

# LITURGICAL ART

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

# TODAY

FALL 2007



Stuflesser church interior with tabernacle as "The Burning Bush," Dickson City, PA.



Gilding a hand-carved Our Lady, 2007.



Gilding a hand-carved angel, 2007.



Gold foil.

## Artwork with gold leaf or metal gold?

Learn from "Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflesser" of Italy to understand the difference and prevent traps.  
by Filip Stuflesser, Sculptor

**G**old leaf is gold that is beaten into extremely thin sheets. The thin gold sheets are commonly used for gilding. Gold leaf is available in a wide variety of karats and shades. The most commonly used is 23-karat yellow gold, which has been our standard gold for over 130 years.

Gold leaf is sometimes confused with metal leaf, but they are different. The term metal leaf is normally used for thin sheets of metal of any color that do not contain any real gold. Pure gold is 24 karats. Real yellow gold leaf is about 92% pure gold. Silver colored white gold is approximately 50% pure gold.

Layering gold leaf over a surface is sometimes called gold leafing, and is a very common form of gilding on different types of materials.

Gold leaf has traditionally been most popular and most common in its use as gilding material for decoration of art (including statues and altars). "Gold" decorations on statues made without leafing are also available for a considerably smaller price, but traditionally some form of gold was

preferred when possible.

Metal gold gets black after some years, gold leaf remains gold leaf after years and years. It just has to be cleaned, nothing else. Metal gold gets black and remains black, nothing else. If parishes want their unique art creations, which will remain and write history of the parish, a piece of art lasting for the next generations of parishioners as well, then gold is gold. We exclusively use real gold leaf.

We at Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflesser have a history of five generations. In our long history we have been applying real gold leaf 23k to over 900 High Altars through out the world, hundreds of sets of Stations of the Cross and thousands of beautiful statues, always carved to our customers' wishes in our studios in Ortisei, Italy.

Since everything is custom made, any detail and application can be executed.

Ars Sacra 1875 Ferdinand Stuflesser, 5th generation, Italian studio for church interiors in wood and bronze. For more information call Filip Stuflesser, 01139 0471 796163 or visit [www.stuflesser.com/](http://www.stuflesser.com/)

# Re-imagining Landscape — Sanctifying Earth

by Michael R. Kapetan, Sculptor

The imperative to address global issues of climate change, pollution of ecologies, water shortages, famine, overpopulation, and resource allocation must be seen in spiritual as well as political and economic terms because, without enduring spiritual commitment, our efforts are likely to fall short of success. Enlightened self-interest has not worked so far.

Liturgical art may claim a compelling role in restoring a sense of reverence for the mystery at the heart of Genesis that may tip the balance of human consciousness towards real ecological progress.

At my home parish, Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan, we have begun to consider the idea of the sacred landscape. The manifold symbolism of the church building—exterior and interior—is well known and needs no recapitulation in this short essay. But the question arises: What of the grounds that the building occupies? How may we treat the landscape to make it conducive to meditation, contemplation, veneration, and education, spiritual and physical recreation? Moreover, we have the opportunity to do nothing less than re-imagine our relationship to the living earth—the first of God’s gifts to mankind and over which He assigned us the responsibility of stewardship.

Our church, like many other new churches of all denominations, has been built upon a large, multi-acre expanse of land that affords new opportunities for establishing creative reconnections to earth, water, and sky. On our site we are practicing or contemplating many traditional church landscape activities—memorial tree plantings, ritual walkways embellished with commemorative paving bricks, images of holy people ensconced in garden settings, Biblical narrative scenarios, shaded arbors, pavilions, rose gardens, labyrinths, playing fields, and the like.

But we can do more. We need to extend our very conception of holiness itself by going beyond placing sacred images and objects into the landscape—which have served in the past to make the lands adjacent to churches extensions of

church interiors—and rather devise ways to impress upon the senses the holiness of the whole earth.

We can contemplate the use of natural materials and man-made instruments that may combine science, art, and spirituality into a single experience that unifies the realms of faith reason. We can begin to think of our church land as something like wilderness, something like Eden, setting out gardens that attract and sustain indigenous plants, birds, insects, and animals, keeping or returning some portion of our land close to its natural state. Like any program of interior iconography that serves as a catechistic experience, we can make church land an iconic earth learning experience. And not only the earth close at hand and underfoot, but a learning experience extending to the sky, space, and time. We can find creative ways to apply our hard-won scientific knowledge of the cadences of the cosmos in the form of solar sculptures that can precisely mark the day of any feast or any saint. We can create time markers that may reactivate within us the awesome silences of the infinite.

In these ways and in other ways as yet unimagined, our churches can fulfill their traditional role as places set apart from the ordinary world where we can heighten our spiritual senses through worship, but can also assume a new role as places firmly set within the world where the sacred beauty of God’s bounteous nature is conserved, celebrated, and exalted.

If earth may be saved from or even spared the continual ravages of human technologies and materialisms by which we

have insulated ourselves from our source, then we need to cut through the deadening layers with all of the tools available to us—our knowledge in the form of earth, water, and sky sciences, our art in whatever forms we are capable of dreaming, and our faith in the form of sacred church landscapes.



We can create time markers that may reactivate within us the awesome silences of the infinite. Above is a model by Michael R. Kapetan for a sundial that is under consideration for placement in the Meditation Garden in the new Mercy Gilbert Medical Center in Gilbert, Arizona.

For more information call Michael R. Kapetan, 734 662-8824 or visit [www.mikekapetan.com/](http://www.mikekapetan.com/)



Depicting the life of Jesus, this 9' x 12' installation reads from the Jesse Tree in bottom left to the Tree of Life in bottom right. The large clear central circle serves as a reminder to take the message of Jesus out into the world. Glass painter Brad Butler hand painted the prophets Isaiah and Matthew, as well as Jesus, using several layers of metal-oxide pigments.

## Seeing Jesus in our Worship Space

by Andrew Vargo, Stained Glass Artist

Liturgical art is an opportunity to bring people closer to God through visual messages and stories. How each person reacts to liturgy-based art is personal, but we hope as artists to make an emotional connection between the viewer and the artwork. This connection is the difference between something that looks beautiful and something that has a greater purpose in the worship space. And there is one design element that offers an immediate emotional connection regardless of theme—the human figure.

Human expression transcends both time and culture. As humans, we read facial expression and body posturing immediately and without knowing it. In that same instant we evaluate that information to tell us confidence level, physical strength, how the person is feeling, etc. If your message is important enough that you don't want anyone to miss it, using the human figure is the most direct and simplest form of communication. It's the universal language of art.

For Christians who come to a worship space to learn and live in the footsteps of Jesus, seeing a visual representation of Him helps to put us in His physical presence—and therefore increases the

emotional intensity present in a worship space. It reminds us how He lived His life in the human form and guides us in how we should aspire to live. In the photo above, His expression portrays a calm confidence. He is compassionate, and full of forgiveness and acceptance. His right hand is open in invitation, and His left hand is blessing those who pass beneath. His presence over the entrance is both a welcome to His home upon arrival and a reminder that you are passing from church into the mission field when leaving. It is a lasting emotional connection that reminds you to live as Jesus did.



For more information call Andrew Vargo of Butler Fine Art Glass, Inc., 317 826.1355 or visit [www.butlerstainedglass.com/](http://www.butlerstainedglass.com/)

*"Art has a unique capacity to take one or other facet of the message and translate it into colors, shapes and sounds which nourish the intuition of those who look or listen."*

*Pope John Paul II*



*To Form Anew XV by Linda McCray expresses religious symbolism through the abstract elements of light and dark.*

## Abstract Spiritual Original Paintings

by Linda McCray, Painter

Paintings have the ability to transform an ordinary building into a sacred space. Abstract paintings invite contemplation and open our hearts to God. Today artists are free from the past obligation to illustrate the Bible and can focus on ways to reach our souls on a deeper, experiential spiritual level. Through the universal language of abstraction the believer is spiritually awakened to follow their journey.

There is nothing like the freshness of an original painting. Painters experiment with new materials, creating exciting new ways to communicate the Word. The medium of painting has progressed further from traditional roots than any other medium because it is so free. Painters are not limited by the shape of the stone as are sculptors. Abstraction is one of many ways contemporary painters embrace the freedom of paint and open the windows to the spirit.

Collaborating with faith communities is very inspirational to me. As I paint, I reflect on the unique spirituality of both the building and its people. I enjoy working closely with individuals in translating their mission into abstract, spiritual paintings created especially for their worship space.

For more information call Linda McCray, 800 923-5537 or visit [MontanaDesignsUnlimited.com/](http://MontanaDesignsUnlimited.com/)

1. Pope John Paul II; Letter of His Holiness to Artists, Vatican, 4/99.

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