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# Christian Artists in a Postmodern Time

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# SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Christian Artists in a Postmodern Time”**

Written by

**Donald Allen Copeland, Jr.**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the completion of the  
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Meets the criteria for acceptance  
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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## Christian Artists in a Postmodern Time

Donald Allen Copeland, Jr.

## Christian Artists in a Postmodern Time

### Introduction

The rigid rules of our traditional schools of artistic standards have been shattered. What our culture expects of artists and what artists expect of themselves has drastically changed. In this time of Postmodernism<sup>1</sup>, any means an artist finds to express and to communicate is valid. There is no dominant school or style, no art Nazis dictating what must be the form to follow in our artistic expression.

My purpose is to take these new trends in art and to apply them to a long dormant voice in the arts, Christianity, and to see where artists who are Christian stand today. I have written forty-four artists from the Christian organization of artists known as Christians in the Visual Arts or CIVA. I have included a copy of the letter I sent which can be found in appendix I. From their responses I made observations and have looked for trends in regard to how these artists operate as Christians and in the influences of this postmodern time.

Postmodernism is a tricky term. It is a relatively new one that is applied to something none of us are entirely sure of yet. Further, is quite difficult to label the current times we live in. Yet, I have chosen to deal with a few of its characteristics

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<sup>1</sup> Postmodernism here relates to, in art, the acceptance of all practices and traditions as being of importance to the total history of art. There is not any one tradition that stands out or that should be upheld, instead all are valid. In this paper it is used to define the period we live in since modern art was challenged with Pop art. It also refers to the intentional revolt against modern art.

concerning art because of its influence on art today.

Postmodernism means so many different things to so many different disciplines that confusion sets in when trying to cross disciplines. Postmodernism in law is loosely related to the postmodern theories of speech communication or literature as well as art. It affects each of these areas in a similar fashion, but we all tend to be rather confused about it. I have found Stanley Grenz's book *A Primer on Postmodernism* quite helpful.

For the purpose of this paper, I have defined postmodernism as 1) the time period after modernism which began its death in the 1960's; and 2) as the conscious defiance of modernism. To place dates on the event is difficult since there is no day of postmodern revolution. However, I would say that it all begins with the exhaustion of Abstraction at Minimalism and the entrance of Pop art. In defiance of modern art and the avant garde, artists like **Sherry Levine**<sup>2</sup> began photographing masterpieces of the avant garde and declaring them as their own pieces. Their acts were a rejection of modernism's necessity of originality and thus the obsessive and constant evolution of the latest developments. From this break emerged swarms of ideologies and styles, old, new, and the rearranged.

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Postmodernism is more than theories of law, literature or art. It is a way of thinking and there are specific

characteristics of this new way of thinking which are central to this discussion. Some of these characteristics have come to conflict on several points with Biblical values. I have written forty-four artists listed in the 1999/2000 Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA) and asked how they have responded to these contradictions. I have asked how they have responded to the idea that there is no absolute truth, like a single, all-powerful creator. Some postmodernists simply do not see truth as something to be sought.

I have also asked specifically how the bombardment with multiple styles of art has influenced them. Also, has text, the by-product of the information age, found it's way into their art? How about the use of technology, has it changed their art?

As I said, I have asked them the vital question about how their artwork is influenced by the artistic styles of this new, anti-modern movement. From their responses I have drawn a conclusion. This paper comes to rest on this idea. All the responses I received expressed a need to create in a manner that is more than pure abstraction. It seems that these Christian artists feel that their art must be representational in order to achieve any purpose worthy of the Kingdom of God, a kind of incidental anti-modernism.

An anti-modern movement was *stirred* about thirty years ago which has set the conditions which we all create in now. With the

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<sup>2</sup> See Wallis, page 27-29. For art work see appendix III.

advent of pop-art and artists like **Andy Warhol** and **Robert Rauschenberg**<sup>3</sup>, art returned to representational subject matter with meaning. Figural oil painters in Germany and Italy like **George Baselitz** and **Sandro Chia** brought<sup>4</sup> brought oil painting, which had been dormant with the invention of plastic acrylics, back to art. Art was reborn into being a social comment and not so severely intellectual and introverted. This new art continued the conversation that the public had felt left out on in the reign of modernism. With the likes of **Cindy Sherman**<sup>5</sup> and **Sherry Levine** who continued and furthered the use of the figure the movement became anti-modern. Suddenly, what modern art set out to do and was so proud of, that is to free itself of everything except itself, was under attack. This allowed artists to create in whatever order they chose, new or old.

Along with the renaissance of meaning, the figure, and oil painting there were other influences, like text, that have been incorporated into today's art. We live in the Information age, an age dominated by the media and infatuated with technological development. Text, the vehicle of this information, is introduced as an element of art like line, shape, and color. Today, combining itself with image, it finds its way into every media of communication and has become common.

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<sup>3</sup> See Godfrey, page 4. For art work of Warhol and Rauschenberg see appendix III.

<sup>4</sup> See Godfrey, page 11, and 21-29 for Baselitz. For Chia see page 11, and 68-70. For art work of both artists see appendix III.

<sup>5</sup> See Wallis, page 79, 180-181, 233-235.

I find the work of **Gaylen Stewart**<sup>6</sup> to be a tremendous example of text and image combined. Another development that Stewart has made use of is sound recordings played along with his exhibits.

Art has changed in many in many ways in the last thirty years. The greatest is the death of modernism. Art has moved from strictly formal abstraction to art that is figural, topical, and socially critical. What is important is that this acceptance of all traditions allows artists to create in the manner of their choice.

In addition to these questions of artistic style, I have inquired about what these artists been saying in their art? This again is affected by our recent evolution in thought. Postmodernism has some key issues that conflict with Christianity's centered belief in a single, absolute God and in his son, the Messiah, Jesus. Simply, it is a way of seeking; however, what is sought is not clear. It is not meaning, progress, knowledge or truth which is sought. Rather, postmodernism declares the death and failure of all these and roots its own meaning in an eclectic use of whatever it wants to be truth, knowledge or value. Instead of absolute truth, there are partial truths and a multi-centered belief system. It doesn't deny Christianity or any religion; however, with postmodernism a combination of any set of desired beliefs could

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix II for examples of art work.



be followed. I have asked these Christian artists about how are they responding to the religious disposition of today's world. The response I got was diverse. Some of these artists embraced aspects of postmodernism, some detested even the label. One thing that is constant among them all is that none of them have compromised their beliefs in light of these screaming ideas.

## The artists

All of the artists who responded to me have discussed and express Christian themes or values in their art, and it has all been figural. Even if it is not a Biblical story or character, their work is often socially critical in light of the teachings of Christ. They feel that this is their responsibility as followers of Christ. None of the people who responded create without content and meaning that goes beyond the forms in their works. They are statements, stories, comments, questions, or some sort of message to today's humanity.

Not all their work is religious, but all of these artists do create religiously based works. For instance, **Kent Twichell**<sup>7</sup> of Los Angeles creates enormous murals of various themes ranging from memorials of Julius Irving to renditions of the Holy Family. These are great paintings that are sometimes several stories high as well as wide. Regardless, he, along with all the other artists who have responded, create images with meaning of some sort.

These artists have the desire to communicate in their art. It is an anti-formal idea, characteristic of many postmodernists. I have concluded that this desire to communicate comes from their faith, their relationship with a God who has communicated with us. This relationship between God and believer seeks to make itself known to the world out of joy, thankfulness, and duty.

One artist, **Carol Bomer**<sup>8</sup> of Ashville, NC, discusses this necessity for representation and meaning saying that like God, who is Spirit (abstract) and Flesh (realistic):

...art must seek to find this mysterious balance in order to proclaim [the] gospel. Art totally divested of realism, like Abstract Expressionism, becomes meaningless. Art must proclaim creation, fall, and redemption.

Bomer, 2

The absence or presence of meaning in Abstract Expressionism, or any abstract art, could be argued. The work of Mark Rothko is a strong argument for finding meaning in abstract art. This is not the issue however. This statement by Bomer sums up what the artists who I have chosen feel about the way their art should be created. For them abstraction was not efficient or effective. To communicate their message they all felt that meaning had to be included directly by representation, regardless of their style preferences.

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<sup>7</sup> For examples of work see appendix II.

<sup>8</sup> For example of work see appendix II.

## Kent Twichell

One of the first responses I received was from the LA artist, Kent Twichell. He is a very prolific artist and not only paints on canvas but uses the sides of large, multistory buildings as his platform. His works are figural murals with subject and theme and are often memorials to the great people of our society. Some of the people he has depicted in his giant murals have been Julius Irving, Jesus, Michael Jackson, and Steve McQueen. His work is very realistic. It is not narrative but there is often meaning behind his works.

Aside from being great, well done art work, the scale of Twichell's work is astounding. Any artist would be challenged by the size of his pieces, and they would also be challenged by the locations that he has painted.

He shared with me his experience of a mural he did for his graduate project. It was in a time, between the years 1966-1977, he says that he began doing "underground Christian art" and he said of them, "These were murals for which I enacted special iconography to give meaning that was hidden until explained." One of these works was his senior project. The piece he did was called "The Holy Trinity with the Virgin" and interestingly it was done on a government school building. To the everyday person the mural appeared to be of three people in white lab coats. However, that is not the entire story. In line with his

"underground Christian art," the story behind the three persons disguised in the lab coats are Mary, mother of Jesus, God the Father, and Christ the Son of God. For his subjects he found famous people from around Los Angeles, the setting of his career.

These people are (in order from left to right) the original mother from the TV show "Lassie", Jan Clayton, Clayton Moore who was the original Lone Ranger who represented God the Father (no one ever saw his face and lived, and Billy Gray the son of the father on the show "Father Knows Best" who represents Jesus. I think that there is much for the population to read into here, and that he was very brave to ask to do it on a government building.

When there was a report on the paper in "The Holy Trinity with the Virgin" there were many complaints and questions raised about painting a religious mural on a public building. It became an issue, and after Twichell offered to white out the whole work, the dean of the school suddenly was on his side as an issue of censorship. He wrote a one page statement to send to all those who wrote in with complaints and explained that, "Literally it was three people in white lab coats but to me it represented...[the Holy Trinity and Mary]." He also wrote saying that he didn't always believe that he would have that kind of freedom in America, but as long as he felt free, he was going to paint like a free man. Since then people have loved the mural and currently he is doing some restoration work on it.

Mr. Twichell doesn't claim to be of any artistic influence or historical period. His work is simply realism, not exaggerated in form or color (other than size). It is natural, the way we would see his subjects in reality. He has only studied masters of the past like **Cravaggio** in order to solve technical problems and not to look for guidance in how he ought to create. He is in no way a true postmodern or anti-modernist in that his work is not aimed at modernism in order to ridicule that style of creating. In fact, his work is seemingly not influenced by any trends of the last thirty years other than it being figural. He talked briefly about modern artists whom were religious and who he thought to be working in contradiction to their calling as modernists, but never says that he rejected modernism or formalism. He simply is a figural artist with theme and subject matter. He expresses that, "I just try to paint each piece as beautifully as I know how," and that he hopes to honor God in doing so. I think that to Twichell, painting people, telling stories, depicting what he believes is beautiful, allows him to honor God the way he believes he ought to. (Twichell, 3)

About postmodernism in general, Twichell expresses his belief that postmodernism is basically a modernist's way of saying, "We give up." Science has discovered things about our world and universe that leaves many of them believing in a Creator. They couldn't disprove God or that He created all this, and they could not prove the laws and ideas they valued to be

true, so now postmodernism turns to no law or truth in an "anything goes" manner. "If you're not going to let me win, then I'll just change the rules." Twichell believes that the best thing to do with postmodernism is to ask it, "Do you believe there are no absolutes? Are you absolutely sure?" With that he dismisses the issue.

## George Langbroek<sup>9</sup>

In a rather stark contrast to Twichell is the Canadian artist of Toronto, George Langbroek. From the very beginning he states that even though Christianity and postmodernism are thought to be in opposition to one another, he states, without distress, "I am a Post-Modern artist." He is the only respondent to have labeled himself so. (Langbroek, *Contemplations*)

Langbroek's concern with postmodernism is born out of the New Testament's call to love one's neighbor. Christ was concerned with people and culture as evident in his turning of the water into wine at the wedding in Cana, a social, cultural event. Postmodernism has brought a new vocabulary and structure to art and Langbroek sees it necessary for us to speak that language. It is the same reason we translate the Bible over and over into the vernacular language of the peoples of the world, to reach people where they are. Langbroek seeks to speak to his neighbors in their language even if it is different.

There are a number of ways that he is accomplishing his goals and purposes. First and most obvious is the particular style in which he creates. He makes prints from etchings of various kinds which allow him to use multiple colors. In the wake, or can I say tradition, of so many artists of this postmodern time period he superimposes and juxtaposes many images onto a single surface to create a collage. They are complex,

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<sup>9</sup> For examples of work see appendix II



colorful, and quite beautiful. Another characteristic of his work is quoting previous works from art history which encompass artists from all kinds of periods. He quotes Michelangelo, Picasso, Gericault, Egyptian statuary, Vermeer, Da Vinci and I assume many others into his entwining images. This use of quotes from other's art works and the way he arranges and composes his work is much like the Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg, it is marvelous and beautiful work.

Another part to Langbroek's response to Jesus' call to his neighbor is in his subject matter and the themes he addresses. He says, "Caring for one's [neighbor] parallels Post-Modern considerations towards individuals belonging to minority group and... issues such as human freedom, race, gender, age and cultural heritage." (Langbroek, *Contemplations*)

In addition to this he says that he addresses the political circus and its affects on people. He also makes use of images of art from non-western cultures. "This consideration towards non-western cultures is also a Post-Modern concern, addressing both contemporary and historical acts of racial and sexual discrimination and exploitation." (Langbroek, *Contemplations*)

These concerns are demonstrated in a piece he calls *Home*. In the work there is a quotation of Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa* which finds itself among other quotations like Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* and Picasso's *Guernica*. All these quotes are placed around images of Red Cross workers feeding poverty

stricken children with swollen bellies and an image of boat people. There is a clear concern here displayed in the connection made by all the juxtaposed imagery. The boat people are hungry, clinging to life in their poverty like the survivors in *Raft of the Medusa*. And just like the insanity and inhumanity of war displayed in *Guernica*, so too is this poverty unthinkable in our world today with its advances, an absolute injustice and horror. While all of this is going on, in the background, in a very low-lying green, are Van Gogh's peasants eating their hard earned potatoes. Just like those humble, honest, peasants, so too are the impoverished children and boat people the honest people in our world. They are without fault and they are innocent yet they are rich in suffering.

(Seerveld,1)

He involves his work in other issues like political events that have great effects on people. Gender is one issue. He uses the nude to discuss these issues, the differences in being male and female, the advantages and disadvantages and the discriminations towards being one or the other. One way he tries to be fair and true in his work towards the sexes is to not exploit or exaggerate the human form of either sex in any way. All the issues Langbroek addresses he feels are his duty to bring out to the public eye, that as a Christian and an artist, that is what he is called to do. He says of himself in the third person:

The issues taken on by Langbroek are based on a pro-active New Testament vision calling him to love and care for his neighbor. This New Testament calling to have concern for one's neighbor runs parallel to numerous Post-Modern considerations.

*Langbroek, Contemplations*

What is wonderful about Langbroek is that his work is done in a manner which is in contemporary language of today's art world. It is not kitsch, nostalgic, or sentimental. It is relevant and socially critical, asking us to look around at who we are, how we live and what we are doing. It resounds Christ's call for us to pay attention to one another and care for one another.

In talking about himself, Langbroek finishes his conversation with me by saying:

By practicing a contemplative process, combining and layering imagery, taking on [Post-Modern issues] such as human freedom, race, gender, age, and cultural heritage, Langbroek successfully works out his task as a Christian in our 20 and 21 century milieu.

*Langbroek, Contemplations*

## Mary McCleary<sup>10</sup>

In studying art history I often find myself gasping and staring blankly at works and even whole styles of art which are beyond belief, that are breathtaking and mesmerizing because of their intricacy, and at the complexity of their medium. The work of Mary McCleary is an example that I have come across in this study which gives me that same reaction. When I look at an example of creativity like the floral designs in Islamic architecture, completed in tile, which cover whole domes, or an example like the incredible floral, stained glass windows like those of Notre Dame de Paris, I think of the work of Mary McCleary.

McCleary is a figural artist, master in composition and storytelling. Her figures are beautiful, having great, dramatic postures and so well developed they are often life-like. They draw us in deep, complex conversations about ourselves as individuals and as a society.

One of McCleary's works, *Sentry*, was written about in an article titled "A Fullness of Vision: Mary McCleary's Collages," by Wayne Roosa. The article appeared in the journal *Image*, a journal dealing with the arts and religion. *Sentry* is about the meaninglessness of the things of this world. In the picture there are subjects of various ages, but they are all part of the same round-a-bout of senseless activity and ritual we fill our

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<sup>10</sup> For examples of work see appendix II

time with to please and to give ourselves a sense of worth. The subjects are involved in various activities that keep their minds occupied. In the foreground is a very bored looking boy slouching in his chair listening to music through headphones. He appears very discontent, in spite of the abundance of things around him. Others are engaged in conversations, unaware of time passing, unconcerned about their being. Two other women stare out a window as if they are watching or waiting for someone or something. Perhaps they are as bored and discontent as the boy as they look for something beyond themselves and the things and the people that surround them. There are two other concepts involved in this picture which are very important to our understanding. There is a still life on the table in the very middle of this composition and it serves as an allegory. As the still life has been used in history, this one speaks of its own decay and hopelessness. It is beautiful, yet it's end is near, its sentence already made out. It reflects what is going on in the lives of the people in the image, their sentence made out and they're waiting, helplessly, for it. McCleary gives an answer, she declares a hope in this morbid picture. Death is not the end for all. Directly above the still life is a painting of Jesus among his fearful disciples as he calms the storm. McCleary has taken us into a conversation and laid out our hopeless state, and proclaimed the gospel of our Savior Jesus. (Roosa, 41)

What sets McCleary apart from the rest of us is her unique method and medium. She composes what are essentially collages or mosaics out of toys, wire, plastic eyes, and whatever else she can find. And even though McCleary's pictures are made of what is considered to be junk, her pieces are defined, detailed, masterpieces. They are dazzling, and to think of where to begin on such a piece is mind boggling.

Even though Ms. McCleary has given no word about herself, the nature of her work speaks loudly. Her works are about us, our society; mirrors for us to observe ourselves in.

## Dora Hagge and Carol G. Bomer<sup>11</sup>

The last two artists I want to talk about are Dora Hagge and Carol Bomer. I have found some great similarities as well as some very clear differences between these two artists. Both are very spiritual in their art and lives, yet they seem great distances apart as artists.

Both Hagge and Bomer have made very clear statements about God as an integral part of their inspiration and purpose. Hagge wrote, "I never, repeat - never, get caught up in what the world is doing on such things as postmodernism. I do get caught up in what the Holy spirit is doing and saying as He guides me in my day to day, all day long [I] walk with him. (Hagge, 1)"

It seems as if Dora Hagge has forsaken postmodernism, as well as Modernism or the Baroque or any other artistic influence. I don't know if that is possible as an artist, but clearly she wishes to have no part in the historical evolution of art. She paints only that which the Holy Spirit leads her and enables her to paint. However, I believe most artists who are Christians believe the same thing, except God has not lead any of us to condemn one another or a particular artistic style.

Instead of a social art, hers is a very interpersonal, spiritual and highly religious art. It does not discuss our world, or the condition people find themselves in. Her work is

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<sup>11</sup> For examples of work see appendix II.



more often about truth, about God and his son Jesus. It proclaims fully the gospel of Christ, giving us a solution to the condition of the world, instead of proclaiming that condition.

At the same time Bomer has written, "To reclaim 'holism of metaphor and intellect, spirit and flesh,' I believe the Christian artist must find direction and truth in the richness of the Holy Scriptures. My work comes out of meditating on his word. (Hagge, 1)"

Like Hagge, Bomer seeks to reveal the knowledge of God to the world. However, she desires to try and reveal all of him. She deems Renaissance nativities as best suited for "Christmas card sentimentality," and seeks for ways to depict a more complete Christ. She makes note of the abstract truth of Christ and God, "Christ is Spirit and flesh, Son of God (and God himself) and Son of Man."

Speaking of this abstract reality she says:

So too, art must seek to find this mysterious balance in order to proclaim [the] gospel. Art totally divested of realism, like Abstract Expressionism, becomes meaningless. Art must proclaim creation, fall, and redemption. I would like the poetic nuances in my work to stimulate the imagination to 'see' in the abstract painting the spiritual truths that cannot be painted realistically.

Bomer, 2

Hagge and Bomer share the same goals, and both are equally based in the scriptures of the Bible. Artistically they have different convictions. Hagge is a colorist whose form is realism



and believes God would have it no other way. Bomer is an abstract figuralist who believes that realism is inadequate for describing the Almighty. Both delve heavily into symbolism and allegory and both of these artists' approaches work, in spite of their obvious differences and convictions. Even though we have two different individuals here, who have indirectly condemned the other, what we should take note of is something I think they would both agree upon. Here are two gifted individuals using their talents, thinking and growing. Overall, I believe that is what is important here, and I believe that brings glory and honor to God Whom they are trying so hard to please.

## Conclusion

In the responses I received from all the artists who wrote back to me I have found my hopes and expectations met and exceeded. I expected to find artists who were talented and creative, however, they went beyond talented to fantastic and awesome.

I found artists who excelled and set standards not only artistically, but also in their faith and in the message they carried. These artists are not only talented, but they also carry the message of hope and life with them. They are true to their faith and are profoundly sincere and zealous.

Artistically they are inventive, creative, and are masters of the talents they possess. They stretch their abilities to levels that are phenomenal. They are not content to create on a level that is just good enough to be considered pretty and acceptable to the public, but seek new ways of creating, pushing intellect and creativity to the next stage.

I had asked if there were Christian artists creating great art today. The answer is yes, and their art is certainly great. Even though they are from a great number of different backgrounds and have different ideas formed in their heads and possess different values, they are not so greatly different. They all share a common idea about the way Christians should express themselves through art. That is that art must be representative in order to speak and clearly share the New Testament teachings.

They all have found abstraction to fall short in it's ability to convey the messages of these artists. This seems to be the marquee of Christian art today. In all the examples I have found, few, if any, have been purely abstract.

One thing, these artists seek to please the same God, to do his work, and add to the celebration of life. With a great sense of duty and passion, I believe they have done all of these exceedingly well and have in fact added to all of creation.

## Appendix I

Dear Artist,

Hi, my name is Donnie Copeland and I am a senior art education major at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. For my senior thesis I am conducting a study on how Christian artists are influenced by postmodern culture, values, and ideas. I am a member of CIVA and I have taken your names from the CIVA 1999/2000 directory. I hope that you are willing to help me. I want to see how other Christian artists are responding to the world we live in and to the artistic influences of today. The basic question is, how are Christian artists, like yourselves, influenced by postmodernism in terms of artistic style and how do you respond to it in light of your Christian faith? How have you responded in your work to issues both spiritual/intellectual and artistic ?

Often postmodernism has very different views on what truth is and what our attitudes towards it should be. Have you been confronted with ideas about absolute truth or what truth is in general? How have these influenced you and how have you responded? Truth is central to Christianity, especially absolute truth like a single creator who is God and his son Jesus who gave his life for us. Have these ideas been challenged in your experience of postmodern thinking? How have you responded?

The struggle between modern art and anti-modern as well as every previous influence continues on today. We borrow images and styles from previous periods and use them in our own art or make them our own art, if you think that can be done. Whatever you practice is of some influence and is a part of the great story of art. Where would you say your art falls in style and influence?

As our world changes we mirror it in our art. For many art has become like a sequence of commercials on TV often resulting in collages of seemingly non-related materials and images. Texts, like in advertising, are now incorporated with the art we create. Are you influenced by these trends in any way, if so how?

The time we live in today is often dubbed the space age or the information age, far beyond the industrial age. We have mastered industry and now our lives and culture seem to be dominated by technology. New technology is constantly developed in every field, and artists are so good about making those developments useful to art. How are you influenced by technology, do you use it in your art? If so do you use it as a tool or some other way?

It would also be very helpful to me and easier for you to explain if I could have any examples of your art like gallery cards or pictures. Web sites are helpful as well. Any information you wish to include about yourself, your background, artistic background, ideas, direction you want to go, feel free to tell me. My address is:

Donnie Copeland  
 OBU P.O. Box 4041  
 Arkadelphia, AR.  
 71998

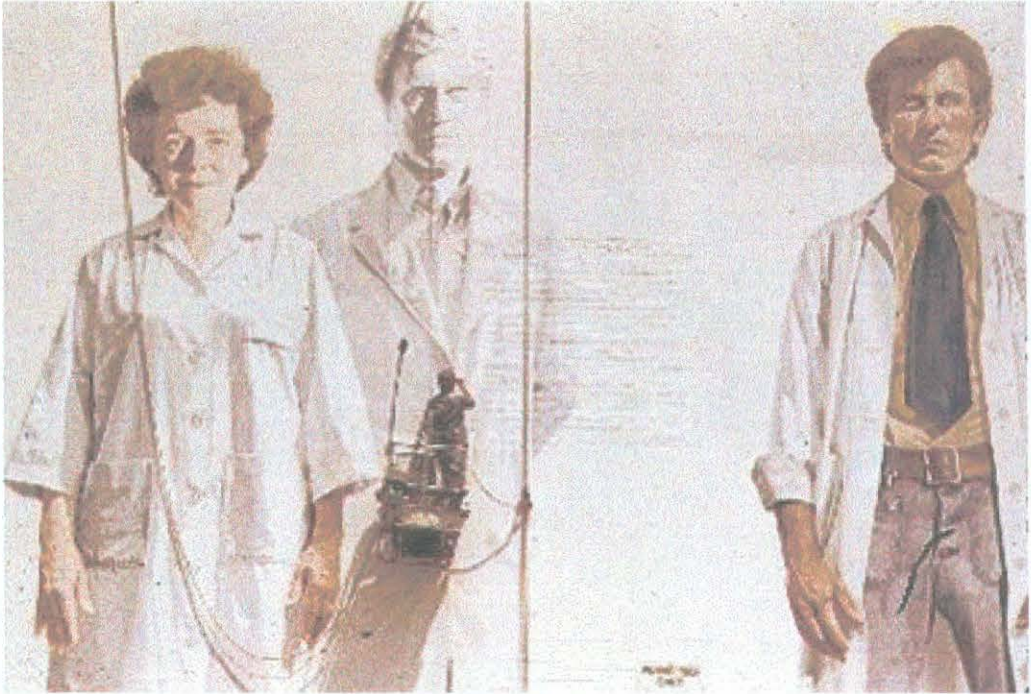
My email address is Cop30763@delta.obu.edu. Feel free to ask me any questions about the study or things you don't understand, or things you think I don't understand. Thank you for whatever help you can offer me, any response you give will be helpful.

Sincerely,

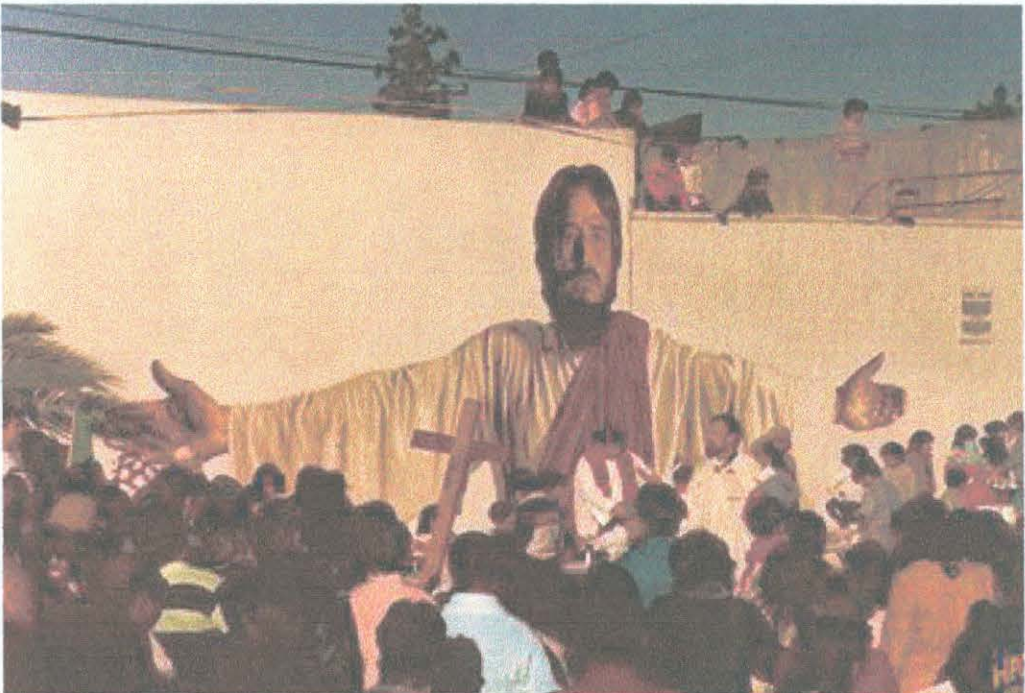
Donald A. Copeland, Jr.

## Appendix II





Kent Twichell: "The Holy Trinity with the Virgin"  
(below) "111th St Jesus"

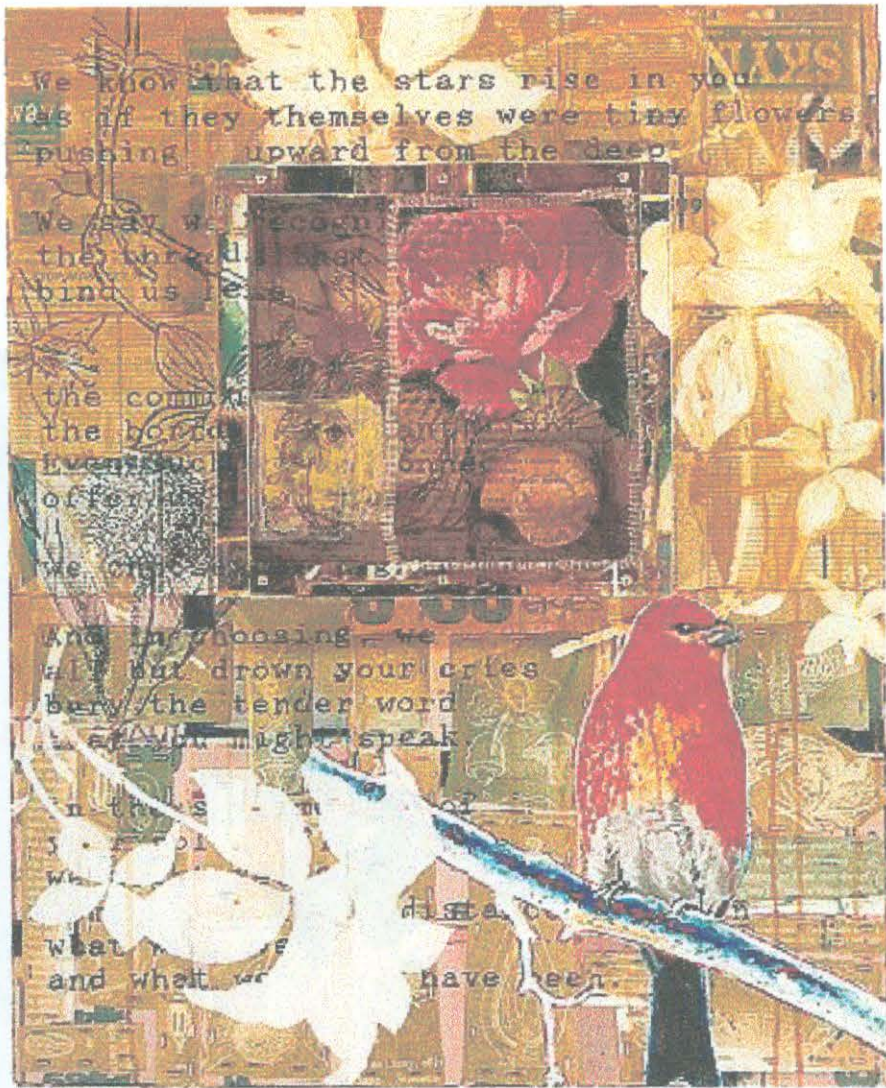








Gaylen Stewart:  
 "Bury the  
 Tender Wood"



(below) Mary McCleary: "Lazarus the Berrer"

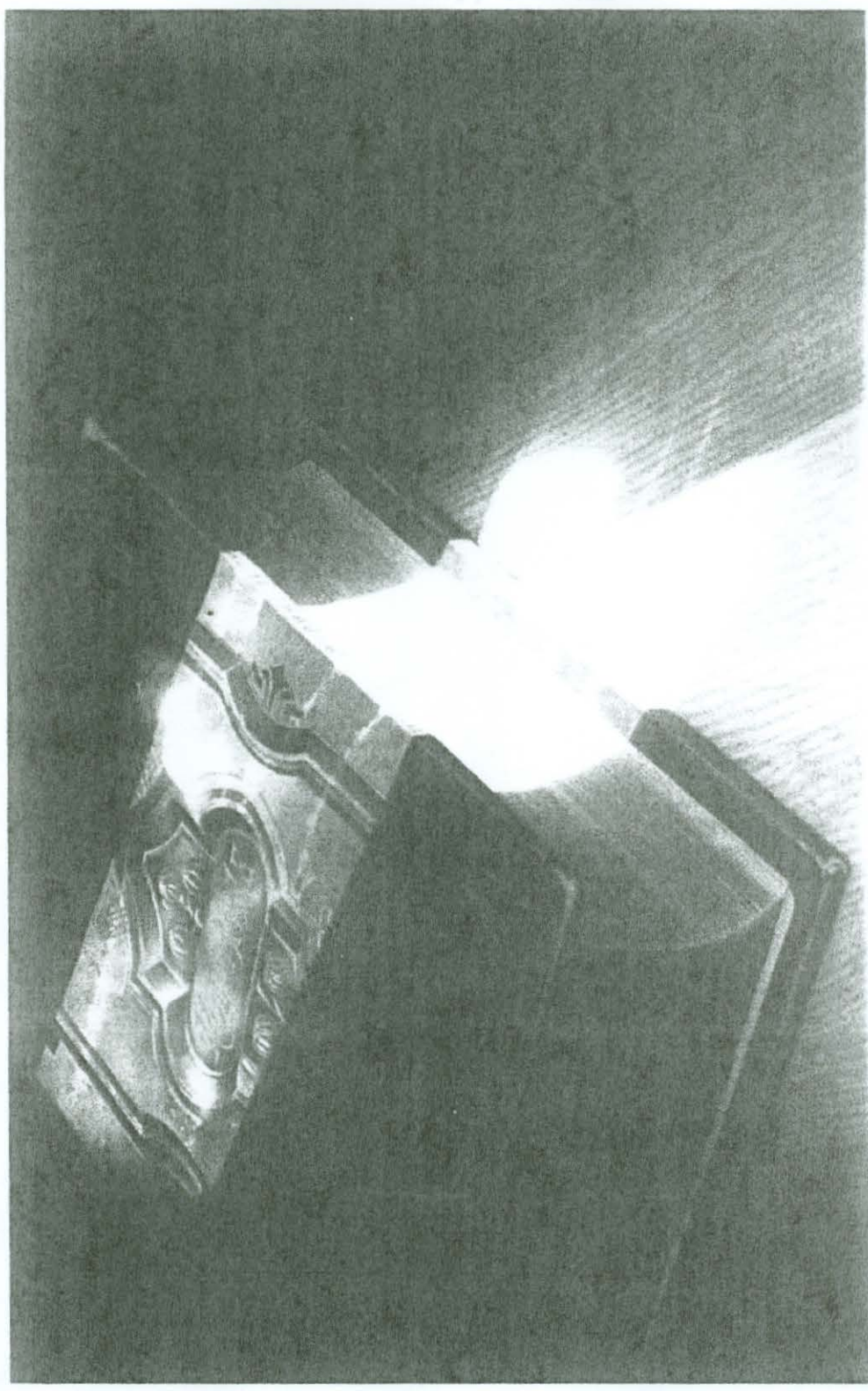






Carol Bomer: "Outside the Camp" III

Appendix III

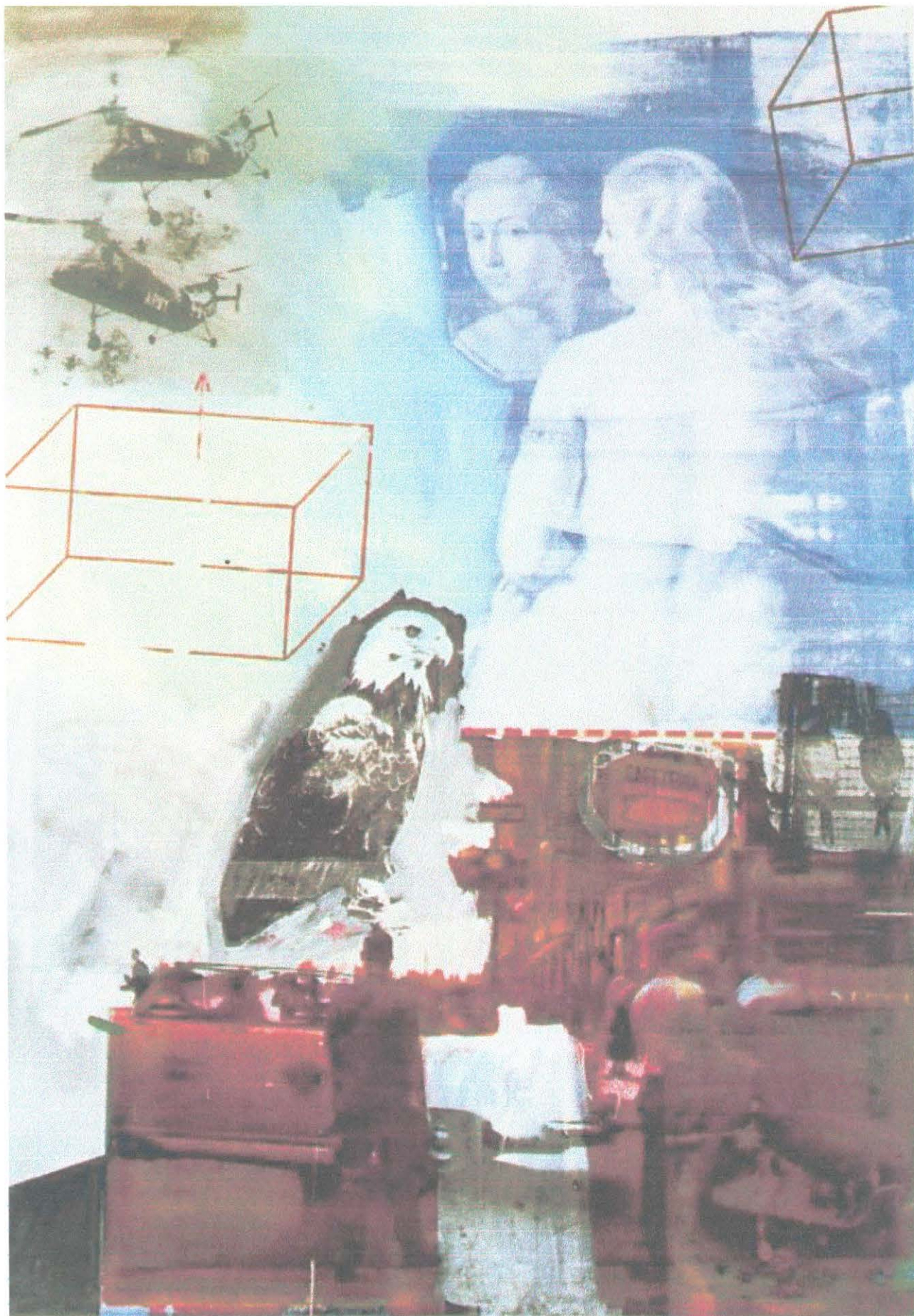


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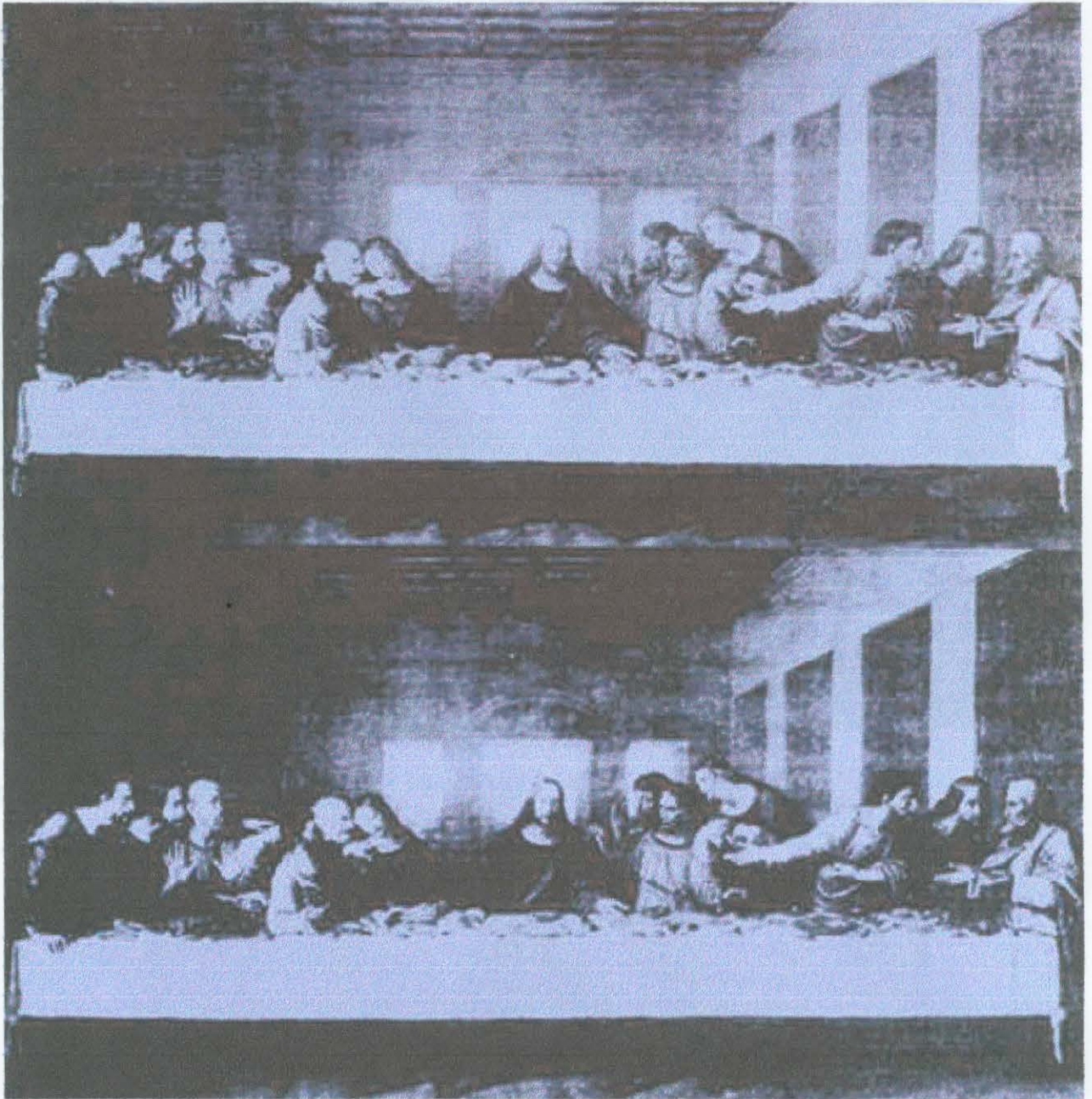
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## Appendix III









Andy Warhol: "The Last Supper III"





Cindy Sherman: Untitled film still #21

(below) untitled film still #10







Sherry Levine: "Budda"





Sandro Chia: "Like in a Movei"



## Letters from the artists



George Baselitz: "Lockenkopf" (Curly Head)





Hello Donald,

I'm busy trying to finish up a giant portrait right now that I've struggled with, off and on, for months but I will try to answer your questions. They show an amazing understanding of our culture and our challenges as Christians who are artists.

When I was in school I also was very curious about how the prevailing culture impacted the artist who was currently making statements in the real world. My curiosity was not about "Christian artists" then. This was off and on between 1966-77 and many things were foggy that seem so clear now. Postmodernism had not yet been defined and I mostly noticed modernist artists contradicting their calling in that so many were very religious and their religion was never Christianity in my experience. During that time I began doing what I called "underground Christian art". These were murals for which I enacted special iconography to give meaning that was hidden until explained. One was painted during 1977 on the exterior of the main classroom building of the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, an LA County School. It was my graduate thesis project and I meant to put a crack in the wall of separation between church and state that has been so misunderstood. I painted a religious mural on a government building. It took me 6 months to get the proper signatures

form the Board of Supervisors, the Dean, etc. I painted 3 figures over 35' tall against a bright white background. All 3 were in white lab coats to represent the wise man robes (a little Modernist sarcasm) and I used recognizable people in LA who agreed to pose for me. I explained my purposes fully to each model and they each agreed to pose. These actor models, because of roles they were famous for during the '50s, were perfect representatives for my theme. L to R was Jan Clayton, the Emmy and Tony Award winning actress who portrayed the mother on the original "Lassie" TV series. She was the most chaste and loved mother figure in America. She was the Virgin Mary. In the middle stood Clayton Moore, the original TV Lone Ranger, without his mask. No one had ever seen his face and lived. He was God the Father. On the right stood Billy Gray. Bill played Bud Anderson in the highly regarded "Father Knows Best" TV series. He was the son of the father who knows best. He was Jesus. I painted the mural with much love and as beautifully as I knew how.

The LA Times usually interviewed me after each of my public murals and wrote nice stories with pictures, etc. This time after the reporter had taken all his notes and was leaving, he yelled back, "Oh I forgot, what is the title?"

I said, "The Holy Trinity with the Virgin". He stared at me, wadded up all his notes and started all over again. There was a giant photo and article in the Times and the school received numerous letters and phone calls, all negative, about the mural, even though they had not actually seen it, only the giant B&W photo of the Billy Gray as Jesus figure. The dean called me into his office and asked me if I was "a religious fanatic or something?" I had caused all kinds of trouble. I told him I'd paint the mural out rather than hurt him or the school. As it turned out, that stopped him immediately. He hated censorship. He was now on my side and perhaps didn't quite know how it had happened. I wrote a one page statement that he could send out to everyone, something to the effect that as an American I felt I had the right to paint a landscape of trees if I wanted to, and say that the trees represented crosses. I had done that with this painting. Literally it was 3 people in white lab coats but to me it represented . . . etc. I said I did not think I would always have such freedom in America the way we were headed but so far I thought I had. The incident ended there and the mural has appeared all over the world as the Holy Trinity with the Virgin and many people love the mural. I have even received phone calls from people who have asked



me about that mural, not knowing the story, and described it as a "spiritual" looking piece.

Currently I'm being asked to do some mild restoration work on it for the new owners, the infamous LA Unified School District. As it turns out, the new Superintendent of Schools loves that mural and is happy to be inheriting it. LAUSD bought the property from Otis after Otis moved to the west side. That campus will now be a special elementary school.

I do not self consciously try to "illustrate" tracts aimed at this post modernist culture. Maybe someday I'll be led to do that. Now I just try to paint each piece as beautifully as I know how. I fall short but keep trying and asking God to lead me to honor Him with the gifts He has given me. It's difficult. I know I let Him down sometimes. I have gotten distracted from my work and not been a good witness to those who were waiting for projects at particular times. This is how I make my living and I earnestly pray that God will provide financially while opening doors for me to glorify Him with my work. That's a tall order in this culture. I keep putting it into God's hands.

I do not know a lot about television anymore so it has little influence on my art today. Several years ago I decided not to get TV. I do use a VCR sometimes because I love movies. I have somewhat of an addiction during weak moments to the ever changing images and pseudo information on the TV screen. I finally decided to just not put myself through it. Some people can turn it off as easily as they turn it on. I can't. It's a struggle.

I did not set out to emulate any period of art history or any artist. I was drawn to Van Gogh, Rembrandt and Michaelangelo. I studied Caravaggio intently to solve many technical issues in painting lights and darks. I'm often labeled wrongly as a "Photo Realist". The Impressionist used cameras too but only as a tool. Most people don't know that Photo Realists were philosophically just Abstract Expressionists. They were dealing with the "purity" of painting and the integrity of the flatness of the picture plane. They outdid the traditional Abstract Expressionists because they copied photos. They did not alter anything. A photo was a flat object and they were not trying to create depth, therefore they were pure, etc., etc. They brought nothing to the picture but like mere machines, copied it. These

considerations all resulted from the understanding or belief that the universe was an accident, not designed. Philosophy, Literature, Art and Music expressed this, as did political society with Social Darwinism, Psychology, Sociology, etc.

Modernism can no longer explain so many things. Perhaps the Creation Scientists have had the greatest impact on Modernism. Scientists are bailing out of Darwinism all over the world. They aren't becoming Creationists usually but they know Uniformitarianism is in error. The fossil record embarrass them, the very laws of Modern Science contradict them, and even though they've had free reign with the culture still the majority believes God did it. So along comes Postmodernism and conveniently preaches "no absolutes". That's like saying "Uncle". "I'm changing the rules because I'm losing." "I'm taking my bat and ball and going home if you won't lie me win." The problem is that we can live our philosophy and they can't. They do not like to hear that. They don't dare live their relativism. They should pray intently that no person in their life ever lives their philosophy. Do they want their recipes for their food written my relativists? How about their dentist? Mechanic? Try surviving just one day with the world living their philosophy. It is the very definition of insanity. It is cloaked in Academic superiority and needs to be satirized to break the spell. At least Modernism had more integrity. Maybe the best of all is a simple question: "Do you believe there are no absolutes?" "Yes" "Are you absolutely sure?"

I struggle with doing paintings of Jesus. I don't know if I'm doing the right thing here. I think words are far, far superior to images. Maybe if I begin to paint full figures and make the faces so bright that they can't be seen.

If you think I have not covered any area please let me know. Yes, you may look at some of my work in a couple of sites. Yes I will be happy to send you cards and other reproduction of my work if it will help you.

God bless you,

Kent Twitchell

<http://www.kentsart.com>  
<http://www.kentsart.8m.com>



## *George Langbroek* Contemplations

The work of George Langbroek is a combination of what many would say are two incompatible traditions, those of Christianity and Post-Modernism. Though the idea may be unsettling for many, Langbroek does not see the disparity between calling himself a Christian and stating, "*I am a Post-Modern artist.*"

The issues Langbroek visually considers reflect a Christian concern and come forth from a New Testament calling to care for his neighbour. Care for one's neighbour parallels Post-Modern considerations towards individuals belonging to minority groups and a Post-Modern emphasis on issues such as human freedom, race, gender, age and cultural heritage. One way that Langbroek shows a Christian concern for his neighbour is by addressing political events and their long term effects. This emphasis on the aftermath of political occurrences is manifested in our Post-Modern milieu by the ability through advanced media technology to bring images of a particular occurrence to the rest of the world and in so doing creating a shared communal experience of the event. The inclusion of non-western cultures within Langbroek's contemporary imagery is another example of how he works out of a concern for mankind (generic). This consideration towards non-western cultures is also a Post-Modern concern, addressing both contemporary and historical acts of racial and sexual discrimination and exploitation.

Through his imagery, Langbroek explores aspects of being male and female as well as their relationships towards one another. The issue of gender is one that has been avidly taken up by Post-Modernism in its strife to bring to the forefront issues of discrimination towards both men and women. Different aspects of being male and female are explored in Langbroek's work by placing importance on the human figure. a great deal of concern is invested by the artist when working with the image of the body. Langbroek strives to present the human figure honestly, being cautious not to exploit it, but rather to give it a sense of integrity. He demonstrates aspects of the body by layering images, formulating within each art work oscillations of meaning and shifts of emphasis. This exploration of being male and female is successfully worked out by Langbroek in his series of intaglio colour viscosity etchings entitled *The Creation of Eve*. By drawing an image of God creating Eve, Langbroek introduced a new and different way of seeing the creation of humankind to the art historical canon, which previously had solely included portrayals of the event from Adam's perspective.

By linking aspects of Christianity and Post-Modernism, Langbroek works out a contemporary method of art making, giving him a strong voice that is heard and understood by Christians and non-Christians alike. The issues taken on by Langbroek are based on a pro-active New Testament vision calling him to love and care for his neighbour. This New Testament calling to have concern for one's neighbour runs parallel to numerous Post-Modern considerations. Langbroek as a responsible Christian takes on the challenge passed on to him by The conclusion that God is dead and through his art making declares that God is alive and integral in our cultural milieu. By practising a contemplative process, combining and layering imagery, taking on Post-Modernism issue such as human freedom, race, gender, age, and cultural heritage, Langbroek successfully works out his task as a Christian in our 20 and 21st century milieu.



Donnie,  
Thanks for your letter requesting info about the affect postmodernism has or the work of Christian artists today. I have written alot on this topic myself. Maybe I can forward a few papers to you.  
I am on an on-line gallery called Fountain-head Gallery.com. Go there to get some more info and some photos of art work. (also find a cover of CT magazine October'98)

#### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

G. Carol Bomer: Through the Needle's Eye the Rich Man Came  
Mixed media/wood; 48 x 48 (photo detail)

This painting is one of eight large (48 x 48) mixed media paintings done for a Christmas '93 Invitational at the Asheville (North Carolina) Art Museum. The Christ of Christmas is God incarnate, the focal point or fulcrum of history. To show this glorious Incarnation, I chose to paint a piercing V (fulcrum) of light rending cloth (canvas on wood). The torn canvas symbolizes the veil of the temple. This veil separated sinful man from holy God, who before Christ came to earth, revealed His presence in the Holy of Holies behind this veil. It protected man from the wrath and glory of God who will not tolerate sin. When Christ came, he took the penalty of sin (death) on himself. This veil was torn in two from top to bottom. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this event in their gospels. "And it was now about the sixth hour (i.e. noon) and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun being obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." And having said this, He breathed his last." - Luke 23:44-46

It was my personal challenge to show in painting that Christ is God, Spirit and flesh, in a way that would not be trite and sentimental. The Renaissance nativities are infected with beautiful Platonic realism, suited for Christmas card sentimentality. I feel they do not adequately exalt the "mystery hidden for ages," the Christ of power and glory. Jesus Christ is Spirit and flesh, Son of God and Son of Man. Reality is both

"abstract" and "realistic." So too, art must seek to find this mysterious balance in order to proclaim gospel. Art totally divested of realism, like Abstract Expressionism, becomes meaningless. Art must proclaim creation, fall, and redemption. I would like the poetic nuances in my work to stimulate the imagination to "see" in the abstract painting the spiritual truths that cannot be painted realistically.

In this piece there are suggestions of blood on doorways, symbolizing a Passover fulfilled, as Christ pushes open the door separating God and man. Christ, "flattened as fire between walls," is the rich man who "stitches the human breach," writes my friend Suzanne Clark. Suzanne is a published poet who teaches English at King College in Bristol, Tennessee.

#### ADVENT

Through the needle's eye  
the rich man came  
squeezing through stars  
of razor light  
that pared his body down to thread.  
Gravity crushed his heart's chime  
and his breath that breathed out worlds  
now flattened as fire between walls.  
The impossible slit stripped him  
admitting him  
to stitch the human breach.

The original painting "Weep for the Wiping of Grace" was used for the cover of the October 26/98 issue of Christianity Today. One of my "Prodigal Series" paintings, it was inspired by the words from my pastor's sermon,

"Instead of skin pleasure, heart pleasure  
Weep for the wiping of Grace,  
inside-out."

(I wrote these words, barely visible, across the bottom of the painting.)

This reproduction is a computer color print on acid free paper. Each piece



is hand-worked with gold oil-pastel to emphasize the grace of the prodigal's father and God's grace descending from the heavens above.

The words "major entrance," visible in the sky, are part of the architectural blueprint that underlays the original piece. The use of the blueprint recalls the Scripture, "We long for a city whose architect and builder is God." Grace descends from heaven and the entrance to the Father's house to intersect the prodigal figure's back. It forms a cross with the earth. The fence posts suggest the three crosses of Golgotha, and the body of the prodigal suggests the buried seed, Christ, who descended into the darkness of the earth. The earth itself points to the heavenly entrance. A Keiferian landscape emphasizes man's universal longing for God and eternity. (Ecclesiastes 3).

The paintings related to this print represent my research activities from 1997-99. They are an ongoing series of media explorations combining layered collage of various papers, low relief, impasto, gold leaf, graphite, acrylics, wax, and varnishes. They focus on changing the conceptual and spacial context of recognizable figurative forms. They are often appropriated images from art history past and present and depict biblical themes and imagery. I often place my figures on non-objective grounds or manipulate them in other ways.

I am concerned with the dichotomy between abstraction and reality, form and content, and representation and non-representation. I have also concentrated on forming a vocabulary of abstract symbolic shapes presented within various iconic formats. Therefore often they suggest altar pieces that have religious importance.

To reclaim the "holism of metaphor and intellect, spirit and flesh," I believe the Christian artist must find direction and truth in the richness of the Holy Scriptures. My work comes out of meditating on his word. Christ is both God and man, Spirit and flesh, as well as Word and image. He resolves the many dichotomies of artistic imaginative work. Through Christ I attempt to join the tangible world and the spiritual world apprehended through the eyes of faith. Instead of re-painting Neo-Platonic classical Renaissance "religious" art, I want to show His sovereign power and glory in a new abstracted way and paint the spiritual world using both non-objective abstraction and objective realism.

\* I have a very limited edition of 70 prints of this piece.

Postmodernism:  
(some random writings)

In 1970, a group of radical historians and other art professionals, and critics formed a New Art Association, in opposition to the College Art Association. Their newsletter declared: "We are against the myth of the neutrality of art ... we believe there is a firm tie between the artistic imagination and the social imagination. We object to the study of art as an activity separated from other human concerns ... We are against the reduction of art to an object of speculation and an ornament for exploiters ... We are against the fragmentation of knowledge which suppresses the real implication of our cultural heritage by providing an ideology which upholds the racist, patriarchal, and class structure of society." (What they mean by the patriarchal structure of society is the biblical authority of God the Father.) These "politically correct" ideas (Chairman Mao coined the words "politically correct or incorrect") are the course of action in American universities.

Attacks on conventional art history and criticism intensified as the 70's progressed, especially as feminist art theory developed in scope and power.

Bill Viola continues the ancient search for unity and diversity, "the one and the many." He is trying to determine what holds it all together. Perhaps that is why he draws from such a variety of religious sources. His Tree of Knowledge is a reference to the Bible. God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of good and evil or they would surely die. And since they disobeyed God, death is common to all men, men who now continue to look for knowledge apart from Christ the only Wisdom from God. Mankind sees the diversity of the world around him, but he cannot find the unifying principle.

Zen Buddhism tries to make man just a part of the whole. In its search for unity in a diverse world, man's use is only instrumental and utilitarian. He has no intrinsic value. He is part of the universal cycle of life and death.

(Bill Viola, who is one of America's leading video artists, has roots in mysticism, Chinese Taoism, Sufism, and Zen Buddhism. He says his chief

concerns are to draw attention to the upset ecological balance of nature by focusing on the connection between our inner and outer lives, on the conception of the self as part of the whole.")  
(Show Examples here, and explain them)

The Bible teaches that man has intrinsic value. He is important as a person. He is created in the image of God. He can be in relationship to this God and love him, give him glory because this God became "flesh," a person. He "lived among us." And he took upon himself the death penalty which all mankind lives under because of sin. And all nature waits patiently for the redemption of God's people. It too is under curse. And it too is important to God, who is the Creator of the trees of the field. All of life serves a purpose- TO glorify the Creator God, who has revealed himself to man through Christ and His holy Word.

This drive towards a Godless unity results in a circle of ashes. There is no hope of meaning apart from Christ "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things and in Him all things hold together..." Colossians 1:12-29



November 12, 1999

Donnie Copeland  
OBU P.O. Box 4041  
Arkadelphia, AR 71998

Dear Donnie,

I have put together a package of things for you. May they bless you and bring the Lord's guidance to you for your senior thesis.

This will be a short note. Because of your senior thesis subject, you have many questions on that subject. It must interest you. I want to say up front. God created you and gave you natural gifts and when you were born again you received supernatural gifts. Be the person God created you to be which is different from the person He created me to be. I was 57 this year. We are from different generations. However, there are some truths that cross generation lines. Please allow me to just talk a bit.

I never, repeat - never, get caught up in what the world is doing on such things as postmodernism. I do get caught up in what the Holy Spirit is doing and saying as He guides me in my day to day, all day long walk with Him. I don't say hello to Him in the morning and then go off to the studio. This is a commitment on my part. I want His input in every moment, every breath of my life. I asked for it in prayer. May my enthusiasm never lessen forever. When you fellowship with the Holy Spirit and look for Him in your day, you establish a relationship with Him that is not at the mercy of someone's theory.

I am full gospel. Speaking in tongues, having the Holy Spirit speak my future and the paintings and whatever else He has planned for me into existence, is what I consider absolutely essential to fulfilling God's plans for me. God gave us gifts and tools. It is a special tool. Words are seeds. Tongues sows God's supernatural seed to grow and bear fruit in your life. Be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Go to a church that sinks its teeth into the Word and living it. We are too close to when Jesus comes back to be lukewarm about God.

I am blessed that the calling on my life is to paint for Him and let Him pour through me a river of living water to bless other people. That however, is not the primary focus. The big focus is always to abide on the vine and let *Him* pour through you. If I focus on what He does through me instead of Him, then I can get off track and full of pride (lacking humility). God has chastened me - I am not to worship the things my hands have made. He and He alone is to be the treasure of my heart.

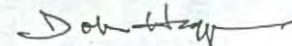
Kenneth Copeland said, "Do what God tells you to do."

Oral Roberts said, "Base your life on three things and you will have success. 1. Find the will of God. 2. Once you find out God's will, don't confer with man. 3. Get it done at any cost.

Find out God's will for your own life. Abide on the vine. Go for the whole loaf of bread called Jesus. Don't take just a few slices off the end called praise and worship and think you have all of Jesus. There is more and God will bless the man or woman who sells out to Him and wants all He has for them. The cry of the heart should be - all of thee and none of me - thy will and not my will.

Postmodernism was not on that list. Enough said.

May God bless you every day, every moment, every breath of your life,



Dora Hagge

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