



imago

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The Roman poet Ovid (43 BC – 17 AD) is praised as one of the finest writers of antiquity with an exceptional ability for poetic invention. *Metamorphosis* is perhaps his best known work. This collection of tales from classical and near eastern myth and legend has been widely influential in western literature. Each of the stories speaks to the theme of a supernatural change of shape. They explore the boundaries between divine and human and draw attention to the aspirations and sufferings which define and threaten the human condition. This work was the inspiration for the current *Festival of Transformation and the Arts* being held in Toronto from February to June 2005. With metamorphosis as the overarching theme the festival is a collaboration of thirty arts groups that bring together both artistic and cultural diversity.

There are two senses in which art may work along with transformation. First there is the way in which art is the means to celebrate and ritualize our transformations and our hopes that change may come. Second there is the possibility that art can bring about transformation whether personal or social. Art can move us from a place of turmoil to a place of tranquility. It can bring comfort in the midst of suffering. It can generate new energy for the body and soul that may be plagued by fatigue. Art is also able to bridge our social and cultural differences, transcend ethnic and religious barriers and remind us of what we hold in common with all humankind. It is a pattern for us to turn to art for festivity and a sense of occasion. But perhaps more significantly art invites us to explore questions of meaning.



On a different but related matter, an article [continued on page 4](#)

Lord of the Dance

Life is a dance and most of us aren't very good at it. We have a hard time knowing our right foot from our left, let alone knowing how to dance with the devil on our back. Christ was the only one who did it without missing a step, a perfect model for us to emulate, each of us in our own unique expression.

The etching shown here is the tenth station of the cross "the disrobing" Christ is depicted in two poses. These two depictions of

Christ suggest certain aspects of his suffering. The dancing figure emphasizes the voluntary nature of his suffering. He was aware of the purpose of his life, to dance for the healing of the nations right to the end. At the same time it suggests the resurrection, the dance of life!

The second section of the etching suggests Christ in quite another posture. Here he shows himself "the suffering servant" naked and stooped. Simultaneously his hands seem to be reaching, as if to lift someone out of a pit. The female figure at the top is in a contorted pose suggesting the presentation of the Christ "See the Man"

This etching was created for the CIVA (Christians in the Visual Arts) travelling



Lord of the Dance, etching 10" x 10", George Langbroek

exhibition, exploring the stations of the cross called "Via Crucis". There are fifteen stations in this addition of prints, by mostly USA artists, e.g. Sandra Bowden, Tim High, Tyrus Clutter and Ed Knippers. This exhibition is available to churches or individuals with liturgical readings for meditation and may be rented from CIVA. www.civa.org

By George Langbroek

Langbroek has been an etcher for twenty years. His other work includes liturgical banners and designs for church furniture, e.g. pulpits, baptismal fonts and communion tables. He is also a partner with six other artists of an art gallery in Jordan, Ontario. Jordan Art Gallery. He can be reached at glangbroek@sympatico.ca 905-935-7917

Out With the Felt Banners and Macrame Fish!

So often I hear, “a church should look like a church”, or “why do new churches always look like barns”, or “why are they trying to act like a church-in-the round in a cruciform shaped building?”. Elements of Christian art, architecture and liturgy are not always synthesized so that we build or renovate churches that still do not serve our sacred space needs. A liturgical design consultant seeks to resolve those tensions by selecting exceptional artists and craftsmen, addressing the congregation’s needs through workshops, and understanding current theory about how the liturgical movement affects re-ordering.

I find myself starting with counseling church administrators about the need for a holistic and sound plan if a church renovation is to be successful.

Churches need architectural refreshment, liturgical functionality and above all fine art – not just good enough religious art, but art that is gallery worthy – otherwise it cannot be transcendent. We need the sublime to transport our hearts before, during and after worship. We should heed (Anglican) Bishop Joe Fricker’s recent exhortation: “Religious buildings should make religious statements”. Our churches must have the design and liturgical art that will say, Yes, we do stand up for Jesus! Whether a memorial stained-glass window is being commissioned, or there is resistance to moving the altar out from the back wall or the whole nave and sanctuary needs refurbishment, a liturgical design consultant can work with the church so that everyone takes ownership of the change and the new is welcomed.

Vanessa Wells is the owner of Pilgrim Projects (Liturgical Design Consultation) www.pilgrimprojects.ca vwells@pilgrimprojects.ca



The Winchcombe Window
oil, R.D. McLarty

“The placement of art into the environment of the church is still an activity of risk and dislocation for artists, congregations and leaders alike. The arts continue to confirm peoples deeply held beliefs and also to confront them with unexpected challenges. This is more likely to be the case as artists are shaped by the currents of contemporary arts practice and therefore work to expose their audiences to these insights.

...
Sacred space is not, however, a place of stasis impervious to change or decay. It is also a place of conflict and tension where people seek to order and pattern the ongoing dimensions of their lives. This activity is an aesthetic one which can be enhanced by a sensitive artist willing to attend to the processes of interaction within a given worshipping community.”

Rod Pattenden, *Circumnavigating Sacred Space*; ARTS 16 #1 2004

Holy Art?

The word ‘holy,’ as applied to a work of art, might seem sacrilegious to our post-Reformation sensibilities. But in the Old Testament, when a created object is called holy, it simply signifies that it has been set aside for sacred use. This function has always inspired a most distinct quality of art.

Archaeologists who uncover pots and vases from the Ancient Near East have little trouble distinguishing at a glance the ones that were fashioned for common use from the ones designed for sacred purpose. The artist, knowing that the end use of the artifact was sacred, was inspired to create differently than for a more common function. The artist’s imagination was engaged for a sacred purpose that would be evident in the work created. I am not suggesting that sacred use is the only valid purpose for art, but a closer examination of this function reveals something of the mystical potentials of art.

As far as it ever comes close to achieving its ideal, the liturgical service is perhaps the best context in which to experience art as

an expression of our relationship to God. It is in this intentionally Divine use that art excels and rises to its highest potential – the glory of God. It is also the application of art that most frees it from the more mundane human centred roles it has been assigned in the past few centuries. As Albert Rouet says in his book, *Liturgy and the Arts*, “liturgy redeems the arts from their self-fascination.” It does so by setting it aside for sacred use.

Liturgy creates its own art form, peculiar to its purpose. From the creative use of burning incense to the subtly subdued lights and shadows on a stone sculpture; from the kaleidoscope of broken light that showers through a stained glass window to a person lighting a candle as a symbol of their prayer, we find art and ritual used as a means of expressing and discovering relationship with God in a way that disregards any need to explain or verbalize what is taking place.

Albert Rouet writes that “the arts are not for ornamentation, but for evocation.” The arts can twig a memory, produce a response or reaction from us that moves beyond the rational. Liturgy seeks these moments of encounter and prepares itself for meeting. Set aside for this sacred purpose, art is a discipline that considers and carefully crafts the conditions for encounter with Truth, and then, with the same creativity celebrates that union. This purpose both inspires artistry and yields work that can be properly called holy.

Art has a very particular relationship to mystery – to those aspects of life that we cannot understand, but which we needn’t hesitate in relating to. Liturgical art participates with such mystery as it alludes to our intuitive sense of God’s presence. The recovery of this relationship with the mysterious is an urgent need for our times. Perhaps it will be the artist whose work and imagination is set aside for sacred use, who will lead us to remember and long for a fresh knowledge of God.



Rob Des Cotes is director of the Vancouver Arts Network (VAN), a community of writers, musicians, actors, dancers and visual artists in creative dialogue with spiritual issues in the arts (www.manifestarts.com). Rob is also pastor at Fairview Baptist Church, where twice monthly VAN members have opportunity to explore the arts in liturgy. ✎

*Albert Rouet, *Liturgy and the Arts*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1997

News & Notes

Tolkien/Lewis Lecture by Ralph Wood now available on CD. In September of 2004 Imago partnered with Paul Johansen, Minister at Good Shepherd Community

Church in Toronto, to have a weekend event focusing on J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. Our guest lecturer was Professor Ralph Wood of Baylor University and author of *The Gospel*

According to Tolkien. Professor Wood's Friday evening lecture titled *J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis: Friends and Combatants* is now available on CD for \$12 postage included. The CD was produced in partnership with Regent College, Vancouver. There is also a 2 CD set available with the Friday night lecture and his talk given on the Saturday morning titled *The Story Within the Story*. If you would like this 2 CD set it is available for \$18 including postage. You may make your request to Imago, by phone, email or regular mail. See contact information on page 4 of this newsletter. Payment must be made by cheque (we are not equipped for credit cards).

Guelph artist Brian Johnston is showing a portfolio of digital photo prints and digital drawings: "The Enigma" at Gallery 404 Guelph from April 2 to 30. Located at 404 York Rd. Contact Gallery #822-0783.

Visual artist Betty Spackman has a show at The Fort Langley Gallery, 9048 Glover Road, Fort Langley, BC, April 2 to 23, 2005. The title of the show is *InSight: I Don't Believe My Eyes*. Also a major book by this artist on the subject of religious kitsch will soon be published. We hope to have a Toronto event to acknowledge the publication of this work.

In a recent issue of the newsletter of The Centre for Faith and Media the question was asked: Where have all the religion reporters gone? It was noted that: "In Canada, the number of "religion reporters" can be counted on two hands. Yet the number of stories with a faith or religious aspect have multiplied in recent years. Journalism schools don't train journalism

students to cover religion. Media outlets do not hire "religion reporters". Yet the religion stories keep coming, fast and furious, and will continue to come, thanks to the multi-religious diversity of Canada, conflicts overseas, and internal debates within Canada over moral and ethical issues. The Centre for Faith and Media under the energetic leadership of Calgary artist **Richelle Wiseman** is hosting a national conference in May at Carleton University with the theme "How the Secular Media Cover Religious Pluralism". You may want to check it out on the Centre homepage at www.faithandmedia.org

Luv Esther "A Musical For Such A Time As This"

Though it is not likely that those who of us who live in Canada will be able to get to see any of the performances noted here, some of you will know **Murray Watts** who has been a guest of Imago in the past. And it may just be possible that this musical might at some time find its way to Canada. This exciting new show, written by Ray Goudie and directed by Murray Watts, is based on the life of the biblical character Esther. It aims to raise money and awareness for AIDS in Africa and present a rallying call to Christians in Britain. The premiere is in Bristol on May 24, with a nationwide tour starting in September. If you're interested in the Bristol performance or *luv esther* coming to your local area, contact ngm (New Generation Ministries) email bookings@luvesther.com, or visit www.luvesther.com for more information.

We are pleased to inform you of the launch of a new solo theatre piece.

Blue Like Jazz//Live, based on a recent book titled *Blue Like Jazz* by Donald Miller, is an innovative and revolutionary theatrical multimedia production developed and performed by Toronto actor **Jason Hildebrand**. It is a personal, raw and humorous reflection on spirituality, God, and community. BLJL is an honest and unexpected journey – a scrapbook of one man's life. The solo performance incorporates the use of video and computer-generated motion graphics, designed by Storystream Media Initiative, that will

feature imagery rooted in Miller's book, as well as provide backdrop for the main action. It will also feature an original jazz music soundscape by Juno award winning musician Paul Neufeld. Donald Miller will be present for the Friday evening performance. *Blue Like Jazz//Live* is an Imago project. For more information check out: bluelikejazzlive.com. Artword Theatre, 75 Portland St. Toronto (1 Block East of Bathurst, South of King St.) May 13–15, Fri 8pm, Sat 2:30 & 8pm, Tickets \$18/23 Sun 2:30 pwy & 6:30pm (Advanced reservations, 416-366-7723, x 290 or www.artword.net)

A West coast event bringing poetry

attuned to the good creation of God into play within a liturgical setting will happen on May 7 at 7pm at Fairview Baptist Church, 1708 W. 16th Ave. Vancouver. 'According to the Loons' is an Arts Liturgy featuring poetry from **Hanna Main-van der Kamp's** new book.

Coming Home

is a recent album by west coast pianist **Peter Dent** and Ottawa area saxaphonist **Peter Woods**. These two very talented jazz musicians provide us with an excellent musical experience for all who find joy in the gentle and engaging strains of



jazz. www.peterwoodsmusic.com

Gerrit Verstraete of Gabriola Island and fellow artist Peter Leclerc founded the **Drawing Society of Canada** in 1998. Their

commitment was to preserve and promote the cause of fine art drawing in Canada primarily through education. The society is a non-profit advocacy group. Last year saw the launch of a Canadian first, namely the online educational "Gallery of Canadian Drawing Masters." Now they are pleased to announce another Canadian first. It is a special way to study classical drawing at home or in your studio with a unique and valuable drawing course first introduced in Paris in 1860. Picasso and Van Gogh were students of the course as were many others in the European art academies of that time. In cooperation with the Dahesh Museum of Art in New York this renowned course is now made available by the Drawing Society of Canada. We're

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

calling this new adventure in arts education, the “Canadian Academy of Drawing.” All the details are now online at www.drawingsociety.com

Creative Worship nights with the Artists of Faith group of Cambridge Ontario have taken a flourishing turn recently. This initiative by sculptor **Heidi Antonia Brannan** originated over a year ago as an offshoot from a “Beholding the Glory” study group. Since then a monthly gathering of creators has explored various

Every genuine artistic intuition goes beyond what the senses perceive and, reaching beneath reality's surface, strives to interpret its hidden mystery.

John Paul II – *Letter to Artists*

The Roman poet Ovid

continued from page 1

in the Winter 2004 issue of *Canadian Art* by Richard Rhodes takes a look at the Carnegie International visual arts show, the first since 9/11. What is noted is the absence of any artistic comment on the events that have captured the headlines in the past three years. Artists have been more or less silent as America in particular has traveled a path characterized by “triumphal narrowness”. The show under the title “the Ultimates” seeks to raise “the eternal, unknowable questions of life that have perennially imposed their weight on art and philosophy”.

What is of interest in all of this is what appears to be a trend toward an “art of searching and away from “an art of staging”. There is now as Rhodes points out “a search for meaning rather than the construction or illustration of it.” If this analysis is correct we could say there is a shift from a more subjective to a more objective mood in current artistry. A move from a “show” culture that believes in the manufacture of meaning: [towards] a return to the world in order to find it.” This I think is a move in the right direction. The faith perspective is one that calls us to

themes from a common basis of creative worship. Recent gatherings have included: a celtic liturgy, an Art Party with the focus of bringing worship offerings to the Lord on a theme from The Lord’s Prayer. Contributions included quilting, icon, song, photography, culinary arts, dance, spoken word and painting. The vision for this sort of gathering is based on a text from 1 Co 14:26, “So here’s what I want you to do. When you gather for worship, each one of you be prepared with something that will be useful for all: Sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight” (The Message). Other themes for future meetings are: The word incarnate: An evening of reading & writings, Gathered Reflections: The Image of God in Creation. If you wish to know more contact: Heidi & Patrick Brannan, stonemaide@sympatico.ca, 519-650-9817.



recognize a reality encountered in both nature and what we call revelation. It is more a matter of a world given than a world constructed. The consensus in recent times is a model where we rely on inner experience as the resource for all our understanding. It will be interesting to see if this account of a new direction is in fact true and if so where it might take contemporary visual art.

We are attending to a number of new projects that have either recently come under Imago or are waiting to be accepted. We will tell you more about these in the days ahead. The Lausanne Document titled *Redeeming the Arts* is now available on the Imago website – it runs to over 60 pages and will, I hope, be of interest to many.

Once again we are grateful for your support of Imago and that you are along side for the journey as we seek to foster the arts in Canada.

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Robin M. Jensen, *The Substance of Things Seen: Art, Faith and the Christian Community*, Eerdmans, 2004

Books on the subject of art and faith continue to appear. This particular work by Robin M.



Jensen addresses important themes concerning arts and the church. Jensen is fairly new on the scene and is Professor of the History of Christian Art and Worship at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville Tennessee. The book consists of six essays. The first two trace some of the place

of visual art in Christian tradition. The opening chapter looks at the role of art in spiritual formation. She writes “Making art is a creative act that draws its inspiration from the external world, incorporates the images in the memory, draws upon the active mind, and produces a visible image that points far beyond itself” (17). Art is a way for us to encounter the truth and so is able to have a formative influence on us. Chapter 3 raises the perennial question of ‘idol or icon?’ and like the early church the author draws on the theology of the incarnation to guide her reflections. There is an insightful discussion of Holy Places and Sacred Spaces where Jensen makes clear her belief that these places are to be shaped by the theology and values of the Christian community, something that is commonly overlooked in our church architecture and decor.

The final chapter takes up the vexing problem of the beautiful and the disturbing in art. The author explores the idea of “the church as art critic” which is a call for the faith community to more actively engage with art as part of the process to invite artistry into the church. There is of course a great spectrum of taste in our faith communities and at the same time the need to be guided by the values which are at the heart of our faith. This is an engaging book and will reward a careful reading as it addresses many of the issues that are part of the current discussions around art and the church. ❧