



imago

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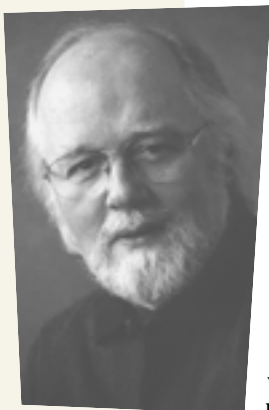
The work done on the Lausanne document titled *Redeeming the Arts* is now in published format. It is contained in a special issue of the magazine *Creative Spirit* – published by Belhaven College in Jackson Mississippi. Below is a brief excerpt out of the section on Art and a Renewed Theological Vision. The full text is on the Imago website (www.imago-arts.on.ca) and the magazine may be purchased for ten dollars through Imago.

Art and creation

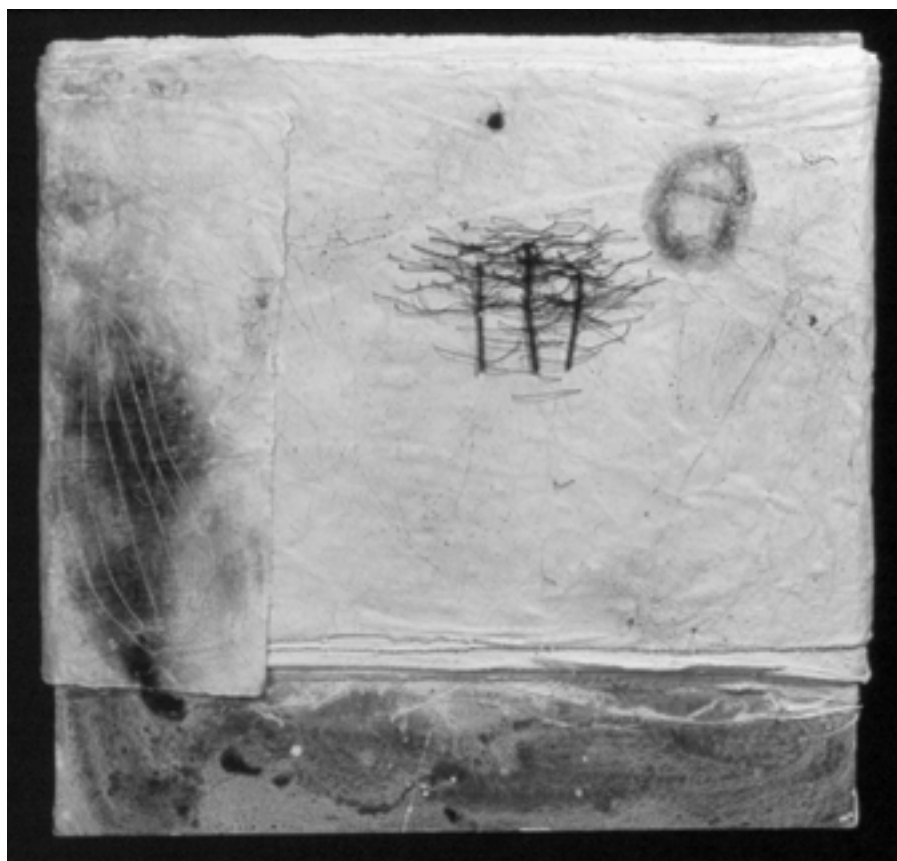
A narrow perspective on redemption ... has resulted in the neglect of the arts, for art is seen as a merely human endeavour tied to this world alone. However when we see clearly that the work of redemption is done for the whole of creation, we are then able to ask the question about redemptive artistry.

The biblical narrative recorded in the early part of Genesis, calls upon us to nurture and develop the creation that God has affirmed as good. If we are to be consistent with the cultural mandate, this will include both the natural order around us and the cultural order that we create. Cultivation of that cultural order involves creativity, imagination and most certainly the arts.

Affirming creation opens the way for embracing all that God has made as “good” including human creativity. And we are to take seriously not only what God has made, but also human making. The creative arts are but one expression of the divine image within us as well as one component of the social and cultural life of the human community. Art is able to reflect and allude (suggest, point) to



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Atoning – II by Sun Ja Kim

My work is a visual dialogue that focuses on the universal dimensions of the human condition and the implications of Jesus

Christ as the redeemer for this condition. I believe that alienation and estrangement are the distinctive characteristics of our natural human nature. I show this alienation and estrangement in my art by using unprocessed, natural materials, such as rope, wood and fabric. This natural human condition renders us vulnerable to deep emotional, psychological, and even physical wounds. Our vulnerability and our wounds are communicated visually through my use of weather-beaten wood, rough-textured rope and discarded fabric that all have become waste materials. I also communicate that even the most alienated and estranged individual

has the potential for being healed of his or her wounds by developing a relationship with Jesus Christ that transcends the material reality.

The prospect of overcoming the “slings and arrows” of the natural human condition by developing a healthy relationship with God is communicated by the use of knots. These knots symbolize the love of God through a connection that transcends the material reality. Fabric coverings are also an integral part of my art. These coverings communicate my conviction that Jesus’ sacrificial death has covered our sins, alienation and estrangement which in turn provides the only foundation for our relationship with God.

You can contact Sung Ja Kim at: jimyoung2056@yahoo.com ☐

Redeeming the Arts

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something of the order and meaning that God has given to the world – that speaks to us of design and a master designer.

We might also consider the sustaining work of Christ in “holding all things together” (Col: 1:17). This speaks of God’s ongoing engagement with the created order. Typically we think of the act of creating the world as a gesture of divine power. There is, however, another model that has been suggested where the creation of the world is understood as an exercise of divine artistry. God lovingly brought into being a vast cosmic order that continues to enjoy the sustaining care of the creator. Those who bear the image of God are also “makers” able to engage imagination in order to be agents of newness. Metaphor and imagination so common in the biblical text are each valuable in the work of enabling us to see and hear anew. Art is deeply dependent on human imagination – something that needs to be recovered in our Christian understanding. ...imagination includes that capacity to see what is possible, and the narrative of scripture that shapes our faith invites us to see fresh possibilities both within and beyond our world of time and space.

If we take the doctrine of creation in its fullness as laid out in scripture, we will accept that work with human hands is sacred work, that holy places are not limited to those places devoted to worship, that sacred and profane may be a false division, and that the ordinary things of life are gifts of common grace from the one who made all things and who saw that it was good. Doing the work of an artist should be seen as a sacred calling. Like all other work, it is to be shaped by the great narrative of scripture and through the one into whose image we are to be conformed (Romans 8:29).

Art and incarnation

At the heart of Christian faith is the majestic declaration that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us – and we beheld his glory... full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The divine becomes human and enters into the darkness and pain of ordinary life, and experiences joys and sorrows. With incarnation so central to the Christian story, it is surprising that so many within the Christian community have given so little attention to



A Profound Weakness: Christians & Kitsch

Piquant Editions, 2005, ISBN 1-903689-13-9

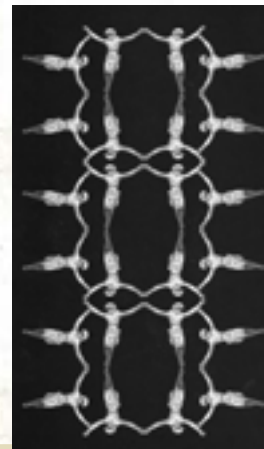
This past June saw the publication of *A Profound Weakness: Christians and Kitsch* by Canadian visual artist Betty Spackman. This is an important book which offers a careful exploration of the relationship between what is often termed “bad art” and personal religious devotion – or more broadly it looks at the role of religious imagery in Western culture. It is a beautiful “coffee table” book of over 400 pages with full colour images on nearly every page. It invites the reader to look afresh at images which are somehow familiar to us all and to think afresh about how to respond.

the body. Embodiment involves sensuality and Christians have resisted the sensual side of life. We need a fresh reminder that God has taken on flesh and with it all that is entailed in being human. The incarnation – God taking on human flesh – makes it clear that there is no room for negative talk about the physical side of life in the Christian story.

That the invisible God becomes visible in Christ is a movement whose structure is paralleled in creative activity. Art is sometimes said to be about making the invisible visible. Theologian Trevor Hart refers to “the poetry of the incarnation.” Here he is suggesting that we cannot fully grasp who Jesus is through His humanity alone. There is more to be known about Jesus than can be found in the merely human. Likewise poetry communicates well beyond the words on the page, visual art beyond the paint on the canvas, and drama well beyond the words and actions of the

Kitsch is notoriously difficult to define but it is commonly understood to be – any form of popular art ... that is a sentimental, cheaply made trivialization of something else. – and is seen as pseudo-art. The author says “I see kitsch, ...to be both a frivolous and a dangerous thing” which at the same time can “have a profound influence on some people going to the core of their deepest beliefs and most personal passions”. Spackman asks concerning these objects of kitsch, “Are they just harmless cultural curios or are they insidious spiritual toxins that can ... poison the heart? The book is a response (not an answer) to that probing question.

The text is a rich combination of narrative and critical reflection on the world of religious kitsch. It is not a book to read through but one in which the reader is rewarded by each return visit, whether it is the pleasure of the narrative, the visual images or the insightful comments of the author. There is much to learn from Spackman’s journeys in the world of kitsch and much to discover about ourselves and those for whom these strange objects mean so much. ❧



performers. Hart goes on to say “He takes our flesh with all of its limiting factors and inherent flaws, and through a work of supremely inspired (Spirit-filled) artistry, transfigures it, before handing it back to us in the glorious state which its original maker always intended it to bear. At this level creation, redemption and re-creation are shown to be interwoven as activities of the same divine Poet.” Incarnation is the embodiment of both judgment and hope. It manifests judgment in revealing our lust for autonomy instead of a relationship with the Creator, and hope in its affirmation of the possibility and promise of re-creation.

John Franklin

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

A Broken Beauty – No Show in Canada but there is a book...

Imago's Executive Director in collaboration with David Goa of Edmonton has worked over the past two years to bring *A Broken Beauty* to Toronto. The show features 15 artists two from Canada (Erica Grimm-Vance and David Robinson) in a compelling look at the human body and the matter of beauty and brokenness. One observation made in the book is that, "In the past fifteen years, throughout North America there has been a notable blossoming of figurative narrative, and religious-themed art that is derived from the Bible, examines the broad Judeo-

Christian legacy, and utilizes narratives from contemporary life that relate to scripture." This show scheduled for a major gallery in Toronto in the spring of 2006 has been cancelled. The Artistic Director left the gallery in August and efforts to preserve the

A Broken Beauty, Erdmans Publishing, 2005, ISBN 0-8028-2818-3



show have not been successful. It is a great disappointment that these works will not come to Toronto. There is however a beautiful book published this past June which contains images of all the works that were to be in the show (Chapter 5) as well as extended discussions over four chapters on issues linked with the show. The book is edited by Theodore Prescott a sculptor and art critic and Professor of Art at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. ❏

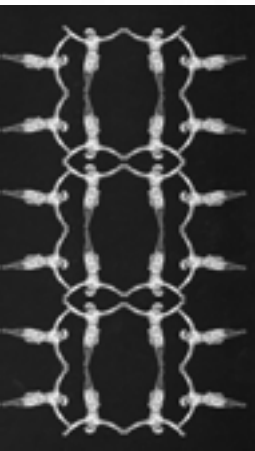
Agnes Martin, 1912–2004

This Canadian born minimalist painter gained wide recognition in the art world. John Bentley Mays in his note in *Canadian Art* (Summer 2005) expresses his discomfort with suggestions that her work is religious – "Her painting were likened to prayers." Her work he says taught nothing, argued nothing, and attempted to save or outrage or advise nobody. They were merely ... instances of "praise". ... an exultant meaninglessness". Well if you find some dissonance in this account you are not alone. Martin's work pays no attention to popular culture or ever makes reference to current fashion or event. It may have been her prairie upbringing that made the horizontal line so prominent in her work but beyond that she seems to be an advocate of simple attentiveness something all too rare today. I am not sure she had any particular religious intent in her art but the viewer has often been moved in that direction by her paintings. ❏

Beyond Magazine

Beyond Magazine is a non-profit, independent magazine that explores what it means to be fully human. It delves into the questions and ideas that wake us up to where we came from, who we are and where we are going. It is a collaboration with writers, poets, thinkers, activists, art lovers, artists, philosophers, and readers in the hope of inspiring all who read this publication to be instruments of justice, compassion, beauty and meaning. You can support this venture with a subscrip-

tion of \$30 for four issues a year or – because it is an Imago project you can give a donation and receive a tax receipt. The graphics provide a visual feast, the text much to reflect on. Have a look at the website www.beyondmag.ca where you can also subscribe or send a note to the mind behind it all Editor, Karen Neudorf – readit@beyondmag.com ❏



First published in 1980 this valuable book has been out of print for some time now. It is good news to know it is once again available. This is an engaging work of interest to all who wish to think clearly and carefully about faith and the arts and to those who are advocates for the practice of artistry informed by faith. Written in that pithy punchy Seerveldian style so many have come to appreciate – ever with a prophetic edge the work challenges a detached disembodied spirituality commonly found in Christian circles and invites us to a gritty embodied way of living out our faith and artistry. Chapter 1 sets out the biblical charter for artistic activity in a Christian

community while chapter 2 gives us the shape of obedient aesthetic life. And the concluding chapter 6 speaks of modern art and the birth of a Christian culture. You will learn a lot from this book and will find new ways to articulate and address the issues surrounding art and Christian understanding. www.seerveld.com/tuppence.html

Rainbows for the Fallen World, Calvin Seerveld, Toronto Tuppence Press, 2005 ❏

CALVIN G. SEERVELD

RAINBOWS
FOR THE
FALLEN
WORLD



News & Notes

Jeanine Noyes Christmas

Two albums of singer/songwriter **Jeanine Noyes** have been Imago projects. A couple of issues ago we noted her outstanding Christmas disc *He's Here*. Currently Jeanine is planning Christmas concerts and hopes to do a number of these in the southern Ontario and in the Vancouver area. If you would like to invite her to your church, town hall or local pub be in touch: info@jeaninenoyes.com www.jeaninenoyes.com

Brian Wigg Voice

A Voice of One Calling is a short play on the life of John the Baptist, 30 minutes in length, ideal for churches as well as other events. It is a dramatic and sometimes humorous reflection on faith, doubt and what it means to be obedient. An imprisoned John the Baptist is challenged by a mysterious stranger to look back on his life and defend himself against charges of failure. If you have any questions or interest please contact: Brian Wigg, 416-535-2656, brian.wigg@pobox.com.

Tina Newlove Clouds

Visual artist **Tina Newlove** has a show titled *Thought Clouds and Silver Lining* from September 9 to November 1, 2005 at Latitude 44, 2900 Dundas Street West, Toronto. www.tinalnewlove.com

VAN Artists' Forum

Saturday October 1 at 7pm – 'VAN Artists' Forum' at Fairview Baptist Church, 1708 West 16th Avenue, Vancouver. Features: **Hannah Main-van der Kamp**, West Coast poet reads from her award-winning new book, *According to Loon Bay*, **Barbara Februar**, painter, designer, teacher, leads a gallery tour of recent works, and **Joycelin Ng**, concert pianist, performs selected works on the Steinway Grand piano.

Imago Evening Exile

Thursday October 27th at 7:30 p.m. at the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse (one block east of King and Parliament, behind Little Trinity Church). The evening will include a number of artists engaging the theme of "Exile" using music, dance, drama, literature, and visual art. You should be at this one! Reception to follow.

Corps Bara Dance Theatre: *athletes of God, servants of the soul*

The way we worship God is the way we encounter the world. Calgary based Corps Bara does both in dance as a company of "creative bodies" (Latin *corps*, Hebrew *bara*) dancing the reign of God revealed in the Christ to the world. Over a dozen years Corps Bara's women dancers have evolved technically and spiritually into a unique and powerful presence in the contemporary



dance scene. They serve the ecumenical community dancing in services, conferences and workshops year round along with Fall and Spring theatre engagements and at New York City's *Project Dance*, as the sole invited Canadian company.

Liturgical dance is Corps Bara's beginnings, as was the genesis of contemporary dance itself. American modern dance pioneers Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis went public in the early 20th century with their spiritual choreography to create sanctuary in the theatre. This is Corps Bara's ministry – to bring a choreography of hope, integrity and transcendent purpose to the public stage that speaks deeply to the human condition and leads audiences to enter the face of the holy in a contemporary dance environment where hopelessness and despair are prevalent themes.

In November, Corps Bara premieres its original full-length story ballet *Popette* at Calgary's Vertigo Theatre. It is a story for all ages, of seizing life and dancing it for all it's worth. *Popette* is a window into a world where the labels of society do not stick and the value of humanity is cherished. A dollmaker is the master of ceremonies into *Popette's* world of impossible things, and guides his creation on a journey of awakening and discovery. A surprise to them both as a children's story, and the loving divine plan of God for us all. *Popette* is an Imago project choreographed by Amy Meyers and produced by Artistic Team Daniela Sedero and Executive Director Karen Sudds.

Next Spring Corps Bara presents *Still Spring*, a mixed program of works by choreographers Stephen Wynne, Daniela Sedero, Lisa Calverley and Connie Moker-Wernekowski exploring themes from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and the movement of the seasons of earth, of life and of the soul. "At the still point of the turning world ... there is only the dance."

By Drew Strickland, Calgary, AB
www.corpsbara.com ☐

Exploring the Threshold: Art and Theology in Dialogue

Toronto School of Theology Art Exhibition. November 2 to 5 at 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and November 6 at 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Toronto School of Theology, 47 Queen's Park Crescent East (Corner of St. Joseph Street) 416-978-4039

Art Talks 2005

Art and Theology: The Use and Abuse of Religious Art Talk – Lecture by John Franklin, Executive Director Imago. Friday November 4, 2005 7:30 p.m. at St. Michael's College, Alumni Hall, 121 St. Joseph St. Rm 400. Reception to follow at Toronto School of Theology.

Art Talks Symposium panel on Religious Art Talk. Saturday, November 5, 10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Institute for Christian Studies, 229 College Street. 416-979-2331 or www.icscanada.edu

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www.imago-arts.on.ca