

Xenos Summer Institute 2008
Breakout Session:
The Arts & the Christian

Mark Bair

My Story

Mikelle Hickman-Romine

What I mean by “art”

What is *Christian Art*?

Why should Christians care about art?

“All of us are engaged daily with works of art, even if we are neither professional nor amateur artists. We read books, we listen to music, we look at posters, we admire flower arrangements. Art, as I am using the word, does not include just “high art” — that is, painting, sculpture, poetry, classical music — but also the more popular expressions — the novel, the theater, the cinema and popular music. In fact, there is a very real sense in which the Christian life itself should be our greatest work of art. Even for the great artist, the most crucial work of art is his life. (Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*, 49)

God cares about art and artists

Art is a powerful conduit of worldviews

Art helps us see

Art connects people

Art contributes to the life of a city

Suggested Resources

www.marshillaudio.org

A Brief History of Painting, Roy Bolton

Modern Art: A Crash Course, Cory Bell

Art and the Bible, Francis Schaeffer. Schaeffer was influenced by Hans Rookmaker, who wrote *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*.

Imagine: A Vision for Christians in the Arts, Steve Turner

State of the Arts, Gene Edward Veith

The Liberated Imagination, Leland Ryken

The Christian Imagination, edited by Leland Ryken

The Gospel According to Tolkien, Ralph Wood

Flannery O'Connor and the Christ-Haunted South, Ralph Wood

The Complete Stories, Flannery O'Connor

Invitation to the Classics, edited by Cowan and Guinness

The Rise of the Creative Class, Richard Florida

Tim Keller's lecture "Christianity and the Creative Age" mp3 and his lecture on Tolkien from www.redeemer.com (go to "Sermon Store");

What should we *do* about art?

Connect with artists inside and outside the church

Use art in your communication with excellence

Make art and Pursue “cultural renewal” to the glory of God

Encourage art of various styles and art that is not religious

Referring to the art that come out of the Reformation in the Netherlands, Turner points out that there was a lot of art that “was not explicitly religious, yet was soaked in Biblical values. One of the most frequently cited examples of this is the work of Rembrandt.” (Turner, *Imagine*, 27)

“If Jesus is the Light of the World, there are two kinds of songs you can write. You can write songs about the light, or you can write songs about you can see from the light.” (T. Bone Burnett, cited in Turner, *Imagine*, 51)

From Francis Schaeffer, *Art and the Bible*:

Christian art today should be twentieth-century art. Art changes. Language changes. The preacher's preaching today must be twentieth-century language communication, or there will be an obstacle to being understood. And if a Christian's art is not twentieth-century art, it is an obstacle to his being heard. It makes him different in a way in which there is no necessity for difference. A Christian should not, therefore, strive to copy Rembrandt or Browning.

While a Christian artist should be modern in his art, he does face certain difficulties. First, we must distinguish carefully between style and message. Let me say firmly that *there is no such thing as a godly style or an ungodly style*. The more one tries to make such a distinction, the more confusing it becomes.

Christian art is by no means always religious art — that is, art which deals with religious themes. Consider God the Creator. Is God's creation totally involved with religious subjects? What about the universe? The birds? The trees? The mountains? What about the bird's song? And the sound of the wind in the trees? When God created out of nothing by His spoken word, he did not just create "religious" objects. And in the Bible, as we have seen, God commanded the artist, working within God's own creation, to fashion statues of oxen and lions and carvings of almond blossoms for the tabernacle and the temple.

We should remember that the Bible contains the Song of Solomon, the love song between a man and a woman, and it contains David's song to Israel's national heroes. Neither subject is "religious." But God's creation — the mountains, the trees, the birds and the bird's songs — are also nonreligious art. Think about that. If God made the flowers, they are worth painting and writing about. If God made the birds, they are worth painting. If God made the sky, the sky is worth painting. If God made the ocean, indeed it's worth writing poetry about. It is worth man's while to create works upon the basis of the great works God has already created.

Examples of Christians doing Art

Redeemer Arts Ministry (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, NYC)

Artists tell the stories of our culture, and impact 21st century society as perhaps no other field does. To the extent that art reflects the heart of its creator, lives transformed by the Gospel serve as agents of cultural change. Redeemer Presbyterian church has a long history of both embracing artists in a loving Christian community, and challenging them to express their faith through their lives and creative work to the glory of God and for the benefit of their industries.

Specifically, the Arts Ministry seeks to:

- equip artists to follow Christ and serve God and one other;
- connect artists to one another through intentional communities; and
- mobilize artists to create works of art that reflect their faith.

IAM (International Arts Movement)

The director of IAM, Makoto Fujimura¹, was interviewed last month by Ken Myers in the *Mars Hill Audio Journal* and serves on the National Council of the Arts see http://www.nea.gov/about/NCA/About_NCA.html

Mission: IAM gathers artists and creative catalysts to wrestle with the deep questions of art, faith and humanity in order to inspire the creative community to engage the culture that is and create the world that ought to be.

Vision: Art is society's existential statement, in answer to the question, "Why live?" International Arts Movement works as a catalyst to *inspire* people to hope, *engage* deeply into the depth of culture's critical zones, and *create* a world that ought to be. We believe that artistic excellence as a model of "what ought to be" paves the way for lasting, enduring humanity.

Our Plans for Urban Columbus

Various Artists:

John Donne

C.S. Lewis

J.R.R. Tolkien

Flannery O'Conner

¹ From his bio on the NEA website: Makoto Fujimura is a painter whose work explores a combination of contemporary American abstract expressionism and traditional Japanese art of Nihonga. Born in Boston and educated both in the United States and Japan, Fujimura creates semi-abstract paintings and installations bridging medieval methods and aesthetics with contemporary expression. In 1990, he founded the International Arts Movement and co-hosted a conference in 1992 titled "The Return to Beauty." Noted artist and critic Robert Kushner has written, "The idea of forging a new kind of art, about hope, healing, redemption, refuge, while maintaining visual sophistication and intellectual integrity is a growing movement, one which finds Fujimura's work at the vanguard."

Dorothy Sayers

Sufjan Stephens

Steve Turner

Artists in Xenos