

Sacred Arts in a Pluralistic Society

Presenter abstracts & bios

AGUIRRE, CURTIS

1988-2022 Parish ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in Vancouver, New Westminster, Nanaimo, and Penticton, BC

1988 M. Div., Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, CA

1982 B.A., History major, California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, CA

“THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS” AS SPIRITUAL WARNING TO CONVERTS AND TRUE BELIEVERS

In his “On the Eight Vices,” John Cassian writes, “Our eighth struggle is against the demon of pride...[who] seeks to destroy those who have mounted almost to the heights of holiness.” His teacher, Evagrius Pontikos, in his “On Prayer: One-hundred and Fifty-three Texts,” writes, “Self-esteem is the start of illusions in the intellect. Under its impulse, the intellect attempts to enclose the Deity in shapes and forms. I shall say again what I have said elsewhere: blessed is the intellect that is completely free from forms during prayer.”

Tim Burton’s “The Nightmare Before Christmas,” is a tale of conversion and hubris, of special visions and spiritual arrogance. Using the writings of Cassian, Evagrius, and others from that period, I propose to explore this animated holiday film as spiritual parable. This can be a useful exercise in our time as we see a great distortion of Christianity in popular religion that blends the role of preacher with political pundit. Using a well-known and much beloved element of popular culture as a tool for insight provides a simple and memorable point of reference.

BLACK, STEVE

Steve Black has a doctorate in New Testament Studies from St. Michaels College, in Toronto. He has been a sessional instructor at VST, and has also taught biblical studies at Codrington College, in Barbados. Now he lives in Sechelt where he serves as Priest at St. Hilda’s Anglican Church.

GOD AND THE GRATEFUL DEAD: THEOLOGICAL PROFILES

The Grateful Dead informed the spirituality of a sub-culture in the USA and Canada. God figures in diverse ways within the lyrical content of the corpus of the Dead... from the playful Prankster God of “One More Saturday Night,” who created earth because God wanted to have “a big old party,” to the poignant tale of August West in “Wharf Rat,” who declares God to be “no friend of mine” in one moment, and in the next says he will get on his feet again if “the good Lord [is] willin’.” One is hard pressed to find a more beautiful

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presentation of grace than in “Attics of My Life” in which we find: “When there was no dream of mine, You dreamed of me.” This paper will explore a few songs at length and show how the Dead’s theological work spans everything from the sublime and heart-breaking to the goofy and impish, because “...sometimes you can get shown the light in the strangest of places if you look at it right...”

CLELAND, JACQUELINE

Jacqueline Cleland (M.Div) is the Pastoral Care and Outreach Coordinator (PCOC) for the Oakridge Christian Ministry (OCM) at the Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church (VCPC). She leads, engages, and is interested in new and novel worshipping communities. She focuses on church planting and revitalization in the realm of Practical Theology.

THE CATHARTIC AND TACTILE PRESENCE OF GOD: AN EASTER ART REFLECTION

The Vancouver Chinese Presbyterian Church under direction of the Pastoral Care and Outreach Coordinator partnered with the artist Jeanette Lee to create a tactile representation of the Easter story based on Isaiah 25:6-9 and Mark 16:1-8. The sculpture will be revealed on March 31st after we journey through the process of making it. This collaboration is an active look at embodying and reimagining the resurrection narrative through the art of welding. Welding is an incredibly precise and technical skill that uses heat and cooling to create from what already existed a new dimension of understanding using pre-existing materials. This will be an introduction to creative arts in worship with an intention of looking at the tragedy of Jesus murder under an Aristotelian lens of catharsis, which leads to a hopeful positive social change. This will be highlighted by the belief of Brother Laurence that it is not components of worship that makes up our connection with God that matter per say. What matters more is the intention of using them to connect with God. This is why the process of welding with scraps was chosen as a tool to deepen our connection to God in a tactile manner. It is an acknowledgement that we are a people can feel less than perfect, yet we can still be inspired by the beautiful work we are called to do. The paper will be an exploration of the logic behind the art collaboration and the hopes for the worship presentation on March 31st 2024.

DUFF, HEATHER

Heather Duff, Ph.D., Language and Literacy Education (UBC, 2016); MFA (UBC, 1986);

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M.Div. (McMaster University, 1983) is an interdisciplinary Artist-Educator-Writer, Instructor at SFU's Continuing Studies, and Artistic Director at Vancouver Youth Theatre. Heather's doctoral dissertation explores philosophical links between ethics, spirituality, and research-based theatre. Chapters are published by the UBC Faculty of Education (2016), Vernon Press (2017), UBC Press (2020), an article in *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal* (2021), and poetry and fic-tion in many literary journals. She was a finalist for *The Malahat Review's* 2011 Long Poem Prize.

POET(H)IC INQUIRY AND DANCE AS METAPHOR

In the approach of *Poet(h)ic Inquiry* (Duff, 2016), the "(h)" refers to breath and spirit as in *pneuma* (Greek); *ruah* (Hebrew); *ar-rūh* (Arabic); and *prana* (Sanskrit).

Dance is a dance of breath across time and space.

Dance is contemplative.

Dance is a metaphor for "becoming" (Deleuze) and outpourings of the soul.

Dance opens doors towards contemplative practices, liturgical and sacred celebration, ethical discernment, and peace/justice praxis, across sacred arts traditions from multifaith to secular humanism.

Dance as metaphor bridges interdisciplinarity and multimodalities across literary and visual arts, dance, drama, and music.

Poet(h)ic inquiry addresses ethical incongruities. *Poet(h)ic Inquiry* is a non-fixed pedagogical space of inquiry at the intersection of arts practices, ethics, and spirit across "contexts of teaching-learning-creativity-knowing" (Duff, 2016). A poet(h)ic approach is complementary to process theology; theopoetics; feminist/queer theology; contemplative/justice praxis; interfaith dialogue; and arts-based methodologies such as narrative/poetic inquiries, a/r/tography, autoethnography, and ethnodrama.

"Dancer" who is both character and metaphor in my dissertation play: *Visiting Griffin* (Duff, 2016) appears also in my poetry (Duff, 2011-2024). I build on theories/theologies of dance as metaphor in contemplation, social justice praxis, and arts-based ethical inquiry through poet(h)ic practice and live presentation of interdisciplinary contemplative dance moving towards a sense of peace, essence, and God.

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Duhan-Kaplan, Laura

Rabbi Laura Duhan-Kaplan, Ph.D. is Director of Inter-Religious Studies and Professor of Jewish Studies at the Vancouver School of Theology. Recent books include *Mouth of the Donkey: Re-Imagining Biblical Animals* and the co-edited anthology *Visions of the End Times: Revelations of Hope and Challenge* (with Maier and El-lithorpe).

VISIONS OF PEACE: JEWISH AND QUAKER PAINTINGS OF ISAIAH 11:6-9

In this presentation, I explore two visual representations of Isaiah 11:6-9. This prophetic oracle describes thirteen animals, including pairs of predators and prey, living peacefully together. One representation, by Edward Hicks (1780-1849), expresses a Quaker vision of messianic time. Its title, "Peaceable Kingdom," alludes to a world governed by a divinely-inspired righteous ruler. Atop a hill, the Christ child presides over the animals resting in harmony. Down in a valley, Quaker leader William Penn and Lenape Chief Tamemund meet for a treaty ceremony. Another representation, by contemporary artist Clay Adamah Mil, expresses a Jewish vision of messianic time. The oracle's animals sleep peacefully on a Torah scroll, surrounded by other biblical animals. The painting's title, "Sacred Rest," points towards Jewish traditions of Shabbat as a weekly taste of messianic time, when humans learn how to pause from strife. To explore the two different visual messages, I place each painting in the context of the artist's biography, theology, and larger body of work. Then, I show how the messages both contrast and complement one another.

FARHANGPOUR, PARVANEH

Parvaneh Farhangpour holds a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy, a Bachelor of Education from Toronto University, a Master of Arts in Comparative Literature from Tehran University, and a PhD in education from Pretoria University. She has published articles in scientific journals and has presented numerous workshops and papers at international conferences, including two presentations at the Parliament of World Religions and the Surrey Teachers Convention. Dr Farhangpour is a researcher, poet and author. She has won a couple of poetry prizes and her poems have appeared in a few magazines in Canada.

ART AS A SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATION OF RELIGION

Throughout history, religion has played an important role in the lives of people and has inspired different forms of art including architecture, literature, music, and painting to name a few. The Baha'i Faith, in particular, promotes the use of the arts as a medium to express spiritual feelings and elevates its station to an act of "worship". Even though this

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Faith is only two centuries old, art is a part of its education curriculum and is integrated into the life of the community. In this presentation, I will briefly discuss the influence of religion in the creation of arts in various civilizations and in particular I will introduce some of the writings from the Baha'i Faith and examples of arts from this tradition as a small step in paving the way for engagement in all kinds of arts.

FRASER, BRIAN

As minister of Brentwood Presbyterian Church in Burnaby, BC, I have contributed to cultivating a provocative missional relationship with the jazz community. This paper will explore some of the inspirations and insights we have enjoyed in reformulating the Christian faith under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our conversations with this community and its mode of musicking.

SPIRIT, SPACE, AND SYNERGY REFLECTIONS ON CHURCH AND JAZZ IN CONVERSATION

As currently imagined, there will be three sections in the paper.

The first section will articulate how we have come to understand the Spirit of our Creator's Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, to be at work in our various relationships with the jazz community.

The second section will explore the importance of our stewardship of our space for our missioning in providing benefits to a chosen group of neighbours – the jazz community – and generating faith-reformulating conversations with them.

The third section will draw from conversations that the Spirit has provoked in and through our collaborations with the jazz community, especially the transcripts of in-terviews we did with jazz musicians on their spiritualities in the summer of 2018 through a Calvin Institute of Christian Worship grant. The focus will be on the syn-ergy in reformulating our Christian faith that is emerging through these expressions of the Creator's forgiving and reconciling love for the world.

HARRISON, DORALI

DoraLi Harrison, VST graduate in MAPPL- Spiritual Care (2024), serves on Vancouver's Community Palliative care team as an Interfaith Spiritual Care Practitioner. An active

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member of Living Interfaith Sanctuary, she's a wife, mother, artist, poet, and retired birth Doula. Her passion lies in exploring life's liminal spaces in search of the Mystery.

SORROW'S CANVAS: ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF LAMENT ACROSS FAITH TRADITIONS

Lament, as a deeply human expression of grief and longing, transcends the boundaries of time, geography, and belief systems. This proposed paper seeks to delve into the rich tapestry of lament as expressed within various spiritual and religious traditions worldwide. Through an interdisciplinary lens examining art, music, prayer, and poetry, this paper aims to highlight some common threads of humanity expressed in moments of sorrow and despair, while considering the unique contextual influences on how these artistic representations of lament may take shape.

Drawing from diverse creative expressions, the paper will analyze the nuanced ways in which lament is articulated, particularly examining its theological dimensions. By illuminating the creative diversity and universality of expressions of lament, this paper seeks to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation lament as part of the shared human experience across religious boundaries.

HAYWARD, NICOLA E.

Nicola E. Hayward is a recent Ph.D. graduate from McGill University in New Testament and Early Christianity and an adjunct lecturer in Early Christianity at the Vancouver School of Theology. She holds a Research Associate position at the Vancouver School of Theology (VST) and an Associate Fellowship at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) at the University of Victoria, Canada. Her dissertation, "The Use of Funerary Art for Commemorating Social Identity and Memory: The Case of Via Latina's Samaritan Woman," focused on women and gender in antiquity.

FEMALE RELIGION AND PRACTICES IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND EARLY MEDIEVAL CHRISTIANITY WOMEN AND SACRED ART: RETHINKING WOMEN'S SACRED SPACE IN LIGHT OF THE SANT'APOLLINARE NUOVO MOSAICS

During the fourth-century contradictory views of women's private worship was pervasive in ancient literature. On the one hand, writers such as Jerome, Ambrose, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzen commended those ascetic women who practiced their faith within the confines of the home. On the other hand, during the Priscillianist controversy misogynistic rhetoric was levied against ascetic women who held domestic prayer meetings with non-household members or engaged in ritual activity without the

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watchful eye of a male cleric. Yet even the positive image of the stay-at-home female ascetic was imbued with patriarchal power as bishops such as Ambrose and Basil sought to define and control women's private religious activities. Women's religious behaviour as defined by male authored texts, highlights the tension over female religious worship, whether it be in the private or public domain. Insights into women's religious activities and experiences in late antiquity, therefore, requires we turn our attention to material evidence. This paper is concerned with how women interacted with religious artworks and the textual narratives they referenced. Moreover, it is concerned with how these artworks functioned in sacred space, revealing women's devotional lives. I begin with a case study of the mosaics found in the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, that feature female biblical figures as well as female martyrs. This case study will focus on female religious experience in light of the mosaic program, which presents new ways for us to reimagine female viewership and participation in a ritualized space.

HUMMEL, ANGELA

Angela Hummel is a Doctoral student at Iliff School of Theology in Denver Colorado where she is developing her Art Theology Method. A top blogger for the Wabash foundation where you can find her Art Theology series on Grace. Workshop creator and facilitator in her Art Theology method at the American Academy of Religion Conference, November 2024. Co-leader of the Arts Pedagogy Roundtable for Wabash, September 2024. Angela has also been a TEDx speaker on Art Theology.

ART THEOLOGY: RE-IMAGINING THEOLOGY THROUGH MAKING ART

Theology has become more interested in "seeing" art not just as illustrative within the discipline but as a primary source of knowledge. Recent scholarship within the field of Art History supports this movement; revealing how we have not fully understood theologians from the 12th through 17th century because we have only focused on their words and have not understood how to value and/or translate the images they created with their words. Their research is grounded in the Extended Mind Theory which demonstrates that we are engaging in a different kind of knowing when we draw or paint our ideas. This paper integrates and builds on this scholarship and seeks to go even further than valuing seeing art as a primary source, it will propose the method of Art Theology. Art Theology involves making art to not only have new ideas and understandings that discursive reasoning alone cannot enter us into, but also to help create a different kind of conversation within the discipline - to move away from argumentation and into collaborative meaning making. The method of Art Theology centres indigenous ways of

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knowing that have often always included making art long before the theological academy formed in the west.

MELVILL JONES, DANIEL

Daniel Melvill Jones is an MDiv Candidate at Regent College and a student in the Anglican Studies program at Vancouver School of Theology, where he is preparing for ordination in the Anglican Church of Canada. He has published or presented papers on a wide range of topics related to art, theology, and society, including Flannery O'Connor's relationship to white nationalism, the role of community in Spike Lee's films, and the popularity J.S. Bach in Japan.

A HERESY AGAINST SECULARISM:” MARK WALLINGER IS MAKING JESUS STRANGE AGAIN

By depicting Christ as an ordinary human whose life-size stature is made minuscule by his surroundings, Mark Wallinger's *Ecce Homo* statue (displayed on Trafalgar Square's Fourth Plinth in 1999) succeeds in making Christ strange to those who encounter it. I will explore three ways that Wallinger's piece does this: by rebuking power, by confronting bystanders, and by challenging the assumptions of secularism. In the first section of my paper, I will describe the artwork and show how its human scale rebukes the destructive power of empire represented by the oversized icons of the British empire that surround it. In the next section, I will demonstrate how Wallinger recruits bystanders into the role of the condemning crowd, a crowd who is prone to reject Jesus because of his ordinariness and his similarity to those on the margin of our society. In the final section, I will examine how Wallinger's depiction of a suffering Jesus challenges the assumptions of secularism within modern Western society.

JORGENSON, ALLEN G

Allen G. Jorgenson holds the William D. Huras Chair in Ecclesiology and Church History at Martin Luther University College at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, ON. His most recent book publication is *The Crux of Theology: Luther's Teachings and our Work for Freedom, Justice, and Peace* (Lexington, 2022) co-edited with Kristen E. Kvam.

POETRY AND THE HEALING OF GOD

In this paper I examine poetry as a theological resource by which God heals and is healed in Jesus of Nazareth. The paper first begins with some reflections on the nature of

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poetry using the thought of the Danish philosopher Knut Løgstrup. Løgstrup underscores the necessary character of poetic expression in that some experiences are so demanding that they cannot be expressed in prosaic or propositional language. Poetry uses indirect language to disclose and so exposes us to truths. In so doing it invites hearers and readers into imaginative spaces that illumine possibilities through which God heals us by gracing us with play. I next explore how poetry heals God in Christ, using a poem from Rainer Maria Rilke's *Book of Hours* in which homesickness is identified with God. I propose that in the incarnation, God in Christ, is homesick in solidarity with human dislocation. Poetry heals this embodied displacement in providing a horizon against which we live our lives: sometimes troubling, sometimes troubled, but always reminiscent of the healing that is in God's wounds that are themselves healed as we touch the wounded God poetically.

LEE, VIVIEN

Based in Singapore, Vivien has a professional background as a business lecturer and educational researcher. She is now an artist whose paintings are inspired by her faith. Her Masters degrees are in the fields of education, and the sacred arts. She is currently a post-graduate student at the Catholic Theological College, University of Divinity, Australia.

A WHOLE NEW WORLD: THE INTERPLAY OF IMAGES AND TEXT IN SOCIO-RHETORICAL INTERPRETATION

This paper presents a fledgling researcher's first-hand experience of using socio-rhetorical interpretation, incorporating visual exegesis, to interpret biblical text. It specifically considers the interaction of the intertexture, social and cultural texture and ideological texture as a multi-disciplinary approach to enter into the world behind sacred texts. Using the example of a study into the "fullness of God" concept in Ephesians 3:14-21, it will be demonstrated that using images and text to step into the first century Greco-Roman world helps readers to take on a more empathetic reading of the passage. Imaginative seeing from different perspectives allows the reader to enter more easily into the context of the passage, a world otherwise highly unfamiliar. This allows for new connections to be made between old and new knowledge and facilitates a more nuanced understanding of scripture. It is proposed that the approach can have implications for dialogue, prayer, faith formation and creative expression.

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LONGHURST, CHRISTOPHER

Christopher Evan Longhurst is a lay Catholic theologian based in New Zealand. He lectures in theology at Te Kupenga Catholic Theological College in Aotearoa New Zealand. His field of research is theological aesthetics and intercultural theology. Chris is also a KAICIID fellow.

HAKA: AN OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF THE RHYTHM OF MAURI

Haka (Māori ritual dance and chant) is an important feature of Māoritanga, the lifeway of Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous people. Despite the haka's international reputation, its origins, meanings, and place in Te Ao Māori and Aotearoa New Zealand's plural society are not always well understood. Like many other indigenous performance rituals, haka have esoteric meanings closely linked to nature. This paper explores the traditional Māori performance of haka as an outward expression of the rhythm of mauri (life principle), and a source of inspiration for all peoples. After looking at how the haka started as a war dance, the paper surveys how this ritual has taken on new meanings over time, connected to similar meanings in other religious and cultural dance performances. Attention is given to what each of the haka variants has in common, the mauri that permeates every aspect of the art.

MAGEE, JAMES

James Magee Jr. holds MA degrees in theological and biblical studies and is a research affiliate with VST. He has published essays focused on the intersections of religion, film and childhood and is currently co-editing a volume on the subject of religion and violence in Wipf & Stock's Religious Pluralism and Public Life series.

THE OLD GODS AND THE NEW" – OR, BETTER YET, NO GODS AT ALL: SECULAR ART AND THE DEMISE OF RELIGION(S) IN GAME OF THRONES

Adapted from George R.R. Martin's best-selling and still unfinished anthology *A Song of Ice and Fire*, HBO's multiple award-winning *Game of Thrones* (2011-2019) features a throng of religious and quasi-religious groups and practices in its imaginary neo-medievalist world. From devotees of the Old Gods in the north of Westeros to the militant Faith of the Seven in the south, from drowned initiates of the Iron Islands to infidels burned alive to the Lord of Light, from supposedly celibate grandmasters and Night's Watchmen to worshipers of the Great Stallion and deified Death on the exotic continent of Essos, this popular television series offers numerous thought-provoking

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analogues to historical and contemporary religions. Moving-picture images of ostensibly pious believers and religious rituals do not, however, automatically constitute sacred art. Indeed, utilizing a cultural studies lens informed by de/secularization theories, I will argue that the disjointed eight seasons of *GoT* collectively constitute antagonistic secular art that narrates the demise of its fictitious religions. While the completed novels may yet offer thoughtful commentary on how the adherents of differing faith traditions could peacefully coexist in a pluralistic society, their screened adaptation presents religion as an antiquated and violent phenomenon that its main characters ultimately discard.

MANSELL, YEHUDA

Yehuda is a Ph.D. Candidate in the joint Durham University/VST program. He holds an MA in Theology from Regent College and a BA in Bible, Archaeology, and ANE Studies from Ben Gurion University. His research interests include literary theory, the book of Job, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and refugee studies.

MIDRASH AND MY LITTLE PONY: OR HOW FAN FICTION CAN HELP US TO BECOME BETTER READERS AND PRACTITIONERS OF SACRED TEXTS

Not just the domain of Trekkies or Harry Potter enthusiasts, but since antiquity, fan fiction as a concept, has a deep tradition in the development, curation, and extension of texts, sacred and secular. This framework can help us recognize that all texts are derivative, imitative, or built upon previously established ideas or tropes, and the longevity of a text is based on whether an engaged community continues to read and discuss it. Therefore, is there anything that can be gleaned from contemporary fan fiction surrounding sacred texts, and can the practice of “biblical fan fiction” contribute to engaged reading, a “sanctified imagination,” or Midrashic exploration? The answer is “Yes!” and we will discover that fan fiction has a place in liturgical expressions in reading communities.

MARCHIONI, GIULIA

Born in Bologna Italy in 1987, MA degree in Art History, PhD in Cultural Heritage Studies (2018). Currently enrolled as an Art History teacher in high school. Specialized in Early Christian Iconography, in particular the use of symbols as means for building religious identity, with special attention to pastoral imagery.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SACRED IN CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE: FORMS, PURPOSES AND MEANINGS

The recognition of a Christian sacred image does not rely only on the viewer’s faith or confession, it rather lies in the image’s very own characteristics, such as location, colour

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or material, as well as on its iconographic features (halo, mandorla-shaped aureola, to name a few).

Art historians have extensively argued the relation between form (style) and content (iconography) in religious images. My contribution aims at unravelling this relation in architecture, arguing whether the holiness of a building is due to its liturgical purpose exclusively or to a specific architectural language of the sacred as well. Is the presence of the divine conveyed exclusively by the practices that take place in a given space or most and foremost by the spatial features themselves? If so, is it possible to identify such features?

The evolution of sacred Christian architecture from the first *domus ecclesiae*, through lavish baroque churches, to essential modern churches will be the background of a cultural analysis of the relation between religious practice and space, in the frame of a semiotic approach. Case studies will be drawn from European architecture but attention will be paid to Eastern architectural types, with a focus on Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, as an example of sacred building used by both Christians and Muslims through the centuries.

MARIE, VICTORIA

Reverend Dr. Victoria Marie, a VST (2014) alumni, is the resident pastor of the Vancouver Catholic Worker. Victoria defines herself as a late blooming, self-taught artist, whose art journey began in 2020 at age 75. As she grows closer to joining them, Victoria feels compelled to form a relationship with her ancestors through art.

RECLAIMING ANCESTRAL COSMOLOGIES THROUGH ART: DECOLONIZING THE SACRED

I come from peoples who have had to struggle for me to even exist. Like many in the African diaspora, I wanted to know my roots beyond what my parents and grandparents could tell me. I wanted to know what the people from the various places in Africa and elsewhere were like before foreign invaders crushed their cultures, especially their spiritual and religious perspectives. My aim was to research and depict in art, the beliefs, strengths, and compassion of the people who came before me before they were colonized by Christianity and Islam. To that end I explored sacred feminine examples from west African, Irish and Welsh cosmologies. This paper is an anthropological and theological exploration of that research. Eight west African and two Celtic sacred feminine figures were the focus of this study.

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MILLER, KATE

Kate Miller is a maintenance artist who makes textile art from discarded clothing and practices visible mending. Currently she is the administrator for University Hill Congregation, Vancouver and their Salt of the Earth: A Christian Seasons Calendar. She holds a MATS from Regent College in Christianity and the Arts.

MAINTENANCE ART FOR THE CHRISTIAN IMAGINATION

What is the vocation of the artist? A Christian theology of the arts suggests that art-making glorifies God as a liturgical response to the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ by the inspiration and movement of the Holy Spirit. This liturgy may be understood as an obligation of discipleship wherein artistry is both sacrament and charism: St. Paul says of Jesus' disciples, "Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries" (1 Cor. 4:1). Envisioning the artist as servant and steward, and not only as someone specially created and creating in the image of the Great Artist, requires a re-visioning of the arts for the Christian imagination by looking outside of distinctly Christian worship and arts traditions. I propose that Maintenance Art, a feminist counterpoint to the avant-garde movement, represented by the work of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, provides this necessary vision of artist as servant and steward.

MORDAG, TUVEYC

Tuveyc is a Doctor in Ministry who has the call for leadership in social issues. She is a VST graduate with two Masters' Degrees in 2014, and 2016. Tuveyc's undergraduate degrees in Business and Marketing in United States that have helped her building a career in business twenty years in the Advertising field. Tuveyc comes from a diverse and multi-religious culture, as well as an immigrant with her daughter to Canada. Therefore, she understands being foreign and the difficulties of integrations in to different culture. As a part of her degrees; she specialized in spiritual care. Her mission is taking responsibility to support social wellbeing and serve to support emotional suffer and identity loss; such as generational healing and cultural unification today. Presently, she works as the acting director of 2H Foundation.

EMBODYING SCRIPTURE IN ART AND RE-IMAGINING SPIRITUALTY IN ART THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY: A COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION LOOKING ART THROUGH THE MONASTIC RELIGIONS AND LOOKING TO CONTEMPORARY REFLECTIONS OF ART IN PLURALISTIC CULTURES.

Question

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How Art shapes religious and spiritual unification and creates deepening in soul and mind through culture in pluralistic societies?

Art creates diversity in culture and develops connection in societies. As well, art supports developing ideas, and demonstrates moral values. Often, art has been reflective of scripture and interacts with faith understanding. When it comes to present time; diverse cultures in pluralistic societies; art brings out spirituality to identify the culture, and the spiritual connection helps people connect with the world.

From the beginning of social living, art has been a major tool to help lead religious, social and cultural understanding in community living. Art always brings out deeper emotions and thoughts, and it demonstrates the strength and the power of human beings. Art is a way of mirroring from the higher power to the world, and art is a way of human being's interacting with the higher power.

Today, the creation is still explored by human beings through thinking and feeling from the "beyond," that is called the "spiritual connection." In the pluralistic societies today; art is a way of reflecting conscious thinking to make sense of what it is that human's feel connected with life. Thus, this paper discusses the "spirituality" in art from the beginning to today and explores the connection in art with culture in pluralistic societies.

The author uses photography as examples of reflecting spiritual thinking in art. (It will be demonstrated with a photography collection by the author).

OBERHOLZER, NINNAKU

Ninnaku Oberholzer completed her undergraduate and postgraduate studies in Theology at the University of Pretoria with an honours degree in Ancient History before receiving the King's Theological Trust Scholarship to pursue her research interests in Christianity at the Arts King's College London. She is currently a phd student at KCL and maintains a research associateship with the department of New Testament and Related Literature at the University of Pretoria.

THE PLURALITY OF CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY AND THE FEMALE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Historically Protestant tradition has not held much space for the arts, nor women. Whilst Protestant artists in the 1600's made a conscious effort to develop Protestant

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iconography, at times this came at the cost of female iconography (particularly Marian iconography) which was re-appropriated to the image of Jesus. The erasure or replacement of the female figure within Christian art has had a lasting impact on the way women are represented in and connect with the religious sphere.

This paper will explore the re-imagining and re-introduction of the female sacred in South African religious experience. This will be done through a brief historic background of the appropriation of female iconography during the Reformation period which influenced the Protestant setting in South Africa and the role women have historically been allowed to play. In light of this background, I will explore how feminist theologians and South African artists (predominantly female) have reclaimed the female sacred figure and express the importance of female religious experience. This conversation will, in particular, explore the plurality of the South African female religious experience through art and the need for expressing the female sacred, focusing on how art allows for the intersection of race, gender, indigenous religion, and Christian theology.

RATCLIFFE, HOLLY

I trained in Anthropology (MA, McMaster), Theology (PhD, Université de Montréal) and Ceramics (DEC, Cégep Limoilou, Québec). I taught History and Practice of Christian Spirituality until 2016 at Montreal Diocesan Theological College. Currently, I make and exhibit ceramic funeral ware and was 2022-2023 CSRS artist in residence at UVic. My theological interests include 14th century English mystics; death; soteriology; contemporary theological aesthetics.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE CERAMICS OF JULIAN STAIR'S QUIETUS: THE VESSEL, DEATH AND THE HUMAN BODY

In 2012 mima (Middleborough Institute of Modern Art) was the first venue for the monumental exhibition of funeral ware by contemporary British potter Julian Stair : *Quietus: The Vessel, Death and the Human Body*. Stair's appropriation of the funeral vessel as a contemporary work of art (with an ancient history) as well as the exploration of secular and religious venues for his exhibition will provide material for reflection on *memento mori* as a contemplative practice.

SNOW, TONY

Rev. Tony Snow (he/him) is a member of the Stoney Nakoda First Nation. He completed

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his MDiv from the Vancouver School of Theology in 2022 and is ordained in the United Church of Canada. He serves as the Indigenous Minister for the Chinook Winds Region in Southern Alberta, where he works with over 90 churches in the denomination and others in the interfaith community to deliver insight and instruction on reconciliation strategies. He is a traditional knowledge keeper and theologian, and works alongside his brother Rev. John Snow and student minister Gloria Snow to lift up the teachings of his father, the late Dr. Rev. Chief John Snow Sr. Tony is completing his proposal to enter the University of Pretoria PhD program.

WAGICHIBI ÎNUTHE: CREATING SPACE FOR INDIGENOUS SACRED DANCE IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY

Many Indigenous nations would traditionally ground their religious life in ritualized dances that have sacred and spiritual origins that are handed down from ancestors whose wisdom is tied to land-based traditions and contexts. These dances exist as faithful spiritual observances, but find little common connection within today's Eurocentric-Canadian modalities. Since colonization, the criminalization of Indigenous spirituality under the Indian Act of 1876 sent practices and teachings underground for many generations. Today, the re-emergence of Indigenous practices, identities and cultures has allowed many dances to re-emerge as secular, identity-driven exercises that are shared among Indigenous nations at Powwows throughout North America. The sacred rituals and ceremonies that once preceded each dance are now largely ignored, erased or embedded within a mixture of traditions that many nations claim. This paper will examine the interstices between sacred and secular dances when pluralistic society seeks greater access and understanding in an era of reconciliation. I curated the exhibit Wagichibi Înuthe on Stoney Nakoda Dance Regalia at the Canmore Museum in 2023-2024 and this paper will examine the challenges encountered when trying to recenter Indigenous voices to the sacred dances beyond cultural anthropology using the social museum model as a strategy within a colonial museological setting.

STEIN, MARK

Mark J. Stein is a Research Associate at Vancouver School of Theology. His interests are in how members of one faith community can be of use to an other in its journeys, both individual and corporate. Primarily, the focus is on interactions between Jews and Christians, through conversation and through text. Mark holds a doctorate in linguistics, and formerly served as an Interfaith Chaplain at Albany Medical Center in Upstate New York.

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WAITING FOR THE BEAT TO DROP: ASCENT AND DESCENT IN PRAYING THE PSALMS WITH THE RABBIS OF THE TALMUD

A lively Rabbinic discourse in Talmud elaborates upon biblical understanding of the holiness of music in faith. Tractate *Pesachim* provides an analysis of Psalms in which the Rabbis note ten musical expressions to initiate Psalms, the most resonant to our ears perhaps “hallelujah”, the most startling perhaps “(a) prayer”. Ascending and alighting from these words, the Psalms are understood as either moving up from human recitation towards God, or descending from the Shechinah to humanity. In tractate *Arukhin* both song and words of Torah/prayer are understood identically as offerings of the service of the heart to God, as mitzvah. Text, music, and action are hence not detachable; any question of their “relationship” sweetly anachronistic and moot. The Rabbis go on to then employ a musicology of Psalms to engage in serious theological speculation. In II Kings 3:15 Elisha remarks, “Now then, get me a musician. As the musician played, the hand of the LORD came upon him”. This talk explores this exquisite art of music and its tie to faith.

UBI, STEVEN, B

Stephen Bernard Ubi is from Nigerian. He holds a master’s degree in religious studies with an emphasis on the Old Testament from Adeleke University in Nigeria. In addition, he studied African Traditional Religion (ATR) for sixteen units in both my graduate and undergraduate degrees. Stephen is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Public and Pastoral Leadership (MAPPL) with a concentration in Spiritual Care at the Vancouver School of Theology in British Columbia.

EXPLORING YORUBA CONCEPTIONS OF THE DIVINE: PRE-CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON GOD IN AFRICA

African traditional religious rites, dance, and artifacts will be crucial in explaining the complex nature of divinity in Yoruba spirituality in relation to the essay “Exploring Yoruba Conceptions of the Divine: Pre-Christian Perspectives on God in Africa.” Festivities and initiations are examples of ceremonies that function as group rituals that strengthen cultural identity and link people to the divine. Dancing is a form of expression that conveys legendary stories and reflects spiritual symbolism, offering insights into Yoruba cosmological worldview. Religious items, such as holy objects and symbols, also illustrate the complex interaction between the material and spiritual realms in Yoruba religious activity and operate as physical expressions of divine presence.

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WITTIG, JES

Jes Wittig is a dancer and movement artist living in New York City. Her research focuses are lived in the space between religion, performance studies, and technology. She is currently pursuing her MA in Philosophy of Religion at Columbia University.

GOLLUM TEMPORALITY: THEY STOLE IT FROM US

In this paper, I offer an illustration of the enclosure that various models of transhumanism, posthumanism, and singularitarianism are already enacting upon human possibilities, through the lens of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth and its inhabitants, particularly the character of Sméagol/Gollum. I argue that Jung's active imagination, a similar practice to Tolkien's invention (Latin root: *invenire*, meaning "to find") of Middle-earth, is an act of wayfinding, a practice of knowledge-making in which the "tools" of time, including language, embodiment, and storytelling, are implemented. The practice of wayfinding moves along temporalities that are distinctly at odds with those of the Transhumanist Movement, even though both narratives contain Christian mappings of time.

To illustrate what this means in practice, I compare the temporalities of the wayfinding practices of Gollum and the Hobbits against the (at the time of writing, speculative) homogeneous, autonomous temporalities of transhumanists who opt to upload their consciousnesses into the deathless Cloud. Ultimately, I argue that Gollum's fate may be more desirable than the fate of those who turn permanently away from the mysteries of reality – that is, anything which cannot be signified or represented to completion – in favor of "living" forever.

YONG, AIZIAH

Aizaiah G. Yong (he/him) is an ordained Pentecostal Christian minister, practical theologian, and healing companion who has served in religious and higher education leadership for over 15 years devoting his energy to spiritual, cultural, and relational transformation in solidarity with QTBIPOC communities.

INSIDE OUT, RADICAL CURIOSITY AND HUMANIST VISIONS OF HEALING

This paper explores the dynamic use of creative arts and spirituality, specifically through the lens of the animated film "Inside Out", in fostering introspection, healing, and interpersonal understanding. Drawing from the framework of Internal Family Systems (IFS), we examine how the film normalizes inner multiplicity through visualizing different aspects of the human psyche, inviting viewers to engage with their own inner worlds. By

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delving into themes of radical curiosity, listening, and inclusion, “Inside Out” underscores the significance of intrapersonal and interpersonal dialogue in the healing process.

Furthermore, we investigate the intersection of art, spirituality, and psychology from a humanist perspective, highlighting the ways in which visual, musical, literary, and performing arts serve as vehicles for expressing and exploring religious and spiritual experiences where no divine being is present. Through analyzing various movie scenes, we demonstrate how artistic expression facilitates the reimagining of theological concepts and promotes pluralism, fostering an invitation to greater empathy and understanding across diverse belief systems. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates the power of integrating the arts and storytelling into individual and community healing practices, offering a holistic approach to spiritual and emotional well-being.

ZAIDI, NASIR

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SACRED ART AND BEAUTY IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND MYSTICISM

Muslim philosophers and mystics discussed the phenomena of art in the context of “the nature of beauty” at existential and foundational levels. Deriving from the sacred text “God is beautiful and loves beauty,” they gave the sacred dimension to the art by connecting it to the absolute beauty of God. They considered the creation as the manifestation of the beautiful names of God. They proved that if the essential light of God had not existed, the entire universe would have fallen into the darkness. They mentioned the profound relationship between absolute perfection and the different levels of imperfect creation. In their view, the beauty has originated and emanated from the spiritual realm of Divine attributes to the material world. Muslim philosophers and mystics also outlined the spirit of art in the light of the “faculty of imagination” in human beings. This article will also discuss how Muslim philosophers and mystics relate art and beauty with human feelings and spiritual pleasure and its relationship with the moral aspect of human soul. This article seeks to glance at specific elements of aesthetics of tangible Islamic art from the point of view of spirituality.

ZIAKIN-COOK, JESSICA

Jessica Ziakin-Cook is a Ph. D student in the department of Art History and Visual Studies

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and Associate Fellow at the Center for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria. A practicing artist and mother of two, she also teaches art history, drawing and creative development at the Vancouver Island School of Art.

PREMODERN SOLUTIONS TO POSTMODERN PROBLEMS? THE SACRED ARTS IN CASCADIA: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS, QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

The Saint John's Bible is a giant illuminated Bible completed in 2011. Conceived as a "premodern solution to a postmodern problem," 299 high quality facsimiles were made for distribution across North America. Of the five in Canada, two are in British Columbia. Given that BC or "Cascadia North" is the most secular place in the world, in human history, what are they doing here? How does their location here change their meaning, and what other Benedictine Sacred Arts are persisting or even thriving in this region? This presentation will report on my preliminary findings on The Saint John's Bible and the sacred arts in BC, and include reflections on the difficulties and opportunities in marrying religion and art history in the 21st century.