22, 2002

Lynne McIlvride Evans, visual artist

– **Recent Paintings and Constructions**,
Prime Gallery, 52 McCaul Street, Toronto,
October 3 to 26, 2002

Imago's 30th Anniversary Celebration

– Friday, November 1, 2002, 7:30 p.m. at the
Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front Street,
Toronto. Featuring: Motus O Dance Thea-
tre, poet John Terpstra, Paul Neufeld Jazz
Trio, Judy Au, piano, vocalists Blaise Pascal
and Jeanine Noyes, and the presentation of
the awards for the three winners of
imago's National Art Competition. Recep-
tion to follow. Tickets: \$30; \$20 seniors and
students. Call the Glenn Gould Box Office:
416-205-5555, Mon. to Fri., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

A New Heaven and A New Earth

– A show of the finalists in *imago's*
National Visual Art Competition.

Painted City Gallery, 234 Queen Street
East (near Sherbourne), Toronto, October
30 to November 9, 2002.

Gallery hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 11 to
6 p.m., Sunday November 3 at 2 to 5 p.m.
Opening Reception with artists and Jurors
present on Saturday November 2, 2002 at
12 noon to 6 p.m.

The Big Picture

– the Bible as one story. Presented by
Brookstone Performing Arts in the Walmer
Centre Theatre, 188 Lowther Avenue (Bloor
and Spadina), Toronto, November 15 to
December 8, 2002. Straight from a national
tour. For details on a full season of
mainstage and touring shows see
www.brookstonetheatre.com

Imago needs an Assistant Treasurer

We are looking for a volunteer to help
with receipting, bookkeeping and
managing of bank accounts. If you have
the interest and skills for this job please
contact Bob Schiedel at 416-767-5522.