

Creative for Christ Session Three: Art and Redemption

Intro and Recap

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

Eph 1:7-10

Signs of Faith in Contemporary Art

James Macmillan

Kwame Anthony Appiah.

James Elkins *The Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art*,

Contemporary art, I think, is as far from organised religion as Western Art has ever been, and that may even be its most singular achievement — or its cardinal failure, depending on your point of view... An observer to the art world today might well come to the conclusion that religious practice and religious ideas are not relevant to art unless they are treated with skepticism.

James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* published by Routledge, New York, 2004, p.15.

Dan Fox words in *Frieze* magazine,

When was the last time you saw an explicitly religious work of contemporary art? Odds are you can't remember. If you can it's because it stood out like the Pope in a brothel. Religious art, when it's not kept safely confined within gilt frames in the medieval departments of major museums, is taboo. Of course, if we're talking art about religion that's totally kosher.

James Elkins, *On the Strange Place of Religion in Contemporary Art* published by Routledge, New York, 2004, p.15.

A Growing Interest in Religion in Art

Christian Wiman,

It is true that Christ makes a man anew, that there is some ultimate change in him. But part of that change is the ability to see life as a whole, to feel the form and unity of it, to become a creature made for and assimilated to existence, rather than a desperate, fragmented thing striving against existence or caught forever just outside it

Cited from the article *Mortify Our Wolves* as included in his memoir *My Bright Abyss* published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.

Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva,

Michael Landy

Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin for Comment magazine,

Religion is back, not only in political debates and the public arena, but also in the arts. Mainstream contemporary art now incorporates the kind of religious references and iconography, including Christian iconography, which, since the origins of modern art in the nineteenth century, had largely been absent.

Cited from Comment web magazine at <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/2093/contemporary-art-and-the-return-of-religion/>

Isabelle Malz, curator at K21 Ständehaus gallery in Düsseldorf,

In contemporary art, a preoccupation with Christian symbolism plays an important role... One reason is that currently, the theme of religion is ubiquitous in politics and the media, albeit less from theological perspectives and more as a socio-political reality.

Cited from the press release for The Problem of God exhibition at http://www.kunstsammlung.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/Pressemappe_PoG_ENGL_final.pdf

John Baldassari and Meg Cranston

Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in Connecticut.

A Walk of Faith

Sarah Thornton, Seven Days in the Art World,

For many art insiders and art aficionados of other kinds, concept-driven art is a kind of existential channel through which they bring meaning to their lives. It demands leaps of faith, but it rewards the believer with a sense of consequence. Moreover, just as churches and other ritualistic meeting places serve a social function, so art events generate a sense of community around shared interests.

Sarah Thornton, Seven Days in the Art World published by Norton, USA 2008. Page xiv.

Rowan Williams,

To be absorbed in the sheer otherness of any created order or beauty is to open the door to God, because it involves that basic displacement of ego without which there can be no spiritual growth.

Apichatpong Weerasethakul

Janet Cardiff

Cildo Meireles

Aaron Rosen,

...it is time to set aside old assumptions about the antagonism between art and religion and look at the topic with fresh eyes. When we do so, we discover a tremendous potential for reciprocity.

Aaron Rosen, Religion and Art in the 21st Century published by Thames and Hudson 2015, p17.

Bill Viola.

Michael Dryde

Chris Ofili

Why I Pray When I Paint

Alain de Botton,

Christianity... never leaves us in any doubt about what art is for: it is a medium to remind us about what matters. It exists to guide us to what we should worship and revile if we wish to be sane. It is a mechanism whereby our memories are forcibly jogged about what we should draw away from and be afraid of.

Alan de Botton, Religion for Atheists page 215, published by Penguin, UK, 2012.

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Christianity... never leaves us in any doubt about what art is for: it is a medium to remind us about what matters. It exists to guide us to what we should worship and revile if we wish to be sane. It is a mechanism whereby our memories are forcibly jogged about what we should draw away from and be afraid of.

Alan de Botton, Religion for Atheists page 215, published by Penguin, UK, 2012.

Empathy and Compassion

Betty Spackman,

We make art to remind us of the invisible and to heal our forgetfulness.

Betty Spackman, Introduction to A Profound Weakness, published by Piquant Editions, 2005.

Alain de Botton,

Christian art understands that images are important partly because they can generate compassion, the fragile quality which enables the boundaries of our egos to dissolve, helps us to recognize ourselves in the experiences of strangers and can make their pain matter to us as much as our own.

Alain de Botton, Religion for Atheists page 227, published by Penguin, UK, 2012.

Robert Orchardson,

In terms of discussing belief in contemporary art I am not sure that it's a taboo as such. I think there is scope, indeed, need, for this; however, I also think there is a commonly held preconception by many that faiths promote redundant philosophy. This can perhaps lead to work that engages with traditional notions of faith in a negative way, without really being open to reconsidering their relevance with open minds.

Robert Orchardson, cited from a personal email exchange between Orchardson and Alastair Gordon.

Jean Baudrillard,:

We are fascinated by what has been created...because the moment of creation cannot be reproduced.

Jean Baudrillard: The System of Objects, reprinted Verso 1997, p76

Old Lorenz Lowenhielm in the film, Babette's Feast,

Everything we rejected has also been granted. Yes, we even get back what we rejected. For mercy and truth have met together, and righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another.

From Babette's Feast, 1987, directed by Gabriel Axel