

Interview with Jeff Crabtree

Principal, Christian City Church School of Creative Arts (SCA), Oxford Falls, Sydney.

What was the perceived need that led to the C.C.C. School of Creative Arts?

Plastic poverty-stricken two-dimensional bumper-sticker attitude of the church to the arts! Phil Pringle, the senior pastor of C.C.C. Sydney - who is from Christchurch - was hanging in Christchurch cafés and had a vision for a Sydney church that was vital and empowered. He's an artist himself, actually one of Australia's top ten-selling painters; he wants to see a renaissance of the arts in the church.

What's your artistic response to nudity in art? Where, how, if, when?

We have life drawing sessions at College but the models are clothed. Some of our artists paint nudes, we have nude paintings in our halls, our

method; the rise of humanism; and the industrial revolution. These all conspired to generate great social and intellectual upheaval and change, particularly in the UK. Australia, New Zealand and America are largely a consequence of those pressures. Humanism seemed to be more right. Artists flocked to it - because it was new. The church had no answers. It literally lost people to the cities. Congregations shrunk, churches lost money and patronage suffered.

Rookmaaker talks about modern art as an expression of the death of a culture. How as Christians can we use art to express culture?

Rookmaaker traces the hopelessness of modernism and humanism as seen through the arts, that is 'black art' and the depression of modern life, the existentialist end of life and

“Plastic poverty-stricken two-dimensional bumper sticker attitude of the church to the arts!”



Bathsheba Artemesia Gentileschi 1640, *Disegno Interno*, Linda James, 1995, oil on canvas, 1.2 x 1.5m.

minister bought one. I personally don't have a problem with nudity in paintings and photographs in a contemporary church. The human body is beautiful - well, some are more beautiful than others. I have a problem with public nudity (on beaches for example). There's a place for it, we shouldn't be ashamed of the human body, nudity in a film for example IF it contributes to a story that adds value. Otherwise it's just gratuitous.

The contemporary church would never have commissioned Michelangelo's *David*, yet we still have *Song of Songs*.

As a major patron, motivator and catalyst for the arts over much of the last two millennia, what happened to the arts in church, where are the artists?

The church was replaced as a patron of the arts about 200 years ago by business interests. It occurred as a result of a confluence of several historical factors: the emergence of scientific

suicide. Christian art should illustrate the life we have, communicate the NEW other than dead-end nihilism.

I feel the next phase [past post-modernism] is a turn toward spirituality - the death of Modernism and the slow strangulation of Post-modernism. People are looking for truth; a re-awakening. 9/11 and 'Bali' won't stop. Events like that will create fear, people will respond by seeking what's right. It's an unequalled opportunity for the church to gain back what has been lost in terms of delivering good news to everyone looking for hope. I believe by 2025 the Arts will replace sport as a primary activity in Australasia.

SCA offers diplomas and certificates in the creative arts within a variety of one to three-year courses, full or part-time. There are two intakes each year (February and July). Courses cover song writing, vocals, music, dance, acting, screen production and visuals. For more information: sca@ccc.org.au, www.ccc.org.au