



From hydroponically grown vines to traditional oil painting, artists are making a visible and profound impact on British churches today. This book seeks to understand the impetus for such a resurgence and unpacks some of the practical, theological and aesthetic issues within it.

ACE is the leading British organisation in the field of visual art and religion. ACE offers stimulating educational projects, publications, advice, information and skills.

Cover image: Rebecca Horn, *Moon Mirror*, St Paul's Cathedral, London 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Laura Moffatt, Director of ACE

During the planning and development of this book, many have asked the question 'Who is it for?' Intended audiences are, seemingly, a neat prerequisite for identifying a publication's market, relevance and purpose. And yet the answer to the question in this instance has not been straightforward. Over the last 20 years, Art & Christianity Enquiry (ACE) has witnessed something of a renaissance of commissioned art for churches and cathedrals in this country, resulting in a widespread dissipation of what might have been described as 'our audience'. Where once a familiar field of artists could be cited as a kind of shortlist of workable choices for a new commission we now see invitations being extended to Turner Prize-winning artists; we see ancient rural churches drawing upon the same levels of expertise and judgement as their metropolitan counterparts; commissioning agencies who once would shy away from places of worship have begun to work for and with the likes of parish priests, lay people, Deans and Chapters. ACE, along with a handful of other organisations, has increasingly sought to create a critical space in which these works of art can be made known, amplifying their resonance within both art history and theology, and discerning quality and ambition.

As with so many endeavours of this kind, we have enlisted the capacity of the internet to begin to document and map an online database of modern and contemporary works of art in UK churches and cathedrals. Ecclesiart, as we call it, has an ever growing, fully illustrated list of works of art that are permanently exhibited (complete with opening times, location maps, biographies of the artists, nominations by, among others, Archbishop Rowan Williams, and more). The list is a deliberately varied selection, compiled to provoke interest and debate and will doubtless have its own small controversies in an era when stylistic trends in art and design seem to have transformed and evolved more quickly than at any time before. So this book introduces a handful of those works of art (a selection

Rona Smith, *North Elevation*, The
Lumen Centre, Bloomsbury, London
2009

Mark Cazalet

The concept for *Tree of Life* at Chelmsford Cathedral came from sitting in the transept of the cathedral and considering the space, the tone of the building, the other artefacts and its people. Only when the brief emerged in dialogue with Dean Peter Judd did I realise the appropriateness to his concerns and that of the funding grant. The ecological nature of the theme and the inherently English nature of an oak tree allowed me scope to weave in secondary narratives of a more controversial nature. I feared that the iconography of Judas's suicide and resurrection might offend, or be misunderstood by people. But the installation process necessitated three weeks of intensive reworking in situ, which allowed me to have hundreds of conversations and in certain cases be influenced into making small changes. Although a source of constant interruption, the request to explain what I was doing made people feel that it was theirs and had in fact evolved through their participation, which it did.



Mark Cazalet, *Tree of Life*,
Chelmsford Cathedral
2003

Rona Smith

In developing my proposal for the north window at The Lumen Centre in Bloomsbury, London, I found that my largely ephemeral and time-based practice could be adapted to meet the brief for a permanent work.

The development of this commission differed dramatically from my usual working process, which involves a great deal of experimenting with materials. Here the expense of both labour and the materials themselves meant that I resolved my ideas through drawing and CAD before the fabrication could commence.

Working in a consecrated space that accommodated different faith groups, it was crucial that the work be sensitive towards the particular atmosphere of the building as well as accessible to all visitors.



Rona Smith, *North Elevation*, The
Lumen Centre, Bloomsbury, London
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