

LITURGICAL ART

"...art remains a kind of bridge to religious experience." Pope John Paul II

TODAY

SPRING 2008



New altar incorporating bronze details from communion rail. Altar is in the newly renovated Clare Okas Chapel of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis in Bartlett, IL.

Mining the Tradition in Liturgical Furnishings

by Stephen A. Remmert, Artisan of Custom Furnishings for Sacred Space

Anyone who has journeyed with a faith community through a church renovation project knows it is a time of great and varied emotions. These emotions for the community range from the excitement and anticipation of the new space, to the sadness and the grief of the loss of the familiar and comfortable. These emotions can cause conflict and accentuate the gap between the past and present. Those of us in positions of shaping the direction and creation of liturgical or sacred furnishings can act as a bridge helping a community to span the gap from the past to the newly created present. One effective means to span this gap is to incorporate significant pieces or remnants of the old into the creation of the new.

In their document "Built of Living Stones," the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops recommend "respect to be shown for the existing building and its appointments so as to preserve as much of the original fabric as possible." Also noting that, "materials such as marble and wood paneling as well as other artifacts or furnishings often can be refurbished and incorporated into the new designs." As these new designs for liturgical furnishings are developed, careful consideration should be given to which elements from the old structure, or furnishings, should represent or carry the heritage. The community will play the greatest role in this process. Artists and designers must listen thoughtfully to the story of the

community, allowing them to name and assign meaning to their heritage.

One example of this process is from a recent commission for a remodeled chapel. The chapel design committee determined that elements from the old communion railing might be incorporated into a new altar. After considering the existing and revised architectural features of the space, as well as the elements from the old communion railing, the new altar was designed and fabricated. The resulting altar then set the motif from which other liturgical pieces were designed. Additionally, a marble carving which was significant on the old altar, was incorporated into a new holy water font. The newly created liturgical pieces provide a hint of the familiar amid the disorientation of the freshly renovated space.

When the story of a new piece, such as the altar, contains some of the heritage of the community, and it is apparent that the community's voice has been heard and honored in the process, the new piece will provide more than just its liturgical function. It will embody in a new way the continuing story of the community, honoring the past and collectively creating a new present and future.

Stephen A. Remmert designs and fabricates custom liturgical furnishings near Chicago IL. For more information call (815) 933-4867 or visit www.remmertstudios.com

Publisher's Note

Through their hearts and hands, artists create visible signs of the sacred that connect us to deeper realities of faith. The highest quality of liturgical art gives visual expression beyond words that inspire contemplation and devotion. I hope this newsletter brings you and artists together to nourish the spirit of prayer in your faith community.



Linda McCray, MFA

Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda McCray".

Published and designed by Linda McCray, MFA, Designs Unlimited, Six Park Place, Clancy, MT 59634, 800 923-5537, Lmccray@artmt.com, MontanaDesignsUnlimited.com

Edited by Barbara Fifer

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Stations of the Cross



ABSTRACT
SPIRITUAL
ORIGINAL
PAINTINGS

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Bronze – Artwork for Centuries

Learn from “Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner” from Italy to understand the value of a bronze piece of art.
by Filip Stuflessner, Sculptor



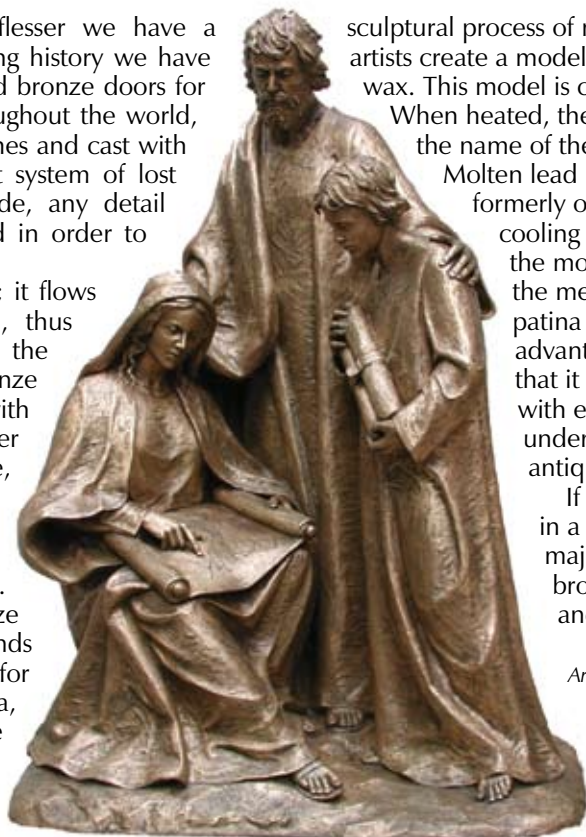
Pope Benedict XVI with bronze altar and ambo by Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner.

Below: Holy Family, a bronze cast for a Catholic high school in St. Petersburg, Florida by Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner.

At Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflessner we have a history of 5 generations. In our long history we have been casting altars, bronze statuary and bronze doors for cathedrals, churches and chapels throughout the world, always modeled to our customer's wishes and cast with the finest bronze through the ancient system of lost wax. Since everything is custom made, any detail and customer's wish can be executed in order to guarantee a unique piece of art.

Bronze is ideal for casting art work; it flows into all crevices of an artistic mold, thus perfectly reproducing every detail of the most delicately modeled sculpture. Bronze is used to designate alloys of copper with zinc, pewter and sometimes other smaller components. The Egyptians used bronze, cast and hammered, for utensils, armor, and statuary far in advance of the Bronze Age in Europe. The Greeks were unexcelled in bronze sculpture. The Romans took quantities of bronze statues from Greece and made thousands themselves. They employed bronze for doors and for furniture and candelabra, using the same procedure as we still use at our Stuflessner workshops now, more than 2,000 years later.

The system of lost wax is the



sculptural process of metal casting. Our sculptors and artists create a model in clay that is then coated with wax. This model is covered with a perforated clay mold.

When heated, the mold will “lose” the wax (hence the name of the method) as it runs out of the holes.

Molten lead (bronze) is poured into the space formerly occupied by the wax. After a ten-day cooling of the work, the sculptor breaks the mold, removes the core, and polishes the metal art work. Different types of patina can be applied. The most important advantage of the lost-wax method is that it eases the casting of a sculpture with elaborate curves and it definitely underlines the art work itself through its antique and noble procedure.

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Passing On the Faith Through Contemporary Visual Language

by Linda McCray, MFA, Abstract Spiritual Painter



Passion to Pentecost by Linda McCray conveys the spirit of the liturgical season through the universal visual language of abstraction that touches the heart. She also layers her paintings with symbolism to enlighten the mind and connect believers to the stories behind the works.

Throughout the ages, art has been used to teach our faith. To pass our beliefs to future generations, we need to communicate to everyone, especially our youth, in the contemporary visual language they identify with. We must accept that no past generation has the best way to express the sacred in our present day, and embrace new ways to reach future generations. For the most part, liturgical art has not kept pace with contemporary art since the Protestant Reformation. Isn't it about time to translate our traditions and beliefs into a vibrant contemporary spirit?

We spend so much effort developing retreats that inspire our children. Why are we not as passionate about bringing up-to-date the visual message they receive quietly in church? Many have referred to our times as being in a spiritual crisis. To pass on the faith, liturgical art needs to speak to our children today more than ever.

Times Change, Needs Change

As times change, so do our needs. While the television show *Ozzie and Harriet* spoke to the people of the '60s, it does not have that same impact today. Similar to television, artwork needs to change if it is to reach our youth, the future of our faith.

Lessons from Art

There was a day when most could not read, and illustrated stories were important in the teaching process. Contemporary students are taught to read and no longer need to learn Bible stories through literal pictorial representations. Today's educational system teaches young adults to critically think, a mental process of discernment, analyzing and evaluating tangible and intangible topics. Critical thinkers gather information from all of their senses.

Contemporary liturgical art invites our youth to use their sense of sight to enhance their spiritual reflections and, in turn, deepen their faith. Today's artists are constantly discovering innovative ways to express the Holy Spirit. Embracing change in liturgical art may be more exciting in our times than ever.

Contemporary Liturgical Art

All of the arts have unique abilities of reaching the hearts of our youth. No one would debate the power of connecting with them through film and music. Why do we overlook the quiet gift of visual art, which pulls us closer to God? When churches only display reproductions of 500 year old art they deny the human spirit new ways to seek the truth. If we are

Bobbie K. Carlyle

Devotion
5' 7" tall



St. Francis
29" or 6' 6" tall



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ORIGINAL PAINTINGS FOR SACRED SPACE



ABSTRACT
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Linda McCray

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“The deposit of faith is one thing; the way that it is presented is another. For the truths preserved in our sacred doctrine can retain the same substance under different forms of expressions.”¹

Pope John XXIII, Second Vatican Council



The Deluge II and Rising III by Linda McCray express sacred realities through the abstract elements of light and dark and the old masters' technique of glazing to create luminosity.

open-minded, the possibilities are endless for contemporary art that speaks to all of us, especially our children, in sacred places.

Artists are free from the past need to illustrate, and are constantly working on new ways to visually communicate. Many are creating symbolism that reflects our day. Yesterday's icons do not speak as effectively today as they once did. Moving contemporary symbols reach further than their intellectual and aesthetic appeal; they evoke a spiritual response within the whole person. Imagine icons in contemporary visual language speaking as strongly today as the Byzantine icons did in their day.

As an artist, I create original abstract spiritual paintings that inspire others to reflect on their own spirituality. I layer my paintings with symbolism for those who choose to read them on a deeper level. Abstract elements are a wonderful way to express the transcendental. One of the ways the Catholic tradition uses abstract elements is through color. Color has the capacity to be read responsively and symbolically. For example, yellow and gold have been used through the ages

to symbolize divinity. In addition, I use them to convey the warmth and peace of the presence of God.

Challenges

Art enriched with contemporary visual language is necessary to continue our vibrant faith communities. Let's take on the challenge of developing new images of faith for our children and embrace their exciting new visions of truth which they will pass on to our grandchildren. There are so many ways to express the sacred through visual art. Let's use them to fan the flame of the Holy Spirit within our children.

Linda McCray, MFA, creates abstract spiritual original paintings for sacred space and teaches art at The University of Montana-Helena College of Technology. For more information call 800 923-5537 or visit MontanaDesignsUnlimited.com.

Footnote 1. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, 54 (1962), p. 792.

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