

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**A Standardized Approach to Analyzing Multi-cultural
Presentations of Christian Worship**

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Faculty of the School of Music
In Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Worship Studies - Ethnomusicology

by

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DOCTOR OF WORSHIP STUDIES or DOCTOR OF MUSIC EDUCATION THESIS
DEFENSE DECISION

The committee has rendered the following decision concerning the defense for

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as submitted on:

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- a. Full approval to proceed with no revisions. The document should be prepared for submission to the Jerry Falwell Library.
- b. Provisional approval pending cited revisions. The student must resubmit the project with cited revisions according to the established timeline.
- c. Redirection of project. The student is being redirected to take MUSC/WRSP 889 again, as minor revisions will not meet the expectations for the research project.

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ABSTRACT

With the growth of the internet, worship pastors can share fine art presentations of the gospel message from cultures worldwide. Since all cultures belong in the kingdom of God, pastors may struggle to validate fine arts performances according to scriptural standards. One of the concerns is the range of interpretations that come from a lack of formal analysis in the literature. Some critics write about fine arts performances based on their own experience and opinion. This may indicate a gap in literature where there is no uniform standard for evaluating those works. Rather than take time to research presentations, a worship pastor may accept the opinion of a person who is not trained to make artistic or scriptural judgments. This lack of a coherent standard may lead to interpretations that allow syncretism to flourish or a misunderstood biblical message. This research shows that the Bible is the authority over artistic presentations and that a person can use a systematic approach to validate these presentations. Individuals in the fine arts field will argue that all work is created as a matter of personal aesthetics. While this may be true in the secular world, a worship leader must maintain a proper discipline of biblical authority. In this study, an ethnographic, qualitative/correlational method will be used to demonstrate the need for a uniform approach to describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating works of Christian fine arts.

Keywords: formal analysis, scriptural judgments, four-step critique method

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Chapter One: Introduction

Until a half-century ago, the gospel hymnbook was the primary source of musical presentations in most Protestant church services and is still considered the musical mainstay of worshiping cultures worldwide.¹ For centuries, the hymnal served as an educational tool that encouraged the spiritual expression of the gospel message while contributing to the characterization of the early, Western civilization. Although the hymnal is used extensively, contemporary praise music has helped to propel artistic expression in visual arts, dance, drama, and conceptual art. With the advent of modern praise music, television, the internet, and access to ethnic Christian artforms worldwide, the choir director turned worship leader is confronted with fine arts presentations of the gospel message increasingly unique and divergent. While diversity and creativity reflect an eternal God, these fine arts presentations often lack a scriptural road map like the appendix of the hymnal.² Locating a reference tool that can be used to examine different art forms can be a challenge and is the topic of this study.

In the early 20th century, a great awakening was built on gospel music accompanied by revivalist preaching.³ Soon afterward, the technologies of radio and television allowed Christian congregations to listen and view the revivalist preaching of theologians like the Reverends Billy

¹ Robert J. Morgan, *Then Sings My Soul: 150 of the World's Greatest Hymn Stories* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003), xi.

² Stephen A. Marini, "Hymnody and History: Early American Evangelical Hymns as Sacred Music," in *Music in American Religious Experience*, eds. Philip V. Bohlman, Edith L. Blumhofer, and Maria M. Chow (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2006), 124.

³ Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2012), 370.

Graham and Martin Luther King, Jr.⁴ During the 21st century, the relatively narrow focus of preaching and hymn singing has given way to mega-church concert productions and world evangelism that embraces countless forms of spiritual expression from around the world.⁵ The passages of Romans 12 show how God, as the great Creator, encourages everyone in His kingdom to grow in creativity.⁶ The challenge for the worship leader or creative arts minister is to understand that for as long as Scripture has influenced the works of Christian artists, various elements of the worldview have influenced artists of the secular world.⁷

An examination of numerous artworks created during the Italian Renaissance reflects many critical moments in Bible history; however, the setting is often contemporary. The artists creating these works used stories from the Bible to showcase their skill at painting architecture, aerial perspective, or emotional expression.⁸ Centuries of intermingling between the church and politics often resulted in imagery full of secular symbolism.⁹ Nearly 600 years later, authors Page and Gray note that Christian artists from all backgrounds regularly cater to the social and political trends endlessly presented via media outlets - taking this style of worship to a level close to idolatry.¹⁰

⁴ Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 333.

⁵ Vernon M. Whaley, *Exalt His Name: Understanding Music and Worship, vol.2* (Calumet City, IL: Evangelical Training Association, 2019), 58.

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are from the *New International Version* (NIV).

⁷ Fred S. Kleiner, Christin J. Mamiya, and Richard G. Tansey, ed's., *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* (New York, NY: Tomson-Wadsworth, 2001), 534.

⁸ Gene A. Mittler, *Art in Focus* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill/Glencoe, 2006), 355.

⁹ Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 534.

¹⁰ Frank S. Page, and L. Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church* (Birmingham, AL: New Hope Publishing, 2014), 24.

A thread constant throughout history is the reliance on the opinion of experts in each discipline of art or theology.¹¹ While expert criticism may help break down the elements of secular art forms, the educated opinion of a worship leader trained to evaluate a work based on scriptural inerrancy and theology is recommended. This study will show how a worship leader can use a proven method of breaking down a creative arts presentation into components that can be examined based on scriptural integrity and fine arts standards.

Background of Topic

From the abstract expressionism paintings of Kandinsky and Klee to the ululation with singing bowls of the Tibetan people, to the projected scenography and dance of Tetsutashi Tabata, individuals allied with the study of fine arts have been challenged with explaining art presentations to the general population. Often, the arts are closely tied to a definition of aesthetics or the practice of “art for art’s sake.”¹² The secular world latches onto this supposition as if art is solely the artist's byproduct, and it is only an outlet of creativity that is devoid of monetary or social value.¹³ Professor and theologian Jerram Barrs writes: “We admire men and women who come up with new designs, and rightly so. But just think how this activity is only an infinitesimally tiny copy of the inventiveness of the Lord, who delights in making all things new - not just at the beginning of the creation, but every day.”¹⁴ The statements of Paul in

¹¹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 86.

¹² *Ibid.*, 91.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹⁴ Jerram Barrs, *Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 16.

his letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:1-5) teaches that describing creative works as worldly, or under the influence of Satan, robs the people of God of the things that He loves and created.¹⁵

For several millennia, Christian missionaries have entered far-reaching geographic areas intending to share scripture without first understanding the native culture's traditions and spiritual beliefs. The results were often chaotic for both the missionary and the native culture. What has since become an idea described as contextualization, Christians have learned to examine a culture extensively before easing their way into the worshiping community of that culture.¹⁶ Studying the creative arts of each community is a crucial factor in gaining access and acceptance in those communities.¹⁷ In the same way, a missionary would approach a new song or dance from an unfamiliar culture; a worship leader can approach a unique style of fine arts performance or presentation – one that may be shared as a part of a study group or as a method to lead others to worship God.¹⁸

The gap relates to the difference between understanding an art form through personal experience and evaluating an art form based on a standard. Barrs illuminates this standard by pointing out that all people make judgments about simple, everyday things such as their clothes, the food they eat, and the music they listen to. These life experiences add up to a learned

¹⁵ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 17.

¹⁶ A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith: A Holistic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 182-183.

¹⁷ Ron Man, "The Bridge: Worship Between Bible and Culture," in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 17-18.

¹⁸ Dianne B. Collard, "Promoting Arts Awareness and Education in the Church," in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 360.

level of discernment that is unique to each person. More specific activities, such as interacting with our cell phones, require time and special training.¹⁹ Artists have dual motivations: that of creating art for art's sake - not intended for public presentation - and art to display or sell. As Barrs notes, artists who choose to be public are not above judgment. A standard of spiritual discernment is found on the pages of 1 Corinthians 2:14. Paul teaches that man cannot understand the spiritual gifts of God if he has only accepted the wisdom of man and not the Holy Spirit.

The focus of this research topic is to demonstrate that a standard can be put in place to evaluate arts presentations that minimize the viewer's opinions. Since worship music is the primary tool of the worship leader, author Vernon Whaley points out that having a standard in place that reinforces music selection will also serve as the groundwork for a better, all-around worship ministry.²⁰

Theoretical Framework

Research Problem

A core concept influencing this study is that church ministers do not have access to a standard, comprehensive guide for evaluating creative Christian arts presentations. Creative arts ministries may be led by a person who only has a moderate level of theological training.²¹ Their musical training should have provided them with a basic knowledge of the principles behind adjudication that can be synthesized to other art forms.²² Examining research on theology and

¹⁹ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 17.

²⁰ Whaley, *Exalt His Name*, vol. 2, 122.

²¹ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 28.

²² John Griffiths, *Music Adjudication: An Art in Itself* (Saskatchewan, CA: University of Regina Dept. of Music, 2018), <http://www.iteaonline.org/members/pedagogy/pdfs/griffiths1.pdf>. 1-2.

the arts should provide the elements necessary to discern art forms from around the world and create discipleship opportunities through a review of those art forms.

Since the proportion of secular experiences that a worship leader is exposed to greatly outweighs scriptural experiences, secular and consumerist perceptions regarding art will affect its understanding.²³ At the other end of the spectrum is the knowledge that art is self-limiting due to the learning curve connected to understanding artistic diversity. As Barrs writes, a soulful expression of worship is exemplified throughout scripture, though believers have historically scoffed at artistic presentations.²⁴ A common understanding in art criticism is that anything is art if the creator says it is so (art for art's sake). Any form of fine art that has been created for use in a worship service should be held to a higher standard.²⁵

The primary challenge for this study is tied to the creation of the art itself. Are the words of the artist who created the work available for examination? Does the art stand up to a standard acceptable for worship or the worshipping community? The challenges relate to the presentation of the actual art. Since art can take countless forms and be influenced by numerous different cultures and traditions, each presentation must be evaluated on its own merits.²⁶ This study will demonstrate that various art forms can be examined by a standardized process that minimizes the impact of the modality of expression.

²³ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 53.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 54.

²⁶ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 86.

Social Arts Theory

Historically, art forms presented in the West have been viewed through a Western or Eurocentric social science theory. Arts researcher Lucy Abrams-Husso recently published an article that summarizes the works of several art critics and philosophers.²⁷ Her summary describes the characteristics of the social study of the arts. She writes:

“That system frequently referred to as an ‘art world,’ or ‘field’ is the main focus of most art sociologists - identifying and defining this ‘world’ and the relationships that exist within it. This includes not only production and distribution of the actual artistic good, but also the process of how we define ‘the system,’ what aesthetic values are considered, why they are, and how this value is acted upon.”²⁸

Abrams-Husso cites the writing of several art sociologists. Monroe Beardsley is quoted as saying that arts presentations such as literature, music, and dance are “an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with the marked aesthetic character.”²⁹ For this study, this social phenomenon is overlaid with the experience relating to worship and the aesthetic character reflecting the creativity of the Holy Spirit.

Statement of Problem and Purpose

A worship leader trained in music may find themselves at the center of missiological activities that include fine arts presentations. Since these exhibitions often include methods of performance that are unique to each culture yet virtually unknown to the worship leader,

²⁷ Lucy Abrams-Husso, “An Introduction to Sociological Art Theories,” [lucyabrams.net](https://www.lucyabrams.net/news/2018/5/28/an-introduction-to-sociological-art-theory). Accessed on Sept. 29, 2021, <https://www.lucyabrams.net/news/2018/5/28/an-introduction-to-sociological-art-theory>.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Monroe Beardsley, *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism*, as quoted in “An Introduction to Sociological Art Theories,” ed. Lucy Abrams-Husso. [lucyabrams.net](https://www.lucyabrams.net/news/2018/5/28/an-introduction-to-sociological-art-theory). Accessed on Sept. 29, 2021, <https://www.lucyabrams.net/news/2018/5/28/an-introduction-to-sociological-art-theory>.

they may find themselves presenting a work of fine arts that is contrary to the integrity of scripture and Christian ideals. The research problem will demonstrate that a critique method that has been proven to work in visual arts can be adapted to all forms of fine arts presentations regardless of their point of origin.

A worship leader who is busy preparing music, or pastor needing to prepare sermons from week to week, may readily accept a fine arts performance based on the opinion or judgment of someone who is not trained in theology or arts criticism.³⁰ Lack of training can lead to the assumption that a work is appropriate for Sunday worship when it may be far from it.

The goal is not to hope that the worship community will naively misunderstand the presentation or perform it without substantiation. The goal is for the worship leader or pastor to learn a mechanism to examine the integrity of the production and plan for the appropriate setting for the presentation to occur.

Problem Statement

The problem exemplified in this study is that a worship team does not have a standardized process for evaluating a fine arts performance that includes unfamiliar elements.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this paper is twofold, to provide anyone involved in a creative arts ministry with the information necessary to examine the elements of an artistic presentation; and to establish the Biblical standard for the use of fine arts performances in worship.

³⁰ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 177.

Significance of the Study

Over the last few decades, the role of the music minister has grown from being simply a choir director to a worship leader and now to a worship/creative arts team leader.³¹ Worship is important to God because He is the creator of all things, and we were created to worship Him.³² The worship leader has the honor of leading others to be in the presence of God - mainly through music.³³ At the same time, the accessibility to music, dance, drama, spoken word, and conceptual art from around the world have become available through the internet.³⁴ The quest to become a more diverse and inclusive culture has led to the growth of churches that may include congregants from a myriad of genealogical backgrounds.³⁵ Social networking sites such as Ancestry.com have drawn people to research how their family's history traces across various continents. A recent study by Baylor University concluded that nearly 25% of all churches in America consider themselves multi-racial, or in which no ethnic group maintains over 80% of the congregation.³⁶ While 25% is an encouraging number, a Pew Research study also acknowledges that by the year 2025, the number of Gen Z youth who identify with being part of

³¹ Matt Boswell, "Qualifications of a Worship Leader." in *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. Matt Boswell (Nashville, TN: B&H Publications, 2013), 25.

³² A.W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2009), 95.

³³ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 19.

³⁴ Marius E. Marton, *Worship Music in the 21st Century: Selecting Proper Music for Worship in Regards to Lyrics, Instrumentation, and Rhythm* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2015), 51.

³⁵ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God In Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 17.

³⁶ Terry Goodrich. "Racially Diverse Congregations in the U.S. Have Nearly Tripled in the Past 20 Years, Baylor University Study Finds," Baylor University, (2020): Accessed on February 2, 2022, <https://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=220972>.

traditionally ethnic background will surpass the number of Gen Z who identify with being white.³⁷

Often, individuals seeking to find their genealogical roots are also looking for answers about the culture, religion, and lifestyles.³⁸ In the Christian world, this opens the possibility of discovering a history that may be different from the traditional idea of the American Christian church. Recently, a native American theologian published a translation of the New Testament in which the phrasing has been adapted to a language more familiar to native American culture.³⁹ For centuries, this has been a natural process that seems to add clarity to the filling of the Holy Spirit described in Acts 2-12. In this passage, Luke writes: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?” God has taken one culture of people and expanded their native language skills for them to speak earnestly to other nations.

With the growth of cultural influences comes another challenge to the worship leader - who may be the main person on staff who has any experience in the creative arts.⁴⁰ That challenge pertains to the interpretation and signifying of creative works that come from

³⁷ Kim Parker and Ruth Igielnik, “On the Cusp of Adulthood and Facing an Uncertain Future: What We Know About Gen Z So Far” (2020): Pew Research Center, Accessed on Sept. 14, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2020/05/14/on-the-cusp-of-adulthood-and-facing-an-uncertain-future-what-we-know-about-gen-z-so-far-2/>.

³⁸ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 174-175.

³⁹ Emily McFarlan Miller, “Native Christians: Indigenous Bible Version Is ‘Made by Us, For Us.’” *Christianity Today* (2021): Accessed on February 2, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2021/september/first-nations-version-indigenous-bible-ivp-translation-wild.html>.

⁴⁰ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 53.

diverse cultures.⁴¹ Diversity may be influenced by the interpretation of liturgical elements in one system of faith. The sacred documents *Mediator Dei* and the *Sacrosanctum Consilium* of the Catholic faith⁴² suggest that liturgical elements may have both divine and human beginnings but are also affected by cultural traditions.⁴³ These elements may be conceptual and contextual at the same time - leading to a complicated process of establishing their integrity before God.⁴⁴

Rather than take the time to assess fine arts presentations, worship leaders will regretfully balk at the suggestion that multicultural art should become a part of their worship services.

However, theologian, pastor, and educator John D. Witvliet provides this encouragement:

What a privilege it is to live in a time of artistic renewal and proliferation: a time of artistic expression in a host of genres, styles, registers, and cultures; a time that has not only witnessed the rise of a discipline like ethnomusicology, with all its resources for understanding the interplay of musical forms and cultural contexts, but also the rise of networks of “ethnodoxologists” - those called by God to learn from and encourage faithful artistic expression done in the name of Jesus Christ across the entire span of global cultures.⁴⁵

If the worship leader is going to fill the role of the creative arts minister, then he or she will need to acquire a basic understanding of ethnodoxology.⁴⁶ Therefore, there are questions

⁴¹ Andrew E. Hill, “Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship,” In *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 7.

⁴² The author refers to the Roman Catholic Encyclical, *Mediator Dei*, and the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy*, 231.

⁴³ Bryan D. Spinks, “Liturgical Theology and Criticism - Things of Heaven and Things of the Earth: Some Reflections of Worship, World Christianity, and Culture,” in *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices*, ed. Charles E. Farhadian (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2007), 231.

⁴⁴ David M. Bailey, “Three Obstacles to Overcome.” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 433.

⁴⁵ John D. Witvliet, “Forward.” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), vii.

⁴⁶ Brian Schrag, “Ethnoartistic Cocreation in the Kingdom of God,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 49.

that need to be addressed in understanding all forms of cultural arts expression and evaluating art forms vastly different from local traditions.⁴⁷ The kingdom of God incorporates every physical, emotional, social, and life condition reflected in the people's day-to-day activities in His created world.⁴⁸ The kingdom of God grows mysteriously (Mark 4) and is built on a set of standards that are unlike anything encountered on earth (Mark 10; Luke 6).⁴⁹

Research Questions

The following research questions will be addressed in this study:

Research Question 1: What are the semiotic and scriptural standards that a worship leader can apply to multicultural visual art, music, drama, and conceptual art forms?

Research Question 2: What criteria can be applied to various traditional and ethnic forms of Christian art?

Significance of the Research Questions

Unlike other fine arts disciplines, a worship pastor must ensure that an arts presentation - whether it is music, visual art, drama, or multi-media - was created with the integrity of scripture and discernment at heart.⁵⁰ In the secular world, many art critics begin reviewing work with the understanding that it reflects the artist's personality and personal idea of expression and aesthetics.⁵¹ These art critics have been trained to look for specific elements unique to the

⁴⁷ Spinks, "Liturgical Theology and Criticism," 232.

⁴⁸ Schrag, "Ethnoartistic Cocreation," 50.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Jerram Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 53.

⁵¹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 86.

presentation and driven by a personal sense of aesthetics.⁵² The worship leader or pastor should respect this; however, art presentations that come to the church must align with the audience and the environment.⁵³ Multicultural presentations may be unique to a geographic community, but the study of them is not much different than any other art form. For example, elements of Russian folklore are present in *The Nutcracker* composed by Tchaikovsky and choreographed by Petipa and Ivanov.⁵⁴ These elements tell a story based on the culture of the country; however, the structure of the symphony follows the same precedence as symphonies being written around the world. The composer incorporated a celesta – a French instrument that provides the unique bell piano sounds of the *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* (a link to a performance of this work is provided below).⁵⁵ In the same way, many folk cultures will incorporate unique instruments or vocal styles. The standards for their use may be meticulously written, or completely unwritten.

A ukiyo-e artist in Japan may use a flung ink style or a wood block print – tools that are available in the community in which the artist works. The image seen in figure 1, is a wood block print created by master artist Hokusai. Although the image portrays objects that are symbolic to the Shintō faith, Hokusai was also known to sell the rights to the use of his name for monetary reasons. The key to studying the arts from any culture is to look at the intention of the artist first, and the physical product second. The work may reflect the beauty of world without referencing a system of faith.

⁵² Ibid., *Art in Focus*, 88.

⁵³ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 37.

⁵⁴ Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky, 1840-1893. “*The Nutcracker: Complete Ballet in Full Score.*” Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 2004.

⁵⁵ Ibid., <https://www.free-stock-music.com/tchaikovsky-dance-of-the-sugar-plum-fairy.html>.



Fig. 1, Katsushika Hokusai, “Goten-Yama Hill, Shinegawa on the Tokaido”, Library of Congress, accessed on April 6, 2022, Rawpixel, CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>.

Worship leaders and theologians recommend reading, reciting, and singing the Psalms as a way in which a disciple can prepare themselves to understand art in the kingdom of God.⁵⁶ Even though Psalms have played an essential part in the writing of Protestant hymns, songwriters occasionally preferred the music of the secular world. This process fails to demonstrate the proper respect for the aesthetic elements and imagery evident in the Bible.⁵⁷ The worship pastor or ministry team that oversees examining forms of worship that may come from local artists or a

⁵⁶ David Taylor, “Psalms: A Biblical Model of Art,” Fuller Studio, (2021): <https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/psalms-a-biblical-model-of-art/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

global culture cannot give a knowledgeable explanation of a new work of art without first understanding the thoughts of the artist who created the work and how they fit into the overall scheme of worship and scripture.⁵⁸ The artist's work will also reflect the community in which they were trained or grew up in.

The second research question relates to the idea that a standard must exist in which the opinion, background, or emotional state of the person describing the work is minimized.⁵⁹ In the passages of John 10:11-14, there is the reference to Jesus as the Good Shepherd; however, shepherds were often tough, rugged individuals hired to protect the flock at all costs.⁶⁰ Through artistic interpretation, metaphors and allusions are often incorporated to dramatize the Biblical story.⁶¹ The worship leader must have the ability to discern appropriateness while still allowing for a personal form of expression.⁶²

This association between metaphor, scripture, and presentation is subject to contextualization.⁶³ While it may seem overwhelming, a creative arts ministry team may quickly acquire the necessary skills to discern works appropriate for their worship community by examining current research. Drama and pageantry are good examples of fine arts

⁵⁸ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 154.

⁵⁹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 90.

⁶⁰ Taylor, "Psalms"

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 116-117.

⁶³ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 2.

performances that are not visible in the Bible yet serve as another form of spiritual expression of the Word.⁶⁴

Hypotheses

A precedence has been set in art history founded on centuries of fine arts created to honor and worship God.⁶⁵ Many of those works also aimed to edify people who had very little access to written material or music.⁶⁶ During the 21st century billions of people have access to internet technology via their cell phones or computer.⁶⁷ Dr. Vernon Whaley provides an overview of contemporary worship by noting that production values available through the computer mean that high-quality presentations of music, drama, dance, visual, and conceptual art are immediately accessible.⁶⁸ It may seem that these presentations are the product of a team of individuals at a large production facility, though the same level of production value can be achieved by one person. The 21st century has ushered in a new phenomenon referred to as “theology for digital-media technology,” that Dr. Whaley also notes contributed to the formation of the mega-church, mega-influential recording labels.⁶⁹

People understand the checks and balances that go into producing a book or television show; however, a similar process may not be evident in performances seen on the internet –

⁶⁴ Emily Brink. “The Significance of Beauty and Excellence in Biblical Worship,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 11.

⁶⁵ Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, 691.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 690.

⁶⁷ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 158.

⁶⁸ *Making Space for Millennials: A Blueprint for Your Culture, Ministry, Leadership and Facilities*, (Barna Group, 2014), 25.

⁶⁹ Whaley, *Exalt His Name*, vol.2, 81.

especially social media outlets such as YouTube, TikTok, or Facebook.⁷⁰ The core concepts of this study highlight the necessity for a ministry team to correctly identify works that reflect scripture and are appropriate to incorporate into church programs.⁷¹ The ministry team must be prepared to disciple their faith community - especially youth - in correctly identifying any creative work for integrity and influence.⁷² The environment in which the artist and worship leader was raised is also essential in pursuing creative works that are appropriate both inside and outside the church community and often reflect the values instilled during those formative years.⁷³

Worship leaders are faced with opinions that cover a range of emotions or expressions; however, little of that is based on factual observations.⁷⁴ There are thousands of books about the Bible, but only one Bible. Hebrews 4:12 states that the Word of God pierces the imagination and the soul and guides our intentions. This study will provide tools for narrowing down the process based on scripture. The lessons of Paul in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 8:21) reinforce the idea that the creation and sharing of any art form created by Christian artists need to be honorable both to God and man.

The four-step critique method provides a clear pathway to a better understanding of Christian art forms. The four steps are description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 117.

⁷¹ Bruce Benedict, "The Worship Leader and Liturgy," in *Doxology and Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. Matt Boswell (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2013), 122.

⁷² Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 254.

⁷³ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 56.

⁷⁴ Whaley, *Exalt His Name*, vol.2, 122.

⁷⁵ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 86.

Minimizing an individual opinion is a crucial factor in understanding this process. Another advantage of this process is that it begins with generic information and becomes more specific and informative with a deeper investigation.⁷⁶ This method focuses on objective analysis rather than subjective.⁷⁷ Objectivity is also the primary way to ensure contextualization in the expressive forms of ethnodoxology. Subjectivity comes naturally and plays a big part when looking at the intentions of the artist. Being objective requires investigation and factual conclusions.⁷⁸

Working Hypotheses

The following hypotheses may be discovered via the research conducted in this study:

Hypothesis 1:

A worship leader can apply semiotic and scriptural standards to multicultural visual art, music, drama, and conceptual art forms, including expression, creation, and performance.

Hypothesis 2:

Criteria that can be applied to various traditional and ethnic forms of Christian art include description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 100.

⁷⁸ Robin P. Harris, "Dealing Effectively with Opponents of the Field." in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 367.

Definition of Terms

Abstract - Artworks that stress the importance of the elements and principles of design rather than subject matter.⁷⁹

Aesthetics qualities - The qualities that can increase our understanding of artworks and serve as the criteria based on judgments.⁸⁰

Art - Something created with beautiful imagination and skill or expresses important ideas or feelings.⁸¹

Conceptual Art - An art form in which the artist intends to convey a concept rather than create an art object.⁸²

Critique - To examine critically.⁸³

Edification - To instruct and improve, especially in moral and religious knowledge.⁸⁴

Ethnodoxology - The interdisciplinary study of how Christians in every culture engage with God and the world through their artistic expressions.⁸⁵

Expressionism is a twentieth-century art movement in which artists tried to communicate their strong emotions through artwork.⁸⁶

⁷⁹ “Abstract,” *Art in Focus*, 599.

⁸⁰ “Aesthetic qualities,” *Art in Focus*, 599.

⁸¹ “Art,” Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster*, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/art>.

⁸² “Conceptual Art,” *Merriam-Webster*, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conceptual%20art>.

⁸³ “Critique,” *Merriam-Webster*, Merriam-Webster, accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conceptual%20art>.

⁸⁴ “Edification,” *Merriam-Webster*. Merriam-Webster, accessed September 29, 2021. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/edify#:~:text=transitive%20verb,a%20%3A%20build>.

⁸⁵ “Ethnodoxology,” Global Ethnodoxology Network, 2019, <https://www.worldofworship.org/what-is-ethnodoxology/>.

⁸⁶ “Expressionism,” *Art in Focus*, (New York, NY: McGraw Hill/Glencoe, 2006), 601.

Fine Arts - Art primarily created for beauty or spiritual significance rather than physical utility. Painting, sculpture, dance, and music are fine arts.⁸⁷

Four-step Critique Method - A method used by art critics to identify qualities of art involving four operations: description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation.⁸⁸

Missiological - The science of the cross-cultural communication of the Christian faith.⁸⁹

Multicultural – A reference to several different cultural communities within a society.⁹⁰

Semiotics – The study and interpretation of signs and symbols.⁹¹

Spiritual discernment - The ability to assess the moral and spiritual status of individuals, groups, and even movements.⁹²

Syncretism - The attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties, as in philosophy or religion.⁹³

⁸⁷ “Fine Arts,” Dictionary.com, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/fine--arts>.

⁸⁸ “Four-Step Critique Method,” *Art in Focus*. (New York, NY: McGraw Hill/Glencoe, 2006), 91.

⁸⁹ “Missiological,” gotquestions.org., <https://www.gotquestions.org/missiology.html>.

⁹⁰ “Multicultural,” accessed April 6, 2022. Marla Morris, “Multicultural Curriculum Concepts.” *Counterpoints* 498 (2016): 295–337. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45157324>.

⁹¹ “Semiotics,” Dictionary.com., accessed on April 6, 2022.

⁹² “Spiritual discernment,” Sinclair Ferguson, “What is Spiritual Discernment?” (2020): <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/discernment-thinking-gods-thoughts>.

⁹³ “Syncretism,” Dictionary.com., accessed September 29, 2021, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/syncretism>.

Chapter One Summary

The purpose of this study will be to identify critical factors that influence the creation and performance of fine arts presentations, how they are utilized by the worshiping community, and tools that are available to analyze representations per scripture. Since fine arts in the Western world have historically been driven by a Eurocentric approach, pastoral staff in the 21st century will have to adapt to Christian art forms that may reflect Afrocentric, Asiatic, or any other ethnographic influences. A process of contextualizing presentations is vital to any worship ministry that believes that assimilating fine arts performances is about honoring God through worship rather than sharing a vehicle of entertainment. Since each fine arts discipline has unique properties utilized in adjudicating creative works, this study attempts to fill the void between disciplines - especially ethnodoxology. This process of contextualization will contain the critique elements of description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation. Each stage has a dual identity - as a mechanism for understanding the art form and the scriptural foundation.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Several issues come into play when establishing a starting point for evaluating fine arts presentations. History has shown that the intermingling of the arts and religion was often the result of a mutual need for each other. Church leaders sought out the most gifted artists to embellish their church buildings - though the reasons were as much about obtaining beautiful presentations as it was about honoring God.⁹⁴ Conversely, the same skilled artists would seek out the greatest commissions to garner a name for themselves and prove that they were the best at their craft.⁹⁵ It is believed that Michelangelo painted the face of his patron, Pope Julius II, on six different biblical figures on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome (fig. 2).⁹⁶



Fig. 2. Michelangelo Buonarroti, "The Prophet Zechariah," *The Sistine Chapel*, (Vatican City, 1508-12), pigment on plaster, accessed on March 17, 2022, <https://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/cappella-sistina/volta/sibille-e-profeti/profeta-zaccaria>.

⁹⁴ Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 534.

⁹⁵ Ross King, *Brunelleschi's Dome: How a Renaissance Genius Reinvented Architecture*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA, 2000), 6-7.

⁹⁶ Kleiner, Mamiya and Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 534.

The Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci is still considered one of the greatest masters of religious paintings; however, his works were often a reflection of an experimental painting process. While creating the famed “Last Supper,” da Vinci attempted to paint a fresco-type mural with new material.⁹⁷ Thinking he would revolutionize the art of decorating churches, his scientific painting method soon left the image peeling from the surface in which it was painted. In typical da Vinci fashion, he disavowed the project and left the monks of Santa Maria delle Grazie with a masterwork that was not masterful.

The relationship between the professional artist and their subject is often a matter of earning an income while demonstrating an appropriate level of respect for a Biblical subject. While *The Last Supper* provides a background glimpse of a work that was part of a failed experiment, it also clearly demonstrates da Vinci’s intense study of humanity. The artist would spend hours studying facial features and gestures in the plazas of Milan; however, it is believed that he left the benevolent face of Jesus unfinished because he thought no one could correctly portray the perfection of the face of the Savior.⁹⁸

During the age of the Reformation, groups of people referred to as *iconoclasts* demanded the removal - and often destruction - of religious paintings and artifacts from local churches. Author Karin Maag suggests that this process was as much about dismantling the Catholic tradition of worshipping saints as building up Protestant theology.⁹⁹ Amid this controversy stood the reality that the paintings and sculptures conveyed symbolic Biblical messages to a largely

⁹⁷ Ross King, *Leonardo and the Last Supper*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA, 2013), 101.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁹⁹ Karin Maag, *Lifting Hearts to the Lord: Worship with John Calvin in Sixteenth-Century Geneva*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2016), 29.

illiterate congregation.¹⁰⁰ Regardless of the religious implications of the works commissioned by the early Church, two of the main issues that often are left in question are the idea of aesthetics and the timing or timelessness of artistic presentations.

Aesthetics

The Oxford Dictionary provides two definitions of aesthetics. The first suggests that aesthetics is a set of principles that guides the “nature and appreciation of beauty.” In contrast, the second indicates that aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that deals with beauty and artistic taste.¹⁰¹ Author Jerrold Levinson suggests that a philosophical reflection of the aesthetics of music may include the structure and arrangement of the actual music. At the same time, other people may believe that the aesthetic comes from the composer's attitude, emotional state, or worldview.¹⁰²

The term “beauty” appears to be the keyword, whether it’s via principle or philosophy. Establishing a standard for beauty is difficult since the definition of beauty can change from one person to another. In terms of aesthetics, something beautiful may not be attractive - in the sense that a ballet, a concerto, or a landscape painting is beautiful. C.S. Lewis writes that beauty exists in the world as a product of God’s limitless creativity. In this example, the author suggests that every individual has a connection to things deemed to have beauty: “We do not want merely to see beauty, though, God knows, even that is bounty enough. We want something else

¹⁰⁰ Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, 530.

¹⁰¹ Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries “Aesthetics,” retrieved on Jan. 17th, 2022, https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/aesthetic_1,

¹⁰² Jerrold Levinson, *Aesthetics of Music*, 1998, doi:10.4324/9780415249126-M030-1. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Taylor and Francis, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/music-aesthetics-of/v-1>.

which can hardly be put into words - to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it.”¹⁰³ The artists and composers who dedicate their lives to creating beautiful works of Christian worship reflect both their love of arts with their love of God.

Another challenge of aesthetics is the abstract or emotional qualities that are a part of art and expressionism. Works of dance and drama include a level of emotion that the viewer can relate to - while others may see it as confusing. Author Stephen Davies suggests that if a musical performance is labeled as “sad,” it is because there is sadness in the piece itself - not because it makes the listener feel sad.¹⁰⁴ The challenge of observing works of art based on how they are created rather than how they are perceived is fundamental to understanding this process. Suppose everyone has a different standard of aesthetics. In that case, to move forward with a proper analysis of fine arts presentations will require a practiced method of investigating the context in which the art was created.¹⁰⁵ The logical conclusion would be to lean on the advice of experts from each field. Though author Tim Sharp points out, artists from within the same discipline may not be able to see eye to eye on anything outside of their unique domain.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses* (San Francisco: CA. Harper-SanFrancisco, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ Stephen Davies, *Artistic Expression*, (2021): doi:10.4324/9780415249126-M020-2. Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Taylor and Francis, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/artistic-expression/v-2>.

¹⁰⁵ Alan P. Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 77.

¹⁰⁶ Tim Sharp, *Collaboration in the Ensemble Arts: Working and Playing Well with Others* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 2014), 2.

Aesthetics as a Moving Target

A Eurocentric approach to aesthetics would recognize that once the artist has declared a work to be finished, it is finished for all time. Students of fine arts programs might recall their mentor encouraging them to complete work, only to begin anew. This is not the case, however, with many world cultures. Those cultures include heritage music that changes with each successive generation or set of circumstances.¹⁰⁷ In this way, the aesthetic of the performance may be related to the efficacy of leading the participant to a completely different state of being or enlightenment.¹⁰⁸ Mark Charles explains that the “Laughing Party” held after the birth of a Navajo child may contain words of scripture that are sung with traditional Navajo words and intonation. These are not predetermined; instead, they directly reflect an outpouring of the heart in the presence of the Creator.¹⁰⁹ For this reason, certain cultures discourage using the word “traditional” because the music or dance they create is intended to represent the needs or emotions at that moment in time.¹¹⁰

For a worship leader, aesthetics is closely linked to a philosophy connected to the creation of beautiful works in response to the gifts of God. Vernon Whaley writes that God called upon Bezalel (Exodus 35) and filled him with skill and workmanship in every type of

¹⁰⁷ Christopher A. Scales, “Tribal Musics.” in *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*, ed. Jeff Todd Titon (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017), 40.

¹⁰⁸ Steven M. Friedson, *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁹ Mark Charles, “A Laughing Party and Contextualized Worship,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 266.

¹¹⁰ Scales, “Tribal Musics,” 35.

craft.¹¹¹ The infilling of this knowledge wasn't only to create aesthetically pleasing works to honor God but to teach others to create the same. Whaley notes that God called Bezalel into action because of the skill and talent that He had gifted him with.¹¹²

Timing and Timelessness of Aesthetics

Another factor in understanding the aesthetic presentation of fine arts is the timing or the timelessness. Cooley notes that like many other nations that have emerged during the last two centuries, much of Europe evolved as groups of fiefdoms loyal to certain city-states or kingdoms.¹¹³ As these groups migrated from one geographic region to another, their expressions of music, dance, drama, and art began to weave together and evolve into new forms. In the field of visual arts, artists like Marc Chagall brought a mixture of religion, European tradition, and expressionism to the U.S., where their artworks vastly influenced contemporary art in general. Hungarian ethnomusicologist and composer Bela Bartok escaped Nazi-occupied Hungary to bring his knowledge of world folk music to the shores of America.¹¹⁴

The emigration resulting from a cataclysmic world war significantly increased the variety and understanding of contemporary and ancient art forms. The growing influence of the internet and the ability of artists to share their work across the globe reflects a process like the migration

¹¹¹ Vernon Whaley, *Exalt His Name: Understanding Music and Worship, Book 2* (Calumet City, IL: Evangelical Training Association), 2018. 16.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Timothy J. Cooley, "Europe/Central and Southeastern Regions," in *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*, ed. Jeff Todd Titon (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017), 244.

¹¹⁴ Greg Cahill, "How Bela Bartok Redefined Classical Music," [stringsmagazine.com](https://stringsmagazine.com/how-bela-bartok-redefined-classical-music/).
<https://stringsmagazine.com/how-bela-bartok-redefined-classical-music/>.

of ethnic groups throughout history. The impact has led to an increased mingling of global art forms and a growing need to ensure the cultural heritage of all forms of art.¹¹⁵ In recent years, the philosophy of phenomenology has evolved to reflect the artist's experience through cultural immersion. As Bakan suggests, his time learning and synthesizing Bali's gamelan *beleganjur* is also worthy of study.¹¹⁶

The Four-Step Critique Method - A Process for Evaluating Fine Arts Presentations

The four-step critique method is comprised of basic steps. Art historians have used the four-step critique method of evaluating works of art for decades. While the focus has been primarily visual arts, every fine arts discipline has a similar mechanism for analyzing new and old presentations in their field. Jerram Barrs explains that no matter the level of expertise, the source, or the complexity of works of art, even the most well-researched person will misunderstand or misinterpret creative works.¹¹⁷ The misunderstanding of artworks, art forms that are abstract, expressionistic, or spiritual justifies a process in which fine arts presentations should be evaluated.

There are four basic steps in this method. Each offers a level of information essential to understanding fine arts presentations. When applied in the sense of a Biblical presentation, the identification has a two-fold meaning. As suggested by Mittler, the first step, simply labeled the description, provides essential information such as the artist or composer's name, the title of the

¹¹⁵ Bruno Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-Three Discussions* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 482-483.

¹¹⁶ Michael B. Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation: Experiences in the World of Balinese Gamelan Beleganjur* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 330.

¹¹⁷ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 15.

work, the medium, and possibly the date.¹¹⁸ This is essential to create proper references or copyrights. The second step delves deeply into the structure of the work itself. In visual arts, it may be the artist's colors or images. In music, it may be the structure of the musical performance, such as the timing or tunefulness. Rasmussen points out that the Takht string ensembles of Egypt play the same melody; however, the individual artist may include octave leaps or tremolo.¹¹⁹ These slight variations add to the work's overall impact while giving the artist individualized expression.

The third and fourth steps are interpretation and evaluation. Depending on how thoroughly the presentation has been analyzed, these steps may be the most important and challenging to attempt. Interpretation is the step in which meaning behind the elements is determined.¹²⁰ A musician may include an augmented chord as a structural transition in a piece of music to create tension or instability. The work may be as simple as an impromptu poem or complex as a ritual dance. The history of the piece or the artist's intentions may need to be illuminated, and the symbolism of the performance explained. The last step - evaluation - may be easier because it relates to the importance or significance of the presentation or the artist's reputation. For the worship leader and theologian, establishing the Biblical significance of the work may or may not include cues from the person or culture that created the work.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 87.

¹¹⁹ Anne K. Rasmussen, "The Arab World." in *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's People*, ed. Jeff Todd Titon (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017), 500.

¹²⁰ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 90.

¹²¹ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 27.

The Scriptural Standards for Fine Arts

Introduction

The Christian church has a history of rejecting or criticizing things they do not understand or contradict church doctrine. Historically, Christian missionaries accepted music, dance, or drama presentations without realizing the works were a syncretic mishmash of biblical and cultural traditions – or that they reflected a poor representation of the Gospel.¹²² The work of David Peterson theorizes that many cultures, both new and old, often attempted to copy the example of the Israelites in Exodus 32 - 34, in which they created the golden calf as a way of controlling their access to God.¹²³ A struggle that consistently occurs within emerging Christian world cultures is the idea that traditional pagan practices can be incorporated into Christian liturgies – without discerning the difference. Peterson continues by pointing out Paul's defense of the Gospel in the courts of Areopagus in Acts 17. The ambivalence of worshiping many gods, including an “unknown god,” coupled with a false sense of security in man-made objects, points to the erroneous belief that God exists in man's world instead of the opposite.¹²⁴ Paul's arguments against polytheism and idolatry are as relevant today as in the first century.

The rebellion against practices of the Catholic church that ultimately led to the beginning of the Reformation was stoked by the increasing power and presence of overzealous worship of

¹²² James R. Krabill, “What Happens to Music When Cultures Meet: Six Stages of Music Development in African Churches,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 147.

¹²³ David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), 146-147.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

saints – some of which never actually existed.¹²⁵ In the words of Martin Luther: “We must insist that the (second) commandment is broken when our opponents worship and honor images, which they do when they attribute to them what ought to be offered to God alone.”¹²⁶ In the same letter, Luther points out that God predicates the second commandment by reminding the people of Israel that He is the Lord God and that they will have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20). This was not exclusive to the Christian culture. The prophet Muhammad banned the representations of humans in Muslim artwork - believing that placing humans in artwork is a form of idolatry and rivaled the worship of Allah.¹²⁷

The invention of the printing press, a renewed interest in the philosophies of Greek humanism, and the Reformation were the platforms in which the Renaissance was established.¹²⁸ Major decorative works were still being commissioned for the church – often paid for by local guilds. The masters of the age created biblical images; however, the new technologies associated with painting with oil pigments on canvas meant that works could easily be painted and transported to a buyer's home or hung on the wall of a church.¹²⁹ The competition this created, enhanced with increased diversity in subject matter, gave artists greater freedom in subject and style.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Maag, *Worship with Calvin*, 29 – 30.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁷ David J. Roxburch, “Concepts of the Portrait in the Islamic Lands, c. 1300-1600,” *Studies in the History of Art* (2009): 119, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42622719>.

¹²⁸ Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 586.

¹²⁹ King, *Leonardo and the Last Supper*, 104.

¹³⁰ Frank S. Page, L. Lavon Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 157.

During the counter-Reformation, the church reasserted itself as the prominent social, political, and spiritual source in the world. Many patrons requested paintings that represented scenes from the Bible. Even so, artists continued creating works that reflected their passions and were encouraged by a marketplace that had a growing interest in decorative work.¹³¹ Fast-forward through the centuries, and the need for works representing the Christian faith ranged from strict adherence to scripture to works that reflect the artist's personal sense of expression. Audiences began to appreciate artistic presentations that broke free from institutional influences. Artists such as Georges Rouault and Arthur Sullivan discovered techniques to match Christian themes to current interests and styles. Symbolism became commonplace; however, the audiences often lacked the edification to discern between Christian and non-Christian meanings.

The Arts Reflected in the World

There is a set of unwritten rules in the world of the secular fine artist. The first rule is that each composer, choreographer, or artist begins with an outpouring of creativity they may or may not wish to market. Famed art critic Clement Greenberg once stated that the trash can was the first place he looked in an artist's studio.¹³² According to Greenberg, this is where he would look for the failed experiments and, occasionally, a brilliant mistake. Many performers readily admit that there is work solely for themselves and work made to earn a living. Artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Georgia O'Keefe, and Twila Tharp admitted to facing the fear of being successful as a detriment to their creativity. In the case of Beethoven, being successful provided

¹³¹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 429.

¹³² T. J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," *Critical Inquiry* 9, no. 1 (1982): 139–56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343277>.

an income for his family, but his reputation amongst his peers was key to his creative efforts.¹³³ If success is defined in terms of monetary gain, then the world of professional artists represents a fraction of the arts informally produced in households and villages across the globe.

Countless numbers of artists rigorously ply their trade while seldom dreaming of becoming famous or receiving income from the work they create. According to a study published by the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Endowment for the Arts, industries that feature a component of art and culture contributed approximately \$878 billion to the gross domestic product of the U.S.¹³⁴ This study also reports that in 2017, the U.S. exported over \$30 billion in arts and cultural goods – nearly double that imported. This statistic includes the rapidly growing cultural arts-based publishing and online streaming industry. This industry alone grew by an estimated 29% in 2017.¹³⁵

Like many other places in the world, England has seen a tremendous uptick in the number of individuals and businesses operating from home or different small environments during the health crises beginning in 2020. A similar study conducted in England by the Center for Economics and Business Research reports that the arts industry contributes approximately 856 million pounds sterling to the economy via tourism-related spending.¹³⁶ While the

¹³³ Ruth Anne Rehfeldt, Stephanie Chan, & Brian Katz, “The Beethoven Revolution: A Case Study in Selection by Consequence,” *Perspectives on Behavior Science*, 44(1), 69–86, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40614-020-00271-x>.

¹³⁴ “During Economic Highs and Lows, the Arts are Key Segment of U.S. Economy,” *National Endowment for the Arts* (March, 2020): accessed on Jan. 27, 2022, <https://www.arts.gov/about/news/2020/during-economic-highs-and-lows-arts-are-key-segment-us-economy>.

¹³⁵ “Economic Highs and Lows,” *National Endowment for the Arts*.

¹³⁶ “The Contribution of the Arts and Culture to the National Economy: Report for Arts Council England and the National Museums Directors’ Council,” Centre for Economics and Business Research, Ltd., (May 2013): accessed on Jan. 27, 2022. https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/The_contribution_of_the_arts_and_culture_to_the_national_economy.pdf.

circumstances are unusual in their scale, the byproduct has been a significant increase in the production of folk art, e-media, communications, and entrepreneurship.¹³⁷ As the study notes, the growth in the cultural arts industry provides young artists with a sounding board in which they can model their work after more experienced professionals while discovering a marketable niche for themselves.¹³⁸

The growth of the Christian arts industry has paralleled the expansion of arts in the secular world. Worship music-sharing has led to approximately 2,800 houses of worship streaming music regularly in the U.S alone. A study by the Pew Research Center discovered that 18% of adults who viewed a religious service on television or computer screen did so for the first time in the year 2020. Over 90% of those people stated that they achieved some level of satisfaction.¹³⁹ Although the switch to online services was dramatic during the pandemic, the same study noted that only 2% of respondents believed they would choose online worship services instead of in-person.¹⁴⁰ The sum of these research studies seems to point to the acceptability of streaming and internet content being produced by churches, but that it will not displace in-person worship in the future.

The most significant impact of streaming and internet arts programming may be in the formats people are more familiar with. In the beginning, the focus of the internet was not unlike

¹³⁷ “The Contribution of the Arts and Culture to the National Economy”

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Alan Cooperman, “Will the Coronavirus Permanently Convert In-Person Worshipers to Online Streamers? They Don’t Think So,” accessed on January 28, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/17/will-the-coronavirus-permanently-convert-in-person-worshippers-to-online-streamers-they-dont-think-so/>.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

television. The web began with entertainment and marketing in mind. Educational links and games were added to get children – and parents – back to a particular website. Much of the success of church-based websites are related to their video music and social media foundations.¹⁴¹ Another study cited by Page and Gray notes that approximately 88% of all churches have websites; however, only one-half use their websites for interactive activities.¹⁴² The authors also note that cell phones have nearly exceeded the computer as a source of information and communication. Citing a study by the Pew Research Center, 91% of Americans own cell phones, and young adults average over 3,000 text messages a month. The number of smartphones worldwide can change based on the approach; several studies seem to point to 78% (6.4 billion people) of the world’s population having a cell phone.¹⁴³

For the ethnodoxologist, technology can be viewed as an avenue for crossing social, political, and religious borders.¹⁴⁴ Importantly, worship teams based in Europe or North America must also recognize that the growth of Christianity is more significant in South America, Africa, and Asia. As Farhadian notes in his study of specific Christian cultures: “In the early church, healing, prophetic utterance, visionary experience, exorcism, speaking in tongues, body movement, and lengthy worship services defined the religious experience, and these practices have been present throughout church history. These same practices now have new

¹⁴¹ Cooperman, “Will the Coronavirus Permanently Convert In-Person Worshippers.”

¹⁴² Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 160.

¹⁴³ S. O’Dea, “Global Smartphone Penetration Rate as Share of Population From 2016 to 2020,” *Pew Research Center*, accessed on January 28, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/203734/global-smartphone-penetration-per-capita-since-2005/>.

¹⁴⁴ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 158.

resonance in the worship practices of non-Western Christians.”¹⁴⁵ In contrast to traditional, Western worship practices, these activities may have been viewed as paganistic or an attempt to include both Biblical principles and ancient traditions. Farhadian suggests that worship in world culture reacts to God’s presence in the world and His actions in the past. He also states that worship in each church is a culmination of local practices influenced by global trends.¹⁴⁶ Page and Gray note that while technology is a supporting tool, it is not neutral. Every program or performance will be infused with local surroundings and cultural elements.¹⁴⁷

Perceptions

Author and ethnodoxologist Andrew Hill emphasizes the need for investigation and analysis when evaluating fine arts worship presentations. Each creative endeavor is meant to reflect the worship of a Holy God. Hill points to God's holiness, immanence, and sovereignty that are characteristic of His uniqueness.¹⁴⁸ In both the Old and New Testaments, worship is used as a verb. In our modern society the term has often become synonymous with a portion of the service which is music-based. Rather than a doorway to a more significant way to love and honor God, the worship process is relegated to a supporting activity.¹⁴⁹ Vernon Whaley observes that serving others is an essential component of the worship arts. Using the example of Philippians 2:25, Whaley notes that Paul extols Timothy because he serves the people and Jesus

¹⁴⁵ Charles E. Farhadian, *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 2.

¹⁴⁶ Farhadian, *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 158.

¹⁴⁸ Andrew E. Hill, “Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship,” 3.

¹⁴⁹ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 55.

Christ, not the people and himself.¹⁵⁰ Building relationships and recognizing that sharing the artistic gifts of God – while remaining open to new, theological ideas – are critical for the active worship artist. Maintaining the attitude that arts are used in the service of God also provides insight into the character of others we encounter in the Christian creative arts.

The modality of artistic presentations varies enormously from one culture to another. The goal of worship remains the same. If artists recognize that they have been gifted a particular talent from God then choose to use that gift for private and public worship, the goal is universally the same. Frank Fortunato draws from the text found in Revelation 7 to demonstrate that God desires to have all the world's people gather before Him in worship. Fortunato writes that for as long as there have been diverse people in the world, they have been preparing themselves to worship in many art forms – including prayer, sacrament, and song.¹⁵¹ As the church grew and spread worldwide, problems were often corrected by returning to scripture. Fortunato reports that Pope Gregory taught his followers to chant Psalms and scriptures to adhere to the Word in the fourth century. These Gregorian chants are one of the earliest forms of structured music.¹⁵² Renaissance artists incorporated visual symbols in paintings and sculptures as a way of helping people to learn concepts that spanned the Bible. In 2 Samuel 6, David teaches that dancing and celebrating in honor of God is worthy. At the same time, another

¹⁵⁰ Whaley, *Exalt His Name*, 136.

¹⁵¹ Frank Fortunato, “How Song Sustained the Church.” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 37.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 38.

person, Michal, only saw it as an opportunity to criticize a person with whom she is in conflict.¹⁵³

A study by Robin P. Harris highlights an important concept that has challenged Christian artists and ethnodoxologists for decades. The author states that music (or any other artform) is not a universal language.¹⁵⁴ Historically, leaders of various churches fail to acknowledge that the arts created within another culture may have the same peculiarities as the arts made in their own communities. These same theologians attempt to examine arts through a western filter – despite being trained in the latest approaches of ethnology. Blacking explains: “Our understanding of man, the music-maker, can be retarded by attempts to classify music according to its sound or the culture of its creators. Terms such as ‘art,’ ‘folk,’ or ‘popular’ can be misleading. Although they may suggest the kinds of experience that the music is intended to convey, they are too often used to refer to the technical complexity that it displays.”¹⁵⁵

Blacking’s study points out that the creation of music begins with the experiences of an individual in society more so than the individual reacting to society.¹⁵⁶ Music educator Rena Upitis echoes this observation by noting that music may also be closely connected to physical

¹⁵³ Gerardo G. Sachs, “David Dances – Michal Scoffs,” *The Jewish Bible Quarterly*, accessed on Jan 30, 2022, https://jbnqnew.jewishbible.org/assets/Uploads/344/344_davmichal1.pdf.

¹⁵⁴ Robin P. Harris, “The Great Misconception: Why Music is Not the Universal Language,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 83.

¹⁵⁵ John Blacking, “The Value of Music in Human Experience,” *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council*, 1 (1969): 34, <https://doi.org/10.2307/767634>.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

objects and other artistic endeavors.¹⁵⁷ The synthesis of music, movement, expression, and symbols are commonly found among world cultures. Looking at the meaning and personal connection people have with music opens the possibility of adding understanding. In the end, each artist becomes more empathetic to other forms of art and opens their mind to learning new ways to create.

Description and Identification

The Secular World

Nearly all formally trained artists honed their skills by observing and copying the works of masters. The works of those masters are so well known that an average person only needs to mention a name – such as Picasso, Bach, Nureyev, or Poe – to conjure up the image of the artist, their work, and their significance. Even in the world of Christian artists, the name Getty, Gaither, or Staples can be used as adjectives describing a genre or style of presentation. Unfortunately, using an artist's name can be limiting because the masters in question also represent a minority of artists. The work may be known more for its notoriety and less for its innovation.

Description is the first part of the four-step critique method.¹⁵⁸ Regardless of the genre of art, the description represents the most utilitarian aspect of identifying a work. The essential components of the formal description of art are the artist's name, the work's title, the medium that it was created in, the date (if known), and the place where the work is currently housed.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Rena B. Uptis, "Music and the Arts: As Ubiquitous and Fundamental as the Air We Breathe," *In Music and Music Education in People's Lives: An Oxford Handbook of Music Education, Vol. 1*, ed. Gary E. McPherson and Graham F. Welch (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), 333.

¹⁵⁸ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 84.

¹⁵⁹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 87.

In music, the name of the artist and the title of the work are noted. If different from the performer, the composer's name is also included. The album's title or collection should include the date and publisher.¹⁶⁰ A noticeable difference between classifying a painting and music performance is that a work of art may be one of a kind. In contrast, a musical composition may be repeated by performers in various settings.

A dance performance is harder to classify because the artist performing the piece may alter it to fit their style or environment. The dance may also be accompanied by music. For this reason, the author or composer's name, the performer, and the choreographer should be identified. The dance company (if there is one), the venue, and the location should be recorded with the date.¹⁶¹ The level of technical skill or the historical context of the performance often means the dancer or musician may be part of a recognized ensemble.¹⁶² Studying dance in world cultures is challenging for a worship leader from the west because dance, or movement, often accompanies ceremonies and celebrations that have existed for centuries. Christopher Scales writes that the "Women's Fancy Shawl Dance" may vary each time performed. The concept is generations-old, yet the performance is modern.¹⁶³ Symbolism and meaning may be at the core of folk performances, yet many cultures embrace singing and movement to build community.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ "Optional Elements Useful for the Citation of Music-Related Materials," Vassar University Library, accessed on Jan 29, 2022: <https://library.vassar.edu/c.php?g=895637&p=6441282#:~:text=Composer%2FPerformer%20Last%20Name%2C%20First,Optional%20access%20date.>

¹⁶¹ "Citing a Performance," California State University, Dominguez Hills, accessed on Jan. 29, 2022: <https://libguides.csudh.edu/dance/performance-citation.>

¹⁶² Ilyana I. Karthas, *When Ballet Became French: Modern Ballet and the Cultural Politics of France, 1909-1958*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt16rpqg0>.

¹⁶³ Scales, "North America/Native America," *Worlds Of Music*, ed. Titon, 57.

¹⁶⁴ Scales, "North America/Native America," *Worlds of Music*, ed. Titon, 55.

A fourth category that is too broad and too varied to summarize succinctly is the area of conceptual art. At the beginning of the twentieth century, artists such as Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky began creating non-objective art.¹⁶⁵ Claude Debussy is often lauded for introducing the world to impressionistic music, though he energetically refuted the term.¹⁶⁶ Art critics were at a loss on how to critique these works, so they grasped a philosophical term - abstract - meaning “withdrawn from material objects or practicality” and married it with the word “expressionism.”¹⁶⁷ The term abstract was also used to describe music without lyrics since the mid-1800s, although symphonic music began a century before.¹⁶⁸

Conceptual art has other unique qualities which make it more difficult to classify. Installation or constructed pieces may include environmental factors or change over time. The artist’s performance, such as interpretive dance or ad hoc poetry, may reflect the artist at that moment in time.¹⁶⁹ For example, musicologist Anne Rasmussen describes spontaneous singing, poetry, and storytelling of the Bedouin tribes of northern Iraq. Although the tale “Sirat Bani Hilal” has been told for centuries, the Rahab poet describes one event after another in music and spoken verse. The performance can last for hours; hence, it is an “epic” song.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁵ Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, 1009.

¹⁶⁶ François Lesure, and Marie Rolf. “Pelléas, “The Long Wait: 1895–98.” In *Claude Debussy: A Critical Biography*, NED-New edition, 140–49, (Boydell & Brewer, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvb4bvz2.16>.

¹⁶⁷ “Abstract,” Online etymology dictionary, Accessed on Jan. 31, 2022, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/abstract>.

¹⁶⁸ Bathia Churgin, “Music of the Classical Era,” *The Musical Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (1982): 228–37, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/742025>. 233.

¹⁶⁹ Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey, ed’s., *Gardner’s Art Through the Ages*, 1078.

¹⁷⁰ Rasmussen, “The Arab World: Poetry and Core Values of Bedouin Culture,” in *Worlds of Music*, 535.

The clear separation between secular and religious fine arts performance in the West is not as well-defined in other parts of the globe. Western museums, music programs, online services, and public television programs tend to categorize music, art, and dance into neat groups so that the audience can tune in to a particular style. The National Gallery of Art has collections that follow periods of art such as Baroque, Realism, and Modern. Other world cultures do not organize performances the same way – the melding of visual, physical, instrumental, and vocalization remains seamless throughout time.¹⁷¹

Another important distinction is the expertise of the person reviewing the work. In Western art, the art critic may not have a specific talent; however, they have honed their skill through education and observation. Much of the fine arts education at the public school level focuses on product or performance – little time is spent understanding art or accessing art from diverse movements or cultures.¹⁷² Depending on the culture, a musician may be honored as a master, while a musician may only be part of a lowly trade in other cultures.¹⁷³ Fortunately, the four-step critique method is designed around the idea that the critic's expertise or opinion or the artist's reputation can be minimized.

¹⁷¹ Jeff Todd Titon, “The Music-Culture as a World of Music,” In *Worlds of Music*, 3.

¹⁷² “Learning Less: Public School Teachers Describe a Narrowing Curriculum. A Report for the Common Core by the Farkas Duffett Research Group,” *Americans for the Arts*, accessed on Jan 28, 2022, <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/cc-learning-less-mar12.pdf>.

¹⁷³ Merriam, *The Anthropology of Music*, 123.

Scripture

In the 21st century, the work of a creative artist is often secondary to the artist's reputation or trendiness. For example, “mukbangers” – individuals streaming videos of themselves eating – have millions of subscribers on social media.¹⁷⁴ A quick review of rising stars in all forms of fine arts presentations discover that many of them have enormous followings on the internet, yet many simply repackage music, fashion, or comedy. While these artists may be considered impersonators in the secular world, in the scriptural world, anyone who shares in the beauty of God’s creation should be encouraged if the focus is on the one true God.

Author Jerram Barrs refers to individuals who believe that after the fall of Adam and the rise of evil in the world, there can be no true beauty in the world until Jesus returns and evil is banished forever.¹⁷⁵ This belief is contrary to the very nature of God’s grace and His pleasure in what He created. Barrs uses the words from Psalm 19 to illustrate that the beauty of God’s creation exists in every corner of the world: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day, they pour forth speech; night after night, they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”¹⁷⁶ This understanding is key to placing works of a Christian artist in the same light as any other artist – secular or religious.

¹⁷⁴ Katie Jackson, “What is ‘Mukbang’? Inside the Viral Korean Food YouTube Trend,” Today.com. Accessed on Feb. 1, 2022, <https://www.today.com/food/what-mukbang-inside-viral-korean-food-phenomenon-t123251>.

¹⁷⁵ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 16.

¹⁷⁶ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 17.

The Christian artist will recognize that all the work they create begins with observing the elements of the world God created. Secondly, they understand that the tools they use – from the paints to the ballet slippers – are elements that first existed in the Kingdom. James Joiner uses the example of Psalms and the way they often remind him of scenes from his youth and passages that spoke to his heart. Psalm 23 became the basis of a study in which the author cited 84 different Psalms that later inspired his performance of music.¹⁷⁷ This is not to say that every artist is simply an impersonator, rather than artists have opened themselves up to the beauty and aesthetics of God’s creation. As Barrs notes: “all creative work is a form of praise and worship: by creating, we declare the glory of God, who made us in His likeness.”¹⁷⁸

Beginning with the earliest stages of written work and expression, artists and theologians have cited the influence of the works that preceded them. Dan Block indicates that many contemporary worship pastors and musicians cite Psalms as the foundational work of human devotion – even to the point of elevating them above the Torah.¹⁷⁹ He argues that David, Asaph, or Moses would be stunned at the idea that their work in Psalms would surpass the writings found in the Pentateuch. Creative results often reflect an epic tale or story meant to teach others the lessons of Scripture. Several points to consider are that an English version of the Bible didn’t exist until 1539 A.D. Paintings existed long before then; however, photographic images could not be reproduced for viewing until 1880. It was in the late 1880s that music was first recorded.

¹⁷⁷ James Richard Joiner, *Forgotten Songs*, 159 – 160.

¹⁷⁸ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 27.

¹⁷⁹ Block, *For the Glory of God*, 6.

Block asserts that two foundational principles affect how we worship: that worship is a response to God as the great Creator; and that we learn how to worship from the words of Scripture.¹⁸⁰

A Study from Christian Copyright Licensing International

The specifics of the description in a critique are not far different from any other reference or citation. The Christian artist who works to honor God also recognizes that credit is due where credit is due. Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) provides an excellent model for acknowledging the works of an artist.¹⁸¹ Although the focus is on music, practicing CCLI standards across all avenues of fine arts will ensure that credit is reasonably given to the original artist. As Bob Kauflin points out, one of the unique features of works by Christian artists is that they readily recognize that their craft is a gift from God, and they willingly share their work and encourage others to utilize it for their audiences.¹⁸² The world health crisis of the 2020s has led to an enormous increase in the streaming of copyrighted songs. The CCLI website notes that the original artist could or should be compensated for broadcasting their music via the internet.¹⁸³

A copyright license such as CCLI or a similar source is a product that all churches should have. Every time that artwork is shared publicly via the internet, it falls in the same category as a program broadcast on network television. Even the pastor's sermon becomes intellectual property whether they write it down or not. The elements found in the typical CCLI description are the song title, the track, album title, the artist's name who initially performed the piece, the

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ "About Christian Copyright Licensing International," CCLI, accessed Feb. 1, 2022, <https://us.ccli.com/about-ccli/>.

¹⁸² Kauflin, *Worship Together*, 114.

¹⁸³ "What is Meant by Copyright?" CCLI, Accessed Feb. 1, 2022, <https://us.ccli.com/about-copyright/>.

record label, the year of the recording, and the format. There is also a CCLI licensing number which is both a code number to the song and a way to register that the music was played in church with proper identification.¹⁸⁴

The CCLI model demonstrates that there is no such thing as overkill when writing the opening description of a work of art. As mentioned previously, the description may seem complicated, but a performance that reflects a portion of scripture may be automatically recognized as a presentation of worship to God. An artist representing themselves or their church will also want to identify themselves as a performer. In the case of the Noon culture of Senegal, Sue Hall-Heimbecker writes about the challenge of encouraging the creation of new works of music created from a multi-faceted source of background material. The music she observed incorporated both traditional and modern genres and drew from the Gospel of Luke derived from lectionary notes of the Catholic church.¹⁸⁵ While new songs were created, they were met with moderate levels of trepidation from the church and congregation. Regardless, the creation of the pieces reflected a list of sources that needed to be identified.

Works Found in the Public Domain

There is also a practical side to a formal description of an art form that speaks directly to the integrity of the Christian artist. Works considered in the public domain and theoretically beyond the need for copyright still need to be accredited. Theologians seldom recall the words of scripture without giving reference to the book, chapter, and verse. Although many

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., “What is Meant by Copyright.”

¹⁸⁵ Sue Hall-Heimbecker, “New Choir Songs – Ones Everyone Can Understand,” ed. Krabill, *Worship and Mission in the Global Church*, 236 – 237.

professional Christian artists readily share their work down to the most significant detail, this does not mean that it can be copied without acknowledgment. A rule of thumb is that any creative work does not become part of the public domain until 70 years after the death of the artist who created it. This timeframe can be extended. Hymns may also have three elements that are copyrighted at different times – the tune, the text, and the arrangement.¹⁸⁶ Christian artists such as Christ Tomlin will occasionally add music to an old hymn. The contemporary song “Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone,”¹⁸⁷ is an example of a song in which only the new parts of the song can be copyrighted – not the original part. In addition, different countries have different guidelines for copyrights. There are significant numbers of art forms that identify as “copyright-free,” however, there are usually constraints.

Bob Kauflin uses the idea of faithfulness as a guide to encourage worship leaders in their use of creative elements. Being faithful means fulfilling the duties as a steward of music, being honest and trustworthy, and meeting the obligations that come with serving God. Kauflin refers to the writing of Paul: “So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).¹⁸⁸ Worship teams readily move forward with music selections that seem a good fit for the pastor’s message. However, every attempt should be made to account for the copyright or licensing process. Identifying the work through the

¹⁸⁶ “How Can I Identify Public Domain Hymns?” the United Methodist Church, Accessed on Feb 12, 2022, <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-how-can-i-identify-public-domain-hymns>.

¹⁸⁷ Chris Tomlin, John Newton, Louie Giglio, “Amazing Grace (My Chains are Gone),” *How Great Is Our God*, (Capitol Christian Music, CCLI song no. 4768151).

¹⁸⁸ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 58.

description phase of a critique is essential.¹⁸⁹ Including the passage of Scripture that the work is based on will lead to edification.

One of the most frequently played songs from the current decade is “Reckless Love,” performed by Cory Asbury. To correctly describe the song, a worship leader would cite the composers – Caleb Culver, Cory Asbury, and Ran Jackson; the performers – Cory Asbury and Bethel Music; the album – *Reckless Love*; the release date of October 27, 2017; and the record label – Bethel Music. If CCLI licensing is used, then the CCLI catalog number would likely be included.¹⁹⁰ The reality is that most church worship leaders do not have the proper training or take the time to cite the works that they copy and perform correctly. Marius Marton comments on the power of music as an evangelical tool – especially for youth. However, not using the tools that God has provided is not much different than talking about the Bible without quoting the Bible.¹⁹¹ Marton continues by noting that Martin Luther rearranged the elements of the Wittenberg Hymnal into four-part harmony to please young people. He adds that Luther desired to draw youth away from “carnal” music and replace it with something of value.¹⁹² The guiding principle of Joshua 24:22 - 24 is a pointed reminder of the integrity of the Christian artist.

¹⁸⁹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 87.

¹⁹⁰ Caleb Culver, Cory Asbury and Ran Jackson, “Reckless Love,” *Reckless Love* (Bethel Music, Oct. 27, 2017).

¹⁹¹ Marton, *Worship Music in the 21st Century*, 21.

¹⁹² Marton, *Worship Music*, 55.

Analysis – Identifying the Elements That Make Up a Creative Work

The Secular World

Two perspectives play an essential role in the analysis phase of the four-step critique method. The first, and possibly the most significant, is the explanation given to work by the artist.¹⁹³ Each fine art category has a group of tools used by the artist creating the works. Although many documents were lost in history, there are still written records explaining the conceptualization and creation of every type of art. The analysis of these art forms speaks to the structure or elements that the artists used in creating the work. In visual arts, the analysis usually looks at the way colors, lines, and shapes are applied, while in music, the patterns, rhythms, melody, harmony, timbre, and dynamics are a few elements that are examined.¹⁹⁴ Dance may include the type of body action, timing, and energy. Conceptual art may include many of these, plus criteria used to judge language. It's not uncommon for an analysis of creative work to focus solely on the building blocks of the work. In other instances, Mittler notes that the principles used to guide building blocks will help clarify the analysis.¹⁹⁵ The representation or symbolism of the building blocks may impact why they are used. However, the interpretation phase of the critique is where this is addressed.

Sharing an example from visual arts, researchers Claus-Christian Carbon and Vera M. Hesslinger use Leonardo da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" as an example of a painting publicly known for the mystique surrounding it, and not necessarily for the technical accomplishments achieved by

¹⁹³ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 89.

¹⁹⁴ Blacking, "The Value of Music," 41 – 42.

¹⁹⁵ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 90.

the artist. The dichotomy between public perception and technological reality is a common problem. Carbon and Hesslinger first note that Giorgio Vasari, a Renaissance biographer, insists that the woman in the portrait is Lisa di Antonio Maria Gherardini, the wife of a wealthy silk merchant from Florence.¹⁹⁶ The title “Mona” simply means “my lady” in Italian. Da Vinci was widely known as the greatest master of Italian painting and charged fees that only wealthy patrons could afford.¹⁹⁷

Recently, another painting thought to have come from the studio of da Vinci titled “La Gioconda” was restored by the staff of the Prado Museum in Spain (fig. 3).¹⁹⁸ The similarities between the two women are striking – however, that topic would be addressed in the evaluation phase of the four-step critique. In terms of analysis, the painstaking renovation of La Gioconda highlights the combination of aerial perspective and *chiaroscuro* that da Vinci used to portray his subjects accurately.¹⁹⁹ The technique, called “sfumato,” is considered one of da Vinci’s contributions to the science of painting. The public is in awe of a rare painting by da Vinci or the mystery surrounding the women’s smile; however, the painting technique is the innovation.

¹⁹⁶ Claus-Christian Carbon, and Vera M. Hesslinger, “Restoring Depth to Leonardo’s Mona Lisa,” *American Scientist*, 103, no. 6 (2015): 404–9, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43707324>.

¹⁹⁷ King, *Leonardo and the Last Supper*, 30.

¹⁹⁸ Carbon and Hesslinger, “Restoring Depth,” 404.

¹⁹⁹ King, *Leonardo and the Last Supper*, 141.

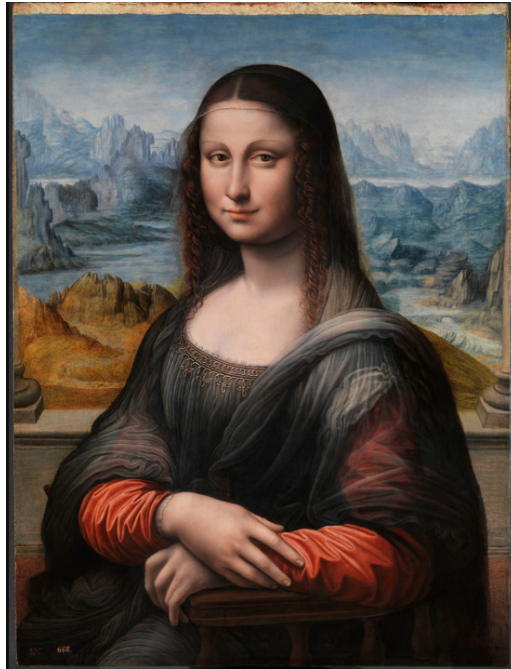


Fig. 3, Workshop of Leonardo da Vinci, “La Gioconda,” (Madrid, ES: The Prado Museum, 1503 – 1516). Oil on panel. Accessed on March 17, 2022. <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/learn/research/studies-and-restorations/resource/study-of-the-prado-museums-copy-of-la-gioconda/504eace0-d54e-49b1-a16b-7afd17f756d3>.

Scripture

In Exodus 31, God tells Moses that He has selected certain artists to help decorate the tent of the Ark of the Covenant. These artisans were filled with the spirit of God, “in the manner of all forms of workmanship.” (Exodus 31:1-5). In the same way, contemporary forms of artistic worship evolve from many different talents. A study of a praise dance from the Macau community of Southeast China, reveals that the dance is like the traditional Chinese Tai Chi. Author Wil LaVeist explains that the dance is made of Chinese traditions, local culture, Asian influences, ballet, and even hip-hop elements.²⁰⁰ Like other forms of expressionism, dance may

²⁰⁰ Wil LaVeist, “Praise Dance: An Exercise in Relationship Building,” ed. Krabill, *Worship and Mission in the Global Church*, 279.

contain elements such as body, action, space, time, and energy.²⁰¹ This type of spiritual expression is an example of a contemporary art form that mixes elements of traditional dance and contemporary worship. Like many other world dance performances, the Macau community encourages worship in the most current sense, not strictly a rote performance.

The slow movement of the body is intended to be meditative, rhythmically moving through a confined space. The praise dance is further enhanced by music composed to honor God.²⁰² Rather than be unique to specific cultures, physical movement is the norm. There are 27 references to dancing in the Old and New Testaments; however, most references describe joyous celebrations. The dance of David in 2 Samuel likely contained elements of the traditional “chagag,” or dance circle that was often used during times of celebration.²⁰³ In Zephaniah, Scripture states: “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17 Scofield). In the Hebrew language, the word “gheel” represents the phrase “joy over.” It describes a type of dance in which the participants spin with great joy and exuberance.²⁰⁴

Analysis of works that fall into the extensive category of conceptual art may rely heavily on the prior knowledge of the reviewer. The example of certain cultures that eschew the term “tradition” or the idea of “movement” as a dance demonstrates that keeping an open mind and

²⁰¹ “Do You Wanna Dance? Understanding the Five Elements of Dance,” *The Kennedy Center*, accessed on Feb. 2, 2022, <https://www.kennedy-center.org/education/resources-for-educators/classroom-resources/media-and-interactives/media/dance/do-you-wanna-dance/>.

²⁰² LaViest, “Praise Dance,” 279.

²⁰³ Sachs, “David Dances – Michal Scoffs,” *The Jewish Bible Quarterly*.

²⁰⁴ Paul James-Griffith, “Dance in the New Testament,” *Christian Heritage Foundation*, Accessed Feb. 2, 2022, <https://www.christianheritageedinburgh.org.uk/2016/08/20/dance-in-the-new-testament/>.

open ears are the best way to identify the structure of specific presentations. Moreau's study of religious performing arts includes the mythological story-dancing of the Balinese, the chanting of Buddhists, and the contemporary Shintō rituals performed during Japanese "noh" plays. The author suggests that a constant interaction between knowledge of local customs and dialogue with participants are the keys to avoiding syncretism when applied in a Christian setting.²⁰⁵

Mistaken Analysis and Non-Objective Fine Arts

Every fine arts category contains an element of expression that could be classified as non-objective. Simply put, these works lack recognizable objects. Abstract art, jazz music, interpretive dance, or conceptual art may be created by artists who merely wish to share an experience that lacks definition or breaks through the boundaries of human experience.²⁰⁶ Artforms of this type may seem mysterious on the surface, but they also provide the opportunity to practice analysis without misinterpreting the presentation.

Non-objective art is a good starting point for analysis because the evaluator has no choice but to examine the elements and principles – especially if there isn't a good explanation available from the artist who created the piece. For example, the song "Every Breath You Take" by the British band, The Police is often incorporated into marriage ceremonies as the consummate love song. However, the music composer, Sting, explains that the song is a "very, very sinister and

²⁰⁵ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 146.

²⁰⁶ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 99.

ugly” song about a stalker.²⁰⁷ The analysis of the vocables used by the BaAka culture of Africa reveals that the song's theme is difficult for someone outside of the culture to understand until the layers of polyphony are separated and studied.²⁰⁸

The lack of a quality that is known by the person analyzing a work of art encourages a deeper look into the structure and organization of the work. However, it can also lead to a misinterpretation. As Robin Harris notes, in some cultures, music arranged in a minor key may seem sad or meditative, while in other cultures, music in a minor key is playful or even triumphant.²⁰⁹ Many attributes are placed on color – both in society and scripture. Red often represents death, sacrifice, or cleansing in the Bible. Conversely, color field artists such as Mark Rothko will use red simply to draw attention to a specific area of a painting. Alan Merriam suggests that elements of music, dance, art, or prose remain abstract until the artist assigns a particular value or meaning.²¹⁰ The symbolism of the presentation may be unique to the culture and difficult to understand without direction from someone within that culture.

Interpretation – Finding the Meaning Behind the Symbolism

The Secular World

The description of an art presentation is essential to give credit to the artist and composer and avoid improper citations. The analysis is a practical way of identifying the surface value of

²⁰⁷ “The Real Story Behind the Song: The Police’s ‘Every Breath You Take,’” by Sting, American Songwriter.com., accessed on Feb. 2, 2022, <https://americansongwriter.com/behind-the-song-every-breath-you-take-by-sting/>.

²⁰⁸ David Locke, “Africa/Ewe, Mande, Dagbamba, Shona, BaAka,” ed. Titon, *Worlds of Music*, 169.

²⁰⁹ Harris, “The Great Misconception,” ed. Krabill *Worship and Mission for the Global Church*, 83.

²¹⁰ Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, 231.

elements that make up the structure of a work. Learning about the structure of diverse art forms can be a gateway into new cultural presentations. The next phase of the four-step critique involves the interpretation of those elements. The interpretation is an informed understanding of why the artist incorporated them into the work. The reasons that certain selections of art are chosen for a display or performance are usually found within the interpretation of that work. This may include the explanation given by the artist who created the work, or it may reflect a close examination of the use of the art form in the culture in which it was created. The work may be historically significant; however, the basis for that is usually found in the final phase of the critique method. The description and analysis should provide information that contributes to the interpretation.²¹¹ Either way, the interpretation should provide the audience with the “why” behind the “what.”

A good starting point for the interpretive phase of a critique is to understand that for every component of western art encountered; there are elements of expression in world art that are completely different. Theologian Jo-Ann Faith Richards describes a service in which the story of the prodigal son was read to a group of people in Kingston, Jamaica. The story was read twice, first in English and then in native Patwa. The reaction of the group was markedly different after the second reading. The group struggled to listen while simultaneously interpreting the English reading. The native language version, however, was full of dynamic imagery identifiable to the home culture.²¹² For years, ethnomusicologists attempted to understand the music of the Javanese gamelan, only to realize that the gamelan does not

²¹¹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*. 90.

²¹² Jo-Ann Faith Richards, “I Don’t Think in English,” ed. Krabill *Worship and Mission*, 326.

incorporate a musical scale that correlates to the standard Western music scale.²¹³ These examples illustrate the need for the interpretation to be conscious of the limitless possibilities of artistic expression and performance and not be biased by Western standards.

The starting point is with the artist who created the work. If the artist's words are not available, then an interpretation of the work by a reputable person close to the artist's source is the next choice.²¹⁴ Bakan describes the interpretation of the Balinese gamelan *beleganjur* by the gamelan masters Sukarata and Asnawa.²¹⁵ The composition of the gamelan may differ across the regions of Indonesia, and the physical make-up of the actual instruments shapes the tonal qualities of the music they make. Although gamelan performances are held on a national scale, they are also vital in the Hindu-Balinese cremation ceremonies, temple celebrations, and festivals honoring Hindu gods.²¹⁶ Bakan studied with both gamelan masters and learned a great deal about the intricacies of music. Bakan is now considered a leading U.S. expert on the gamelan; however, he shares that as a foreigner, his mentors concluded that he could never fully comprehend the musical culture of a place he did not grow up in.²¹⁷

The experience of Bakan reflects his musical training plus immersion in the culture. This is important in the interpretation of any creative work. The person researching the piece should have some training in the field or be savvy enough to identify interpretations by reliable sources.

²¹³ Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation*, 19.

²¹⁴ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 99.

²¹⁵ Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation*, 40.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 40 – 41.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 332.

An expert should guide the contextualization of the elements of work. However, studies have shown that artists from adjoining communities can also be a good resource.²¹⁸

Scripture

The scriptural integrity that is important for a Christian artist or theologian is critical to the successful interpretation of art forms. The responsibility of being a steward of the gospel means that a worship leader takes the time to analyze and interpret art forms that may be used for presentation to a congregation. Many worship leaders are musicians and hopefully more sympathetic to the misinterpretation of different forms of art.

The interpretation of any work created as a form of worship can be both challenging and straightforward. Regardless of the culture that it comes from, Scripture is often the source of symbolism. Other elements, such as pagan symbols, may be present. Like the story of the golden calf in Exodus 32, the purpose of the object denotes its acceptability. Jerram Barrs notes that Christian people worldwide often enjoy the aesthetic works of believers and non-believers. In Matthew 5:43, the Apostle writes that God shares the gifts of rain and sunshine with both the righteous and the wicked. Christians are to show love and respect for all of God's creation, regardless of the current state of the spirit. In 1 Kings, Solomon readily accepts the work of unbelievers working on the construction of the Temple.²¹⁹ Barrs cites the writing of John Calvin, in which he explains that one of God's greatest gifts is the ability to reason. This ability means that we can witness the works of believers and unbelievers and discern that which glorifies God

²¹⁸ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 67.

²¹⁹ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 32.

intentionally and that which only reflects the beauty of His creation.²²⁰ Calvin continues by writing that anyone who has received a gift of creativity should ask: “For whence is it that one is more excellent than another, but that in a common nature the grace of God is specially displayed in passing by many and thus proclaiming that it is under obligation to none. We may add that everyone is brought under influences according to his calling.”²²¹ Barr notes that churches are guilty of having a negative attitude towards the human art – dance in particular – yet proclaim the beauty of the flowers in their gardens.²²²

In the Muslim community, it is not uncommon for a non-believer to admit that they have not been appropriately trained in the writings of the Quran and therefore excused from non-belief. While Christians may be dismayed at the rituals they see during a missionary video, they may also lack training in Biblical symbolism. Barrs points out that for centuries aesthetics had very little to do with creating aesthetic art forms; it was a practical craft. While art was being developed for religious purposes, aesthetics were the result of the experience and skill that comes from being a master craftsman.²²³ After the Renaissance, Barrs laments that art became less of a craft created in every household to a product only available to the wealthy. At the same time, the criticism of the church became more acute, and public opinion discouraged Christian subjects in favor of personal expression or secular themes. Before long, Barrs writes: “The artist is thought

²²⁰ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 33.

²²¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, as quoted in Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 33.

²²² Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 37.

²²³ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 34.

to be in danger from the world. A young believer who persists in such a calling may be told, ‘If you must be an artist, then at least use your art for evangelistic purposes. This can be your only justification for pursuing such a life.’²²⁴

Since every tool and person is a part of God's creation, then the purpose of the objects that are created are connected to the understanding of the complete work. As author and theologian James Hamilton points out, the symbols in the Bible tell stories, but what stories do they tell?²²⁵ The author suggests that to understand the symbolism of the Bible, the symbolism of the worldview must also be understood. When Moses instructs the people of Israel in the use of blood sacrifice (Leviticus 6), the rationale is already understood.²²⁶ The symbols used in scripture contextualize the passages to the various audiences of the world. Hamilton suggests that symbols interpret and communicate concepts that are passed along throughout history. The symbol of a vine or tree is used throughout the Bible and other cultures to represent the giving and taking of life. The references made in Isaiah 6 – 11 are examples that help contextualize the gospel message to cultures worldwide.²²⁷

²²⁴ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 37.

²²⁵ James Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology: A Guide to the Bible's Story, Symbolism, and Patterns* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 64.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

²²⁷ Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology*, 68.

Evaluation – Person, Place, or Thing

The Secular World

A pivotal turning point in the interpretation/evaluation of artwork dates to the painting *Impression: Sunrise*, by Claude Monet in 1872 (fig. 4).²²⁸ The artist, who is considered a forerunner of the Impressionist movement, created a simple painting of a sunrise over the port of Le Havre in France. Rather than painting realistically, the artist painted the figures in the scene representationally. The artist's palette of colors and the simplicity of the brush strokes exemplified the serenity of a quiet sunrise. However, the implications of the work illustrate the evaluation process. The French press responded harshly to the painting, which resulted in a significant group of artists labeling themselves as “impressionists” in a show of solidarity with Monet.²²⁹ As the furor increased, Emperor Napoleon III issued a decree stating that people should enjoy whatever art they choose. Significant events such as this are the background for the evaluation phase of the critique. The artist, the event, the meaning, the impact – all can influence the overall content of the evaluation.

²²⁸ Claude Monet, *Impression, Sunrise*, 1872, Musee Marmottan Monet, Oil on canvas.

²²⁹ Ross King, *Judgement of Paris*, 356.

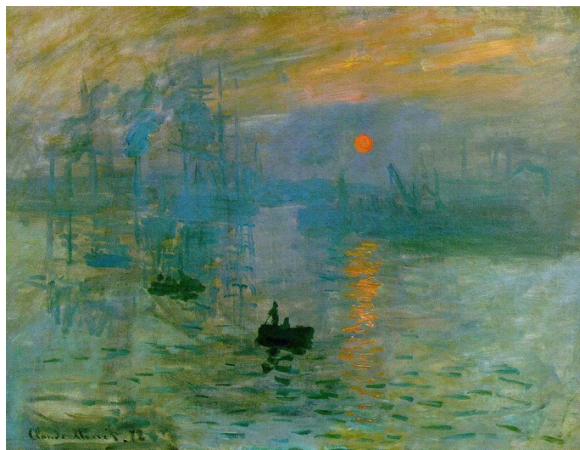


Fig. 4, Claude Monet, *Impression: Sunrise*, (Paris, FR: Musee Marmottan Monet, Oil on canvas, accessed on March 18, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impression,_Sunrise).

The evaluation phase is the stage that is often misinterpreted. Many examples of abstract, modern art and performances have been viewed repeatedly, but the interpretation is misguided. First or second-person accounts are the most important, but those descriptions are not always available. With all its symbolism, historical artwork is also known for exaggeration and ideological constructs. Christopher Scales shares the example of the “Ghost Dance” by the Native North American Sioux culture as a form of expression and fellowship that was misinterpreted with disastrous results at Wounded Knee creek.²³⁰

The evaluation phase becomes relevant when connected to the study or reproduction of artistic performances from emergent cultures or communities in which traditional art forms have been used to represent Christian themes. McKinney suggests that the study of cultural art forms should have both etic and emic approaches.²³¹ This should be mirrored in the evaluations that are pursued by ethnodoxologists. During the etic phase, the researcher will gather information

²³⁰ Scales, “North America/Native America,” In *Worlds of Music*. 62.

²³¹ McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals*, 4.

based on what is available from existing resources. The source of that material is essential; however, critical insights may also come from informal conversations. To discover the emic perspective, the researcher will need to seek out first-person accounts of the activity and become knowledgeable regarding folk terms that describe the work in its native language. The author suggests that the researcher should also consider elements of social structure, such as gender, age, and kinship.²³²

The etic phase is closely linked to objectivity. Critics who are investigating arts presentations from around the world should set a baseline of research that identifies the components of the piece with the least amount of opinionated content. Although the emic phase may seem to reflect greater subjectivity, there is still a goal of minimizing individual interpretation. In essence, an etic and emic approach may be viewed as the best way to evaluate the music, dance, drama, or art of the culture. Once the critic moves beyond the point of wholesale analysis and on to the point of individual critique then the subjective words of the artist are key to understanding their heart and motivations.

One area of evaluation that is challenging is the category of dance and movement. Nettl points out that there is a distinction between “dance” and “a dance” in Western society.” Dance may be a simple, impromptu reaction to music, whereas “a dance” may be choreographed and recited during ceremonies or celebrations. Lack of training in choreographics is common. Nettl

²³² McKinney, *Globetrotting*, 5.

suggests that the commercialism of music has a more significant impact than dance in Western society – because dance seems to serve music.²³³ There have been longitudinal studies of ethnochoreology; however, those studies often exist interdependently of ethnomusicology.

A study by Alan Lomax, Forrestine Paulay, and Irmgard Bartenieff called “choreometrics” is one of the most comprehensive dance studies. This study mirrors a similar analysis of music by Lomax called “cantometrics.”²³⁴ Each of these extensive studies contains a rating scale that differentiates patterns of behavior that are tied to human dance or music experiences. Following the same presentation of information found in cantometrics, the researchers created a loosely defined set of movements that are markers of dance traditions in geographic regions of the world.²³⁵

Scripture

Wells and Van Neste provide several evaluations of the Psalms. Starting with the idea that Psalms reflects a range of emotions, including love, sorrow, fear, trust, thankfulness, and dependence on God, the authors suggest that the rhetorical use of the Psalms is to move people the way God wants them to.²³⁶ The authors suggest that Psalms are meant to be sung – that singing them helps shape the hearts of the people who sing them.²³⁷ Demonstrating how Psalms build up worship, Wells and Van Neste write: “They show profound respect for God as well as

²³³ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 450 – 451.

²³⁴ Alan Lomax, “Brief Progress Report: Cantometrics-Choreometrics Projects,” *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 4 (1972): 142–45, <https://doi.org/10.2307/767680>.

²³⁵ Lomax, “Cantometrics,” 144.

²³⁶ Wells and Van Neste, *Forgotten Songs*, 28.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

uninhibited delight in Him. By making individual laments, thanksgivings, and confessions of sin matters of corporate song, they enable the whole congregation to take upon themselves, as their own, the troubles and victories of the individual members, so that everyone can ‘rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep’ (Romans 12:15).²³⁸

During the evaluation phase, the person studying fine arts performance will be concerned with the meaning. Symbols and structure make up the analysis and interpretation, and the evaluation explains why the event takes place. In visual arts or music, simply saying the work is from an artist like Jackson Pollock or Cole Porter may suffice. Brian Spinks suggests that the starting place for the numerous cultures throughout the world is the relationship between theology and culture.²³⁹ Using examples such as 1 Corinthians, in which Paul warns against eating the meat used in pagan rituals, Spinks notes that the Bible has instances in which Hebrew, Gentile, Greek, Roman, and other cultures collide. Based on the *Didache*, one of the earliest Christian documents, the author writes: “In fact, the gospel as it is lived through a community of faith must itself be regarded as a cultural, symbolic world, a social construct with its interests and concerns, and thus inculturation is not an incarnation of a timeless, unchanging, and acultural reality into a particular culture, but always an intercultural encounter or dialogue between a least two cultures.”²⁴⁰ Scripture is certainly a combination of Hebrew teaching overlaid with the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the point of the ascension moving forward, much of the work of the Apostles is a time of trial and triumph in communicating the Word to new cultures.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Brian Spinks, “Liturgical theology and Criticism,” 231.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 232-233.

The evaluation phase requires discernment. The golden calf discussed in Exodus is currently used symbolically in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. The Hebrews coming out of Egypt would have been taught that a sacred cow could represent strength, fertility, motherhood, and the gods Apis, Ptah, or Hathor.²⁴¹ In the Old Testament, an unblemished bull was often used as the sacrifice of atonement. The key is worship. The Hebrews leaving Egypt chose to worship the golden calf in direct violation of God's instructions.

In the same way, evaluating elements of dance, musical performance, artwork, or language is assessed based on its purpose. Using a technique that is based on both emic and etic approaches will help to distinguish the individual and cultural significance of a creative work. In Exodus 32:1, the Hebrew people cajoled Aaron into fashioning the calf, though they still offered traditional Hebrew sacrifices. This example illustrates the importance of subjectivity in obtaining a clear understanding of the motivation behind a work.

As Jerram Barrs writes, the second commandment forbids making representational images and then bowing in worship to them. It is idolatry that is prohibited, not the representation.²⁴² Rivka Ulmer, professor of Jewish studies, also suggests that in Exodus 12, God had instructed the Israelites to slay the “lambs” during Passover because the lamb also represented the Egyptian god Amun.²⁴³ Worship leaders have heard the passages in Exodus relating to the golden calf. However, many have not read Ezekiel 20 to understand the longstanding practice of idol worship conducted by the Hebrews being brought out of Egypt.

²⁴¹ Rivka Ulmer, “The Egyptian Gods in Midrashic Texts.” *The Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 2 (2010): 181–204, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4073106>.

²⁴² Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 46.

²⁴³ Ulmer, “The Egyptian gods in Midrashic Texts,” 189.

In concluding his research, Ulmer summarizes that the gods of the Egyptians were symbolic of gods that were worshipped as idols, the onomatology of names, statues, and images, physical objects such as rings, oaths that were made, and overall opposition to the God of the Bible.²⁴⁴ During the occupation of Palestine by the Romans, the worship of Greco-Roman gods occurred like earlier worship of the Egyptian gods. It could be said that the symbols and parables of both the Old and New Testaments reflect the influence of these polytheistic cultures.

Symbols are found in cultures worldwide and represent the types of elements that may contribute to fine arts presentations. The evaluation of these works should identify the symbol regarding culture, heritage, folklore, and context related to Scripture. A theme carried throughout the Testaments is that the gods of the old traditions must give way to the Triune God of the Bible. In fine arts performances, the process of putting legends and gods into perspective is essential in the contextualization of Christianity.

Critique, Christianity, and the Vernacular

At the beginning of the book about worldwide worship, Charles Farhadian provides some crucial lessons regarding world worship. He points out that Christianity is one of the few world religions that encourages translating Biblical text and symbols into local languages.²⁴⁵ This is made clear by the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians 14; a person can speak in tongues, but if there is no one there to prophecy (translate), then the effort is futile. Paul writes: “If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say ‘amen’ to your thanksgiving since he does not know what you are saying? You

²⁴⁴ Ulmer, “The Egyptian gods,” 203.

²⁴⁵ Farhadian, *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 11.

may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified.” (1 Corinthians 14:16-17).

Drawing from the works of Justin Martyr, Farhadian suggests that God has scattered truths about Himself throughout the world and that it is Christian theology that will illuminate them.²⁴⁶ Using the example of a shofar can be meaningless in a culture that has never seen a ram. Artists in the Middle Ages filled images with symbols that represented Biblical themes. In the 21st century, Hamilton warns that experts in theology or fine arts have reverted to using figural interpretations that are set apart from the exegetical features of the scriptural texts that reveal the symbolism.²⁴⁷

There is also the context in which symbols are used in every culture. As Farhadian notes, a museum attraction is nothing more than a curiosity until the piece's context is revealed.²⁴⁸ Like many of the symbols and metaphors found in the Bible, creative art forms can be both singular and universal. Farhadian uses Jesus as an example of someone particular – a Palestinian Jew – yet universally accepted.²⁴⁹ The Apostles were given gifts of the Holy Spirit in the tongues of many different languages at Pentecost. The book of Revelation discusses the presence of many other people and languages from all parts of the world before the Lamb of God. Even Western Christianity and Bible translation reflect Hebrew, Hellenistic, Roman, and European traditions.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 12.

²⁴⁷ Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology*, 62.

²⁴⁸ Farhadian, *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 13.

²⁴⁹ Farhadian, *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 15.

Moreau’s definition of a “myth” provides a baseline approach in which the study of art forms from other cultures can be evaluated:

“For contextual purposes, I use a broader definition: myths are any real or fictional story, recurring theme, or character type that appeals to the consciousness of a people by embodying its cultural ideals or by giving expression to deep commonly held beliefs and felt emotions. The mythic corpus of any society, then, includes its scriptures, epics, and classics but also proverbs, folklore, fairy stories, and even contemporary stories that incorporate mythic elements (stories of heroism, sacrifice, love, and so on).”²⁵⁰

Moreau does not use the term “myth” as an untrue story or legend; instead, a myth is a tool that creates a particular set of values. Every society has a collection of narratives that reflect its thoughts on humanity, laws, personal values, and worldview.²⁵¹ When an artist from any culture creates a work of music, dance, art, or drama, they would be expected to draw on the social myths that make up the fabric of their culture. As Wells and Van Neste suggest, when artists use these influences as a foundation of work to honor God, the focus needs to be on reflecting the aesthetics of the world that God created while understanding that it should also remember the human condition as it is so often portrayed in Scripture.²⁵²

Examples from Case Studies

An Example of the Four-Step Critique Method in Fine Arts Photography

This four-step critique is used to analyze the well-known photograph “Migrant Mother: Nipomo, California” by Dorothea Lange (fig. 5).²⁵³

²⁵⁰ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 101.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Wells and Van Neste, *Forgotten Songs*, 204.

²⁵³ Dorothea Lange, “Migrant Mother: Nipomo, California,” Gelatin silver print, (New York:NY, Museum of Modern Art, 1936), accessed on Feb. 14, 2022, https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/dorothea-lange-

Description: Dorothea Lange, “Migrant Mother: Nipomo, California.” (1936). Gelatin silver print. New York: NY, Museum of Modern Art.

Analysis: The nine-zone grid is a classic tool used by photographers to place an image's primary and secondary focal points. In this case, Lange arranged the woman's face in the top-center portion of the grid as the primary focal point. Each of the children is placed in corner zones, avoiding the image's static center and the weightiness at the bottom of the image area.

Interpretation: At the time this was taken, the technology of black and white photography was more advanced than color photography. In addition, photographers preferred black and white photography for capturing dramatic subjects. In this photograph, the two children on the sides are turned away. The children's placement helps draw attention to the mother's face, which, along with the smallest child's face, emerges from the shadows in the background.

Evaluation: Dorothea Lange was employed by the Farm Security Administration to chronicle the plight of farm and city poor people in the U.S. Black and white photography could be reproduced in newspapers and magazines, and this picture became iconic in its representation of the plight of the poor. MoMA curator Sarah Meister suggests that Lange's photography took on the role of a documentary that recorded social conditions but also motivated people to help improve the lives of the poor.²⁵⁴

[migrant-mother-nipomo-california-1936/#:~:text=Dorothea%20Lange%20took%20this%20photograph,provide%20aid%20to%20impoverished%20farmers.](https://www.moma.org/collection/works/50989)

²⁵⁴ Sarah Meister, “Dorothea Lange: Words and Pictures,” (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art), accessed on Feb. 14, 2022, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/50989>.

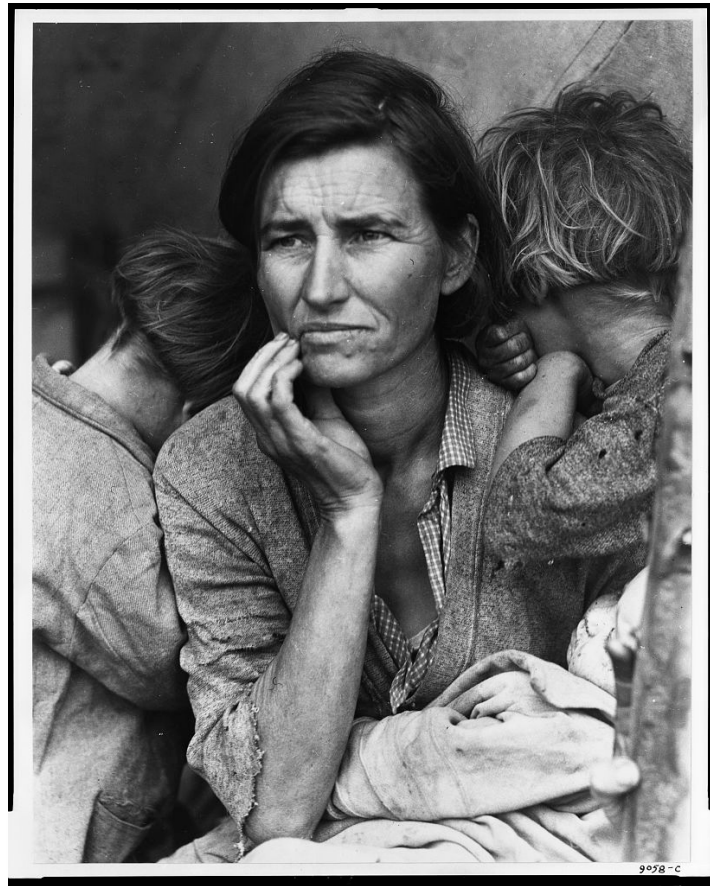


Fig. 5, Dorothea Lange “Migrant Mother: Nipomo, Ca.” (Washington, D.C: Library of Congress, 1936), Black and white gelatin print, accessed on March 18, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2017762891/>.

An Example of the Four-Step Critique Method in Dance

This example of the four-step critique applied to the review of “Stomp Dance” of the Native North American Yuchi culture of Eastern Oklahoma led by Sonny Bucktrot.

Description: Sonny Bucktrot, “Stomp Dance,” in *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*. Christopher A. Scales and Jeff Todd Titon ed., Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ Sonny Bucktrot, “Stomp Dance,” in *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*, ed. Titon (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017).

Interpretation: The song incorporates a call and response style in which a single male leader sings a phrase that is repeated by an all-male chorus. The singing is accompanied by women wearing shell or metal can rattles who add percussion by rhythmically stomping their feet. The open vocal style consists of one octave, syncopated melodic lines that usually descend. The “Stomp Dance” song consists of short melodic phrases that vary in number.

Analysis: The “Stomp Dance” is performed by a single line of dancers surrounding a fire. The number of phrases that are sung depends on the leader's knowledge – though the person leading the dance may change each time the dance is performed.

Evaluation: Sonny Bucktrot’s recordings play an important role in continuing Woodland culture dance traditions. The “Stomp Dance” is not exclusive to the Yuchi; rather, it is considered a social dance that many Native North American cultures share. The dance may be performed many times during the night. The “Stomp Dance” is regarded as a building block of many other dance traditions.²⁵⁶

A Sample Case Study of Music from a Merger of Hindu and Christian Culture

This study is based on the musical experience of Christopher Dicran Hale, a Christian musician who presented music at a Hindu temple service.²⁵⁷ According to Hale, the music group *Aradhna* creates music that worships “Yeshu” - Jesus, through the Hindu tradition of “bhakti” – loving, devotion, and surrender.

²⁵⁶ Jason Baird Jackson, “The Paradoxical Power of Endangerment Traditional Native American Dance and Music in Eastern Oklahoma,” *World Literature Today* 81, no. 5 (2007): 37–41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40038592>.

²⁵⁷ Christopher Dicran Hale, “Where Hindu and Christian Worlds Meet: Through the Yeshu Bhakti Music of Aradhna,” In *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed., (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 296.

Description: Aradhna, “Ga Ga More Manwa Yesu Bhajan.” *Namaste Sate*. CD Baby. Jan. 26, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vkp8AiMjPJY>.

Analysis: The song and video feature vocals, guitar, sitar, and drum. It follows the traditional format of the “bhajan,” or devotional song.

Interpretation: The musicians overlaid the performance of the bhajan with spoken word in which they shared a Hindu style of poetry. In English, the title of the song means “Sing, My Soul, the Song of Jesus.”

Evaluation: Drawing from Hale’s description of the experience, the process of worshipping Yesu Bakhti is a way for people to become disciples of Jesus without leaving the Hindu community.²⁵⁸ Hale was disappointed that the Hindus did not see Jesus as unique; however, he believed that sharing the Gospel message through an avenue acceptable to the Hindu community was worthwhile. This is an example of a Christian art form that can support the worship of Jesus Christ in a culture in which the traditions of another religion are entirely dominant. Many Christians in India take on the appearance of a western church on Sunday only to follow their traditional culture during the week.²⁵⁹ The problem is not following their traditional culture during the week, rather than allowing their Sunday service to pursue a paradoxically western format. Many Christian churches in India still attempt to follow a Eurocentric form of praise and music rather than create works based on traditional Indian forms of music and arts.

²⁵⁸ Hale, “Hindu and Christian,” 295.

²⁵⁹ Jacob Joseph, “The Challenge of Indigenizing Christian Worship: An Example from India,” In *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*. Ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 139.

Chapter Two Summary

The four-step critique method that is the basis of this literature review has traditionally been used to identify works of visual arts. The criteria used to judge music, dance, drama, and conceptual art have mechanisms like this method. The challenge comes from identifying a uniform process that can be applied to the unlimited forms of creative expression that exist in the world. Research has shown that creative art forms have been the subject of misinterpretation and rote translation throughout history.²⁶⁰ Evaluation of works created as a personal form of expression and worship of God requires extensive knowledge of art forms and Scripture. The first finding of this literature review is that there is no boundary to the beauty and aesthetics of God's kingdom, though Christian artists may struggle to gain acceptance in their own communities. Jerram Barrs details the Christian perspective of the arts by writing: "Our work in any field of the arts will be imitative. We will be thinking God's thoughts after him – painting with his colors; speaking with his gift of language; exploring and expressing his sounds and harmonies; working with his creation in all its glory, diversity, and in-built inventiveness."²⁶¹ The only time that the words of scripture suggest the conflict that God has with creative works is when they are used to honor false gods or teach others to honor false gods.

The second finding reveals that the researchers involved with the judgment of arts arrived at the four-step critique method as a way in which works of fine arts can be judged pragmatically – minimizing the use of opinion. The problem of misinterpretation exists; however, the use of first-person accounts is strongly suggested. The research of Alan Lomax is one of the few

²⁶⁰ Kleiner, Mamiya and Tansey, *Art Through the Ages*, 2.

²⁶¹ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 26.

comprehensive studies of music and dance forms from geographic regions of the world.²⁶² The philosophy behind the four-step critique method is not to recreate studies such as Lomax's but to provide a creative arts team with a tool that can be used to evaluate cultural art forms on a case-by-case basis.

Once the four-step method has been applied to an art presentation, scriptural analysis can be applied. The story of the golden calf in Exodus provides an excellent example of questioning that can help understand the theological basis of creative works. The Hebrews coming out of Egypt understood the teaching of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, yet they chose to worship a god and idol of their former Egyptian captors. Worldview and the arts are a mixture of the culture in which people live overlaid with the knowledge of God, whose creation is reflected in their works and whose being is the focus of artistic worship. A.W. Tozer describes the reflection of people of God through Jesus Christ: "Some give themselves up to the disciplines of science, technology, philosophy, art, and music. When we worship the Lord Jesus Christ, we embrace and encompass all disciplines because He is the Lord of them all."²⁶³

Regardless of the superficiality of worldview, art presentations from cultures worldwide that have been created to worship God will be held to the highest expectations. Bob Kauflin writes that many worship leaders and artists suffer from the inward pride of being unique, being talented, and idolizing the tools of the trade; when the sole purpose is to honor God.²⁶⁴ There is enormous self-satisfaction when works are created, yet many Christian artists fail to recognize that the works that have meaning are the works that reflect worship.

²⁶² Lomax, "Brief Progress Report," 144.

²⁶³ A.W. Tozer, *The Purpose of Man*, 149-150.

²⁶⁴ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 24.

The case studies provided at the end of the chapter are meant to illustrate the two-fold approach to the critique methodology. The first concept is that a fine arts presentation may come in various forms, and analysis of those forms should be done outside of personal bias or opinion.²⁶⁵ The second is that all acts of creativity first reflect the beauty of the kingdom of God, who is the greatest Creator. As noted in Barrs, contextualizing the work means examining the work based on the original culture in which it was created and then the context of the work as a product intent of leading others to worship.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 230.

²⁶⁶ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 50-51.

Chapter Three – Methodology

Introduction and Background

This study was based on ethnographic, qualitative, and correlational approaches. The ethnographic portion reflects the diverse creative communities throughout the world. The examination of research was based on a qualitative approach which allowed for the incorporation of subjective input. Subjectivity is key to understanding art forms that may include abstract or non-objective elements observed during the four-step critique's analysis, interpretation, and evaluation phases. The ethnographic and qualitative approach also has correlational relationships between many different facets of fine arts presentations – the relationship between aesthetics and scripture is primary.

The primary objective of this study is to illustrate the lack of an analytical tool for the examination of multicultural fine arts presentations. The approach reflected in this study includes classic studies in music and cultural anthropology. Examining essays written by ethnodoxologists provided examples of creative art forms from cultures around the globe. After secular and Christian perspectives were established, the conclusions of ethnodoxologists such as Barrs and Moreau were used to identify precedence for Christian art in worship. Once each of these categories was addressed, the four-step critique method drawn from visual arts was suggested as a single tool for examining various art forms from around the world.

This study demonstrates that there is critique methodology available for each fine art discipline. However, few tie all of them together. Nettl points out that researchers entering the field of ethnography should prepare themselves to follow pathways of discovery that fall outside of their original plan.²⁶⁷ The same is true of a creative arts team whose field may only consist of

²⁶⁷ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 123.

access to world cultures via the internet. In either case, the breadth of the field of fine arts is too broad for ethnodoxologists to have acquired expertise in every category of fine arts. The research problems address individuals' lack of training in assessing fine arts performances based on scriptural standards. The research conducted by Barrs establishes a criterion for artistic endeavors meant to honor and worship God. At the same time, the four-step method published by Mittler guides the analysis of the building blocks of work.

Connecting scriptural standards with the principles and elements of creative artworks enables researchers to establish works that reflect God's creation or works that reflect the beauty of God's creation in a worshipful fashion. This research demonstrates that worldview influences the design of secular and non-secular works. The words of the composer or artist are the first step in understanding a particular work. Theologically, the artist's explanation may lack definition, be challenging to translate, or be misinformed altogether. The words of John Witvliet in Farhadian include a caution towards works that display Christian themes on the outside but are heavily influenced by worldview and cultural syncretism.²⁶⁸ Some leeway is provided for artists who do not have a solid theological background. In the estimate of Barrs: "Christian artists need to regard themselves as creatures of God, using gifts given by God, delighting in the world made by God, needing the help of other artists, doing their work to the glory of God, and devoting their labors to the enrichment of the lives of others."²⁶⁹ In reality, the secular world is influential in the creation of art and the artists themselves.

²⁶⁸ John Witvliet, "Afterword: Inculturation, Worship, and Dispositions of Ministry," In *Christian Worship Worldwide*, ed. Charles E. Farhadian, 275.

²⁶⁹ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 28.

Case Studies - Ethnography

During this research, cased studies or specific examples were drawn from Art History, Music History, Dance, and Conceptual Art. Classic works such as Monet's "Impression: Sunrise" were included in the literature review, while other specific examples are included in the chapter on "Research Findings." The purpose of these case studies was to reflect on the analysis of fine arts presentations by experts in each discipline overlaid with the framework of a four-step critique. Each case study includes a counterargument reflecting secular worldview and perceptions. This study also accepts that presentations of fine arts are not restricted by geopolitical or cultural boundaries. A fundamental premise is that culture creates works to honor God with the tools they have on hand. Folk art is an example of works often made with found materials – materials gathered from local resources. One example is the reference to the Yuchi women incorporating shell or tin can rattles while performing a "Stomp Dance".

The case study of "Yeshu bakhti" is included as a counter-cultural example in which Christian worship concepts fall outside the boundaries of Western ideals. Studies like this help to demonstrate that fine arts performance and creative works may honor the Holy Spirit, but their appearance is vastly different. Brian Spinks suggests that the rebirth of baptism means that every Christian is a stranger to the world they live in and should only reflect our true home – heaven. The example of Hindu individuals following Jesus Christ as the "one true God" may not seem that different than the difference between Hebrew and Gentile, however it does point to the idea of a compromise that places God in the company of idols.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Spinks, "Liturgical Theology and Criticism," In *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 252.

Correlational Research

The study of each fine arts discipline includes elements or building blocks that contribute to completing the total work. The four-step method separates these elements into categories for identification yet acknowledges that interrelationships cannot be separated or evaluated outside the culture in which they were created.²⁷¹ In most instances, the correlation between elements is meant to be viewed without delving into cause and effect. However, in ethnodoxology, the sum of these elements may need to be understood if the work is to withstand scriptural standards.

This study examines the correlations between several categories of worship arts. The first category relates to the physical examination of music, art, dance, or drama. The four-step method can be used as a tool for examining each type of work. Depending on the subject, following the process in the order of description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation may be the most structured. Each of these steps correlates with one another, however, an evaluator may begin with the interpretation phase to establish the meaning of the work first.

The second correlation exists between works created primarily for aesthetics and works created for worship. Signs that point to the meaning of the work can be found in any portion of the four-step method. While the words of the artist are considered the cornerstone of evaluating works, additional steps will be required to establish whether the motivations of the artist correlate with the principles outlined in scripture. The challenge may be twofold; the artist creating the work may have a “take it or leave it” mentality regarding the acceptance of their work, and the person evaluating the work may lack the theological training to discern what is proper for the worship. The subjective words of the artist may begin the process; however, a broader understanding of the work should maintain objectivity.

²⁷¹ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*, 21.

Qualitative Research

The basis of this qualitative research comes from the critique of multicultural art forms by historians and theologians. Each case study provides examples of critique methodology that illustrate the fundamentals of fine arts presentations. The first main idea is that presentations created for worship will have elements drawn from that culture. Secondly, the heart of the artist creating and performing the work should reflect a clear understanding that the work is to honor God and His creation.²⁷² A weakness found in any type of qualitative analysis of creativity is the lack of objective data. This can leave room for multiple interpretations.²⁷³ Another drawback is that the four-step critique method can be applied to various situations, but the conclusions cannot be applied universally. Each presentation of fine arts must still be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

The qualitative research methods used for this study revolve around ethnography and phenomenology. Over time, researchers discovered that the best way to understand the music and art of a culture is to immerse themselves in that culture.²⁷⁴ The ethnographic approach leads to further study in which an event or phenomenon is examined for the lived experiences of the participants.²⁷⁵ During the 20th century, Nettl writes that physical and biological features correlated with cultural explanations for the creation of music.²⁷⁶ Nettl continues by observing: “All known cultures accompany religious activity with music.” He continues, “Further, there is

²⁷² Humphrey, *Grand Entrance*, 85.

²⁷³ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 152.

²⁷⁴ McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals*, 41.

²⁷⁵ McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals*, 61.

²⁷⁶ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 33.

the conception of music as an art that consists of distinct units of creativity, which can be identified by their place in ritual, by creator or performer, by opus number.”²⁷⁷ Reflecting the words of Harold Best, this method of researching ethnography and phenomenology reveals that there is no such thing as pagan or Christian art. There *are* pagan or Christian contexts *behind* the art.²⁷⁸

All Research Methods

The research in this study began with the four-step critique method as reported by Mittler and Kleiner, Mamiya, and Tansey. Elements of music, dance, and drama were drawn from the authors contributing to the extensive work compiled by Titon. Generalizations and specific features regarding contextualization came from studies by Nettl, Merriam, and McKinney. Additional works contributed to the research that pertained to aesthetics and scripture. Most notable were the studies of Barrs, Moreau, and Kauflin, in addition to the compilation of works by Krabill and Farhadian. In each case, the information collected reflected the first-hand experience of the contributor associated with the artists.

The main themes that emerged from this research follow. The first theme reflects the need for a non-judgmental method for evaluating fine arts performances at face value. The second theme states that works by any artist can be viewed as an imitation of God’s creativity – regardless of the artist’s goal. The third theme notes that the artist’s “heart” in creating works that honor God is the criteria for teaching and promoting worship.²⁷⁹ The last theme is that a

²⁷⁷ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 35.

²⁷⁸ Harold Best, “God’s Creation and Human Creativity: Seven Affirmations,” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, ed. James R. Krabill (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), 13.

²⁷⁹ James Hamilton, Jr., *What is Biblical Theology*, 97.

purely western or Eurocentric view of creative art forms can be counterproductive and counterintuitive.²⁸⁰

A key advantage of qualitative analysis is the natural setting in which evaluations can occur. The author reporting on the event was experienced in evaluating the category of art being studied, whether music, art, dance, or conceptual. In each case reported, the critique reflected a fine arts presentation as it happened in the artist's culture. Many of the contributions were derived from comprehensive journals and scholarly texts. Subjectivity and bias were primarily avoided by the authors being cited, though it should be noted that secular and religious works often reflect both factors.²⁸¹ The essence of diversity and divergent thinking can exist at the root of creativity, hence individual efforts may only reflect personal expression that may be individualistic or countercultural.

Another advantage reinforced by this study is the flexibility of the four-step critique method. This method can be adapted to meet new and exciting forms of creative arts, although one drawback may come from establishing a framework of analysis. This methodology also allowed for local experts or experienced individuals to provide rhetorical information instead of the words of the original artist. The observations of people trained in fine arts disciplines are often available on the internet. These studies can be matched with parallel observations of theologians working in the same communities. As the study shows, artistic presentations in a worship service usually have some form of background information that can be studied.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals*, 58.

²⁸¹ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 36-37.

²⁸² Farhadian, *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 12.

Chapter Four – Research Findings

Introduction

This research focused on reporting information related to the semiotic and scriptural standards of fine arts and introducing the four-step critique method to evaluate fine arts forms. Numerous studies have been done on specific types of music, dance, visual arts, and conceptual presentations. The evolution of mission work has also led to a trove of research on individual cultures and divergent art forms. At the center of this research is the understanding that diverse Christian art forms are available to congregations throughout the world. Pastoral teams may not have a process in place to evaluate this wealth of creativity. Collections of comprehensive essays by Krabill, Nettel, Titon, and Farhadian provide in-depth observations of individual cultures. The work of Barrs, Moreau, Kauflin and Whaley deliver insights from the scriptural world and the interaction between man and God's creative kingdom. The chronicle of art history found in Gardner's extensive text shows that the intermingling of art and religion has existed for an eternity. For as long as creative art forms have existed, man has struggled to identify those semiotic and scriptural standards.²⁸³

Results

The Coexistence of Spirit and Creativity

In the letter to the church of Colossus, Paul sets the example of God's dominion over all things created on earth: "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him for him." There is no separation between things made by man and things made possible

²⁸³ Kleiner, Mamiya and Tansey, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages*, 586.

by God. Jerram Barrs shared a statement by J.R.R. Tolkien where he acknowledges that his epic work was the result of “sub-creation,” meaning that the work he created was within the boundaries of the world created by God.²⁸⁴ Barrs suggests that the challenge of understanding works that reflect only a world view is that contemporary artists often only see themselves during their creations. God has gifted them a talent; however, they often use this gift as an advantage that elevates them above others.²⁸⁵

One of the conclusions of this research points to the rising exclusivity of art forms in certain cultures. Theologians such as Page and Gray observe that contemporary art and music in 21st century North American churches are increasingly becoming a matter of singular expression with limited participation.²⁸⁶ The authors suggest that moving to a small praise team and simplified music sidesteps both musical and theological training. According to the authors: "Church choirs accustomed to singing challenging musical arrangements were faced with two options: (1) embrace the new choral approaches and face perpetual boredom, or (2) continue to use literature that no longer connected across local congregations."²⁸⁷ Over the last decades, church choirs have given way to praise teams that draw heavily from popularized music. In response to the Christian music industry, many songs relate to individual expression instead of corporate worship.²⁸⁸ In contrast, the “Stomp Dance” of the eastern Oklahoma woodland tribes

²⁸⁴ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 27.

²⁸⁵ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 28.

²⁸⁶ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 110.

²⁸⁷ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 111.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

is often performed in the evenings so that working people and guests can participate.²⁸⁹ This is also true of dance and movement found in cultures around the globe. A key finding of this research acknowledges that the motivation of the Christian artist is critical, as is the component of creativity that includes teaching and participation.

Each of these statements focuses on the heart and mind of the individual creating a work of art or groups of individuals copying that work of art. A Christian artist is no different from a secular artist since both draw elements and inspiration from God's creation. Delving into the works of Bob Kauflin reveals a significant difference in the interpretation of creative works by Christian artists. Kauflin chooses the term "proclamation" to distinguish between secular motivation and worship. In 1 Peter 2:9, Kauflin notes that performing music is more than creating a "worship experience" - that the participants proclaim God's truth in their lives.²⁹⁰

Understanding the heart of the artist and their intention in creating a work of art or musical selection that is shared during corporate worship is at the very core of the four-step critique method. During the interpretation phase, the physical element of the creative work is examined. Alan Merriam states that signs and symbols are often the basis of those works. Signs and symbols only escape their basic, physical form when they are interpreted by someone viewing, listening, or participating in the work.²⁹¹ Translating these works can be difficult. David Reck uses the example of the South Indian "Raga" as an example of a symbolic creative work that has no parallel in the West. The author notes that because a "raga" is based on

²⁸⁹ Sonny Bucktrot, "Stomp Dance," in Titon, 41.

²⁹⁰ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 129.

²⁹¹ Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, 231.

coloring human emotions and is part of an oral tradition, it is not written down. Symbolically, Reck observes that ragas: “may also be associated with colors, animals, deities, a season of the year, a time of day, or certain magical properties.”²⁹² As an artform, ragas only exist in the presence of the performers and an audience.

Religious and Secular Works – Separate Yet Connected

A comprehensive study of fine arts reveals a common understanding; creative works from the secular world have coexisted with religious works throughout the ages. The analysis of a musical work reflects an arrangement structured around a conventional method, where the lyrics may seem superficial on the one hand yet symbolic on the other. This study alludes to a challenge for the Christian who sings along with a Christian musical selection throughout the week as a form of entertainment, then is charged with singing the same song on Sunday as a form of worship.

The song “Hallelujah” by Leonard Cohen is a prime example of a piece that appears to contain a secular message, when in fact the composer’s words tell of events from the Old Testament.²⁹³ A review published in Rolling Stone magazine in 2019 reflected the work by author Alan Light containing quotes from Cohen. The article begins with a complete description of the work. Cohen provides an analysis of the song in the lyrics – singing “the fourth, the fifth/ the minor fall, the major lift,” which refers to a typical chord progression in rock and blues

²⁹² David E. Reck, “Asia/India,” in *In Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World’s Peoples*, ed. Jeff Todd Titon (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017), 312.

²⁹³ “How Leonard Cohen’s ‘Hallelujah’ Brilliantly Mingled Sex, Religion,” *Rolling Stone Magazine*, ed., from “The Holy or the Broken: Leonard Cohen, Jeff Buckley and the Unlikely Ascent of ‘Hallelujah,’” Alan Light, (New York:NY, Simon, and Schuster, 2012), accessed on March 1, 2022. <https://www.rollingstone.com/feature/how-leonard-cohens-hallelujah-brilliantly-mingled-sex-religion-194516/>.

music.²⁹⁴ The composer also provides the interpretation. Cohen suggests that the harmonic progression of the verse supports the term “hallelujah” which occurs at the end of every line. At first, the use of the term is tied to the response of King David and his relationship with Bathsheba. On the surface, the remainder of the song seems to be steeped in sensuality as the story reflects the relationship between Samson and Delilah.²⁹⁵ Years after publishing the song, Cohen stated: “I wanted to push the Hallelujah deep into the secular world, into the ordinary world. The *Hallelujah*, the David’s *Hallelujah*, was still a religious song. So, I wanted to indicate that *Hallelujah* can come out of things that have nothing to do with religion.”²⁹⁶

The references made to works by Leonardo da Vinci show that an artist can be gifted and faithful, yet use Biblical themes and a church commission to advance the study of art. Musicians and artists welcome an invitation to share their talents in a church setting without understanding creativity is meant to worship God. Vernon Whaley suggests that the call to be a Christian artist requires specific prerequisites. He writes: “Most often, one assumes the prerequisites for worship preparation have to do with developing music, communication, leadership, or administrative skills.” He continues, “The prerequisites for worship leadership preparation I want to discuss have more to do with developing and nurturing godly character, a holy disposition and deportment, Christian graces, humility and personality qualities.”²⁹⁷ Artists who don’t have any training in theology should be welcomed but need to have an openness and desire to learn the Gospel.

²⁹⁴ Rolling Stone, “Leonard Cohen’s Hallelujah.”

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Whaley, *Exalt His Name*, 151.

Summary: Scriptural Semiotics and Aesthetics

A core concept stated in the research questions relates to the accountability of an artist. There are scriptural standards that create a baseline of creativity, and ethical considerations that must be met while investigating cultures and communities. Like the artist who uses their gifts to elevate themselves in society, author James Hamilton, Jr. suggests that using an analytical term like “figural” to describe creative works exists only in the artist's mind. He suggests examining the typological components of work so that the exegetical features of the work remain true.²⁹⁸ The figural and typological elements will be featured in the artist’s description of their work. Research supporting the four-step method suggests that the artist’s description, analysis, and interpretation of the work is irrefutable.²⁹⁹ The opinion of the most experienced reviewer must defer to the words of the artist. To a certain extent, the building blocks or structure of the work may be evident on the surface. Elements can be described in the physical sense, but the meaning or intention is the responsibility of the artist or composer.³⁰⁰

In many cultures, aesthetics may also be reflected in the functional aspects of an art form or celebration. The Moche culture of South America created numerous stirrup vessels that often contained herbs or liquids that were used as medicines or for rituals. The vessel in fig.6, was possibly carved into the face of an important figure or deity from the community.³⁰¹ There are

²⁹⁸ James Hamilton, Jr., *What is Biblical Theology*, 62.

²⁹⁹ Mittler, *Art in Focus*, 86.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ “Moche Portrait Head Bottle”, (5th-6th century B.C.), *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, accessed on April 7, 2022. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/308527>.

symbols placed on the figure that possibly represent life and death. In certain cultures, these vessels would have been ceremoniously broken – a ritual thought to release the spirit of the person who had died.



Fig. 6, “Moche Portrait Head Bottle”, (5th-6th century B.C.), *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Accessed on April 7, 2022. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/308527>.

Regarding evaluation, the reviewer's opinion should be minimized unless they are considered an expert in that discipline. Allowing opinion or bias to take place can lead to a false indictment of otherwise genuine work. Marius Marton suggests that the passage of Romans 2:1 can be used by a person researching a presentation intended for a church congregation.³⁰² Close examination of work requires a certain amount of expertise and commitment that reaches beyond the average. The byproduct of evaluating Christian art forms has the benefit of building

³⁰² Marius Marton, *Worship Music in the 21st Century*, 75-76.

up skills in ethnodoxology and discernment. By rule, contextualization requires study and immersion, however building a skill in the science of evaluation will enable individuals to facilitate a proper approach.

Historically, a caution emerges when the researcher becomes so entrenched in the culture that they are studying that they lose objectivity. In Bakan's study of the Balinese gamelan, the author became so connected with the gamelan society that he introduced the idea that his own experience should be the subject of study.³⁰³ In the early part of the 20th century, Andre Breton became so involved with the observation and functionality of Haitian Vodou, that he became reluctant to share the secretive practices that he participated in.³⁰⁴ Each of these experiences underscores the need for the evaluator to understand the context of the signs and symbols of another tradition, while keeping a proper distance.

The use of symbolism in the Christian culture is no different than other traditional cultures. The repeated use of certain symbols is passed on from generation to generation. Hamilton describes the "symbolic universe" of the Bible that the authors of scripture used to teach and communicate.³⁰⁵ Barrs suggests that imagery begins with life experiences outside of religious thought, only to be transformed after the infilling of the Holy Spirit.³⁰⁶ Author Douglas

³⁰³ Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation*, 330.

³⁰⁴ Terri Geis, "Myth, History and Repetition: André Breton and Vodou in Haiti," *South Central Review* 32, no. 1 (2015): 56–75, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44016878>.

³⁰⁵ James Hamilton, *What is Biblical Theology*, 65.

³⁰⁶ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 43.

Bond refers to the poetry of Psalms that eschews personal tastes and opinions stating: “God-ordained means of keeping every generation enthralled with the surpassing splendor of biblical truth.”³⁰⁷ The symbolism and meaning of creative works may reflect a secular worldview coupled with a biblical message. Each still reflects the beauty of God’s kingdom.

The lessons learned from research, such as the Hindu-inspired music of *Aradhana*, demonstrate that a thorough examination of symbolism and intent is critical.³⁰⁸ Although some Hindu people worship "Jesu Bhakti" as the one true God, it does not mean that they do not acknowledge the other gods. Author Christopher Hale acknowledges the potential of broadening the understanding of the Christian faith through a study of Hindu traditions. The question remains whether the evaluation of art forms such as this maintains a standard in which participants are reinforced by scripture or led astray by contradictions.

A study by the Pew Research Center reinforces this assumption when Americans were asked questions about religious affiliation.³⁰⁹ Depending on the question, some will say they are Christian in one sense and unaffiliated in another. The study also concludes that people will say one thing face to face, but something else when responding to a survey on the internet. Another finding suggests that research and observations previously done in person or by phone cannot be used as a point of comparison for studies conducted in writing or the internet.³¹⁰ A study by

³⁰⁷ Douglas Bond, "Biblical Poetry in a Postbiblical, Postpoetry World." In *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples*, ed's. Wells and Van Neste (Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2017), 72.

³⁰⁸ Hale, “Where Hindu and Christian Worlds Meet,” In *Worship and Mission*, 295.

³⁰⁹ _____ “Measuring Religion in Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel,” Pew Research Center, accessed on March 7, 2022, <https://www.pewforum.org/2021/01/14/measuring-religion-in-pew-research-centers-american-trends-panel/>.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

Miller in the *Virginia Law Review* reflects a current thought in which the category “spiritual but not religious,” should receive protection under the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment.³¹¹ In terms of the artist, this reflection of new age religion seems to indicate that any form of individual spirituality is just as acceptable under the law as organized religion. In terms of analyzing creative art forms, the statements of the artist reflect both the mechanical and spiritual aspects of their creation.

³¹¹ Courtney Miller, “Spiritual but not Religious: Rethinking the Legal Definition of Religion,” *Virginia Law Review* 102, no. 3 (2016): 833–94, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43923324>.

Chapter Five – Conclusion

Findings and Indications

The most obvious and important observation of fine arts is the intermingling and separation of religion and worldview. Throughout history artwork in the form of drawing and painting, instrumental and vocal music, dance, and movement has paralleled the development of society and technology. Anthropologists have relied on imagery to understand the fabric of civilizations, while music and movement provided insight into ceremonies and celebrations. A thread that is common to each civilization is some type of relationship with a mythical or mystical god. As noted in this research, technology played an important part in the recording of important moments in the history of each culture. In this regard, historical context is important – “technology” may be as simple as replacing a clay stick with a lead pencil.

Geography may be one of the most important factors in the production of artworks for use in society or the recording of religious themes. Early civilizations would create works with material that was easy to locate in their surroundings. During the time of Moses, parchment or vellum made from animal skins would have been available, but expensive. Papyrus from the Nile River valley was also available until over-harvesting resulted in the near extinction of the reed used to make it.³¹² Some of the earliest paintings used pigments that were difficult to obtain. In painting the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the blue pigment that Michelangelo applied with a brush made from squirrel fur came from cobalt that was melted into glass and then ground to a pigment.³¹³

³¹² Kleiner, Mamiya and Tansey, *Art Through the Ages*, 319.

³¹³ King, *Michelangelo, and the Pope's Ceiling*, 125.

However, the advancement in civilization was chronicled, the importance of the arts rose with the importance of a system of faith. The reason that many early images of art represented themes from Scripture is that the church or royalty were the few institutions that could afford the cost of such things. This was not limited to Christianity. Silk scrolls found in China and Japan often depicted life around the emperor's palace. In nearly every culture, the representation of a god or deity was in relationship with living people. The work of the Japanese master Hokusai often reflected the theme of man against nature – with a sacred image of Mt. Fuji in the background. The epic block print “The Great Wave Off of Kanagawa,” is one such example.³¹⁴

The work of Bakan illustrates the crossover between a musical instrument and religious belief. The “great gongs” of the Balinese gamelan are described by Bakan: “The gong *ageng* is thus to the gamelan what the sacred volcano, Mount Agung, is to Bali, and what the trinity of supreme Hindu deities – Brahma, Wisnu, and Siwa, collectively the ‘trimurti’ (three shapes) of God – is to the universe itself.”³¹⁵ Western societies often enjoy displaying images of Buddha or Vishnu as decorations and ornaments, whereas these images would normally be placed in a shrine in a Hindu home.

The primary indication of these findings is that the creative arts team for a local congregation may not have the tools or information to discern things that properly identify the Christian faith and things that represent society. The work of Wickeri in Farhadian is an example of how deeply Hindu traditions influence the lives of Christians in India.³¹⁶ Many of

³¹⁴ Kleiner, Mamiya and Tansey, *Art Through the Ages*, 831.

³¹⁵ Bakan, *Music of Death and New Creation*, 40.

³¹⁶ Philip L. Wickeri, “The Mar Thoma Christians of Kerala: A Study of the Relationship between Liturgy and Mission in the Indian Context,” ed. James R. Krabill *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 86-87.

those Christians practice the same traditions as everyone else in their community, however, they only worship the God of the Bible. They also set themselves apart during worship services which are unique both to India and other systems of Christian faith.

Understanding that each system of Christian faith is unique is key to understanding that Godly worship can be reflected in many ways. The research of Page and Gray suggests that Protestant churches in America vary tremendously. The authors note that many North American churches believe that the Western way is the best way.³¹⁷ This viewpoint stops short of recognizing the growth of the Christian church in places far away from North America or Europe. As Moreau points out, the key to understanding the worship practices of a different culture is to study the social fabric of that culture.³¹⁸ Research suggests that using a reliable source such as a scholarly journal can provide a creative arts team with the information necessary to understand the culture, the Biblical principles behind their music or art, and possibly some insights on the artist who created the work.

Syncretism and Symbolism

A conclusion drawn from this study refers to the dual meaning of symbols in society. A dance recital may include light from a fire or the ringing of a bell – the visual cue may be identical, but the reference is vastly different. In the Buddhist culture, the positions of the hands and fingers are called *mudra*. Hindu or Buddhist dance may have as many as 500 different symbolic hand and finger movements.³¹⁹ As noted earlier, understanding the significance of any

³¹⁷ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*,

³¹⁸ Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith*,

³¹⁹ Swami Satyananda Saraswati, and Janez Kristijan Hiti, *Asana pranayama mudra bandha* (Bihar, India: Yoga Publications Trust, 1996), 419.

creative work from another culture requires interpretation. Gaining access to the work of an individual in that culture or an explanation from the artisans themselves is the best way to understand the meaning or intention of the performance. A *mudra* dance that was created to honor God would probably include gestures that originated in Hinduism.

Author James Hamilton begins the work on symbolism by defining the elements of biblical theology. In creating a short list of criteria, he writes: “What is the ‘interpretive perspective’? It’s the framework of assumptions and presuppositions, associations and identifications, truths and symbols that are taken for granted as an author or speaker describes the world and the events that take place in it.”³²⁰ The information that this criterion would elicit could also be applied to the theology of any system of faith, or as a baseline for understanding the meaning behind a creative performance.

As suggested by the writing of Page and Gray, the world of the Christian artist has become a place where sensitivity to cultural diversity is paramount.³²¹ Syncretism can find many ways to grow within a fine arts performance if the biblical understanding of the artist is not thorough. Page and Gray refer to the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple:

“As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name - or men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm – when he comes and prays toward this temple, then hear from heaven your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this I have built bears your name.” (1 Kings, 8:41-43).

The guiding principle is to learn from other cultures, but also be prepared to teach. Syncretism is distinctly possible – and very likely – in many cultures because syncretic elements are commonly

³²⁰ Hamilton, Jr., *What is Biblical Theology*, 15.

³²¹ Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 174.

found in most communities. Page and Gray point out that misunderstanding the worship practice of another culture may result from a lack of theological questioning.³²² One of the conclusions of this research is that many artists with a role in the Christian church have not received theological training that equals their preparation in the arts. As Whaley points out, thorough learning and teaching of scripture will provide the framework to understand and evaluate other presentations.³²³

Significance

Anthropology and the Arts

As noted earlier in this study, the creation of music, dance, and visual arts often was the result of the influence of a system of faith or royal household or a practical need of a local community. The source of influence could be identified by the means or location in which the art was located. Works of a church or royal commission may still be viewed at a national museum, symphony, or cathedral, whereas folk art may only be found in a local celebration or archeological dig. Merriam makes an important distinction regarding the study of institutional and folk music. Using music as an example, Merriam suggests that very few cultures have elaborate theories of sound. This would allow for a structured analysis to take place by an observer outside of the performance.³²⁴ Conversely, folk evaluation looks at the words and actions that have purpose or value. The author's statement readily applies to the critique of any type of work: "The folk evaluation is the explanation of the people themselves for their actions, while the analytical evaluation is applied by the outsider, based upon experience in a variety of

³²² Page and Gray, *Hungry for Worship*, 173.

³²³ Whaley, *Exalt His Name*, 138-139.

³²⁴ Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, 31.

cultures, and directed toward the broad aim of understanding regularities in human behavior.”³²⁵ Neither process is perfect, however, both help create a framework that further investigation can take place.

In the early 1960s, Alan Lomax published a comprehensive work of music that he called "cantometrics." This was followed by a study of dance or movement called "choreometrics."³²⁶ Each of the studies includes a rating scale that is used to evaluate elements that are woven into the structure or the performance of the piece. Since that time, both studies have come under scrutiny by researchers who decry the incongruities and others who applaud the analytical approach. Lomax understood that taking a wholesale approach would reveal many flaws, however, he acknowledges that there are already numerous specific studies of structure in fine arts; preferring to place the structure in terms of the emotional quality.³²⁷ The statements of Blacking reflect the work of Lomax. Blacking agrees that the only way to understand why "Mozart is Mozart" is to study them intently. He also concludes: "We need a unitary method of musical analysis which can not only be applied to all music, but can explain both the form, the social and emotional content, and the effects of music, as systems of relationships between an infinite number of variables."³²⁸ The essence of cantometrics and choreometrics is the same as the four-step critique method. That essence begins with a knowledge of the structure of the art form which is then applied to the social structure or context in which the work was created.

³²⁵ Merriam, *Anthropology of Music*, 31-32.

³²⁶ Alan Lomax, "Song Structure and Social Structure," *Ethnology*, Oct. 1962. Vol.1, No.4, (University of Pittsburgh Press), 425-451, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3772850>.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Blacking, "Structuralism in Venda Music," 93.

Significance in Worship

The theme that is repeated most often in this study is that the relationship between art that is created in the secular sense constantly crosses over with work that reflects a culture's system of faith. Whether music, dance, visual art, or a version of conceptual art, the work of artists constantly reflects worship, spirituality, emotion, or environmental splendor. The Eurocentric approach dominates Western understanding of art; however, the meaning of the work may be completely different in other parts of the globe. The four-step critique method seeks to be allied with a systematic approach based on standards like Lomax's cantometrics. This approach recognizes that creative art forms vary tremendously, but provides a systematic approach based on elements common to that discipline.³²⁹

The research and writing of Barrs support the systematic analysis of creative art while recognizing both the cultural value and the presence of art and artist in God's kingdom.³³⁰ Similarly, Kauflin's work speaks to the heart of the artist as a performer and as a teacher of art (in this case – music) and theology.³³¹ Fundamentally, the first two steps of the critique method – description and analysis - could be viewed as the “structured” portion of a review, while the second and third – interpretation and evaluation – could be viewed as the “social” portion.

There has been a long-standing argument that says Christian art should not mimic secular art or vice versa. This viewpoint usually reflects some sort of bias or lack of understanding on the part of the person making this type of judgment. The four-step method attempts to limit

³²⁹ Lomax, “Song and Social Structure,” 425.

³³⁰ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 58.

³³¹ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 53.

the amount of impact of opinion or bias. Christian artists and musicians use secular themes to draw in people from the outside who would not otherwise attend a worship service. Towns and Whaley wrote about the evangelist Homer Rodeheaver who incorporated popular music styles to draw people into revival services.³³² Working with charismatic preacher Billy Sunday, Rodeheaver would utilize classic hymns and patriotic songs to energize large groups of people with the gospel message and American pride. Sunday and Rodeheaver were not alone. Both Wesley brothers were known to incorporate the melodies of popular songs into their hymns.

The significance of this part of the study mirrors the main philosophy of cantometrics. Some countless examples and techniques can be used to study the structural elements of music, dance, and song. Even simple patterns like the music of the "Stomp Dance" can be readily analyzed. Researchers agree that contextualizing fine artworks in terms of culture and belief is the most important process in evaluation. Contextualization in terms of worship art comes from seeking out and understanding the heart of the artist or composer.

Human Nature and Limitations

The Reality of the Church and Worldview

The studies of ethnomusicology by Lomax, Merriam, Nettl, and Blacking all agree on the basic assumption that research will be conducted by individuals who have some expertise in the discipline of the fine arts that they propose to study. The reality of life in the 21st century shows that many church congregations are being led by worship leaders who lack formal music or theological training. As author Dave Williams points out, the pastor of the church may be overwhelmed with other responsibilities or not prepared to teach *and* preach.³³³ It may not be

³³² Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 240-241.

³³³ Dave Williams, *How to Help Your Pastor Succeed: Moving from the Multitude to the Inner Circle*, (Lansing, MI: Decapolis Books, 2005), 20-21.

fair to say that worship leadership is a folk profession, however, many churches have leadership teams that are fielded by hobby artists and lay organizers. These simple facts are at the basis of the limiting factors of the four-step critique method.

The health crisis of the early 2020s has demonstrated that hobbyists from all over the globe have turned into armchair production specialists. A Lifeway Research poll stated that by early 2021, 85% of Protestant church communities were offering live-streamed services.³³⁴ Many of those churches were using technologies managed by volunteers from their community. The ease of broadcasting media through outlets such as Facebook has enabled people from around the world to unabashedly share secular and religious content. Unfortunately, the “gonzo journalism” of the Vietnam war era has become the new norm of the 21st century.

The prevalence of misrepresented information enabled by the internet, combined with an increased prevalence of informally trained church staff further illustrates the limitations of analyzing cultural artforms. Kauflin suggests that the first weapon in the fight against inerrancy is to establish a creative arts team that values the integrity of their work and the work of fellow Christian artists. Studying the words of Scripture – both personally and privately – will help to provide the worship artist with a heart for Christian artworks.³³⁵ The idea behind discipline and discernment can be found in 1 Corinthians 12; each person that makes up the body of believers has an important role to play, and each has a God-given talent. Working as an effective team, the worship artists can evaluate works from anywhere on earth that can help to lead their congregation into worship.

³³⁴ “Online Services Expanded Reach of Churches During Pandemic,” *Lifeway Newsroom*. Accessed on March 10, 2022. <https://news.lifeway.com/2021/10/14/online-services-expanded-reach-of-churches-during-pandemic/#:~:text=As%20the%20coronavirus%20began%20to,to%2097%25%20in%20April%202020>.

³³⁵ Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 199.

Limitations From Ethnodoxology

The four-step critique method provides a structured approach for viewing art forms, but limiting factors can be presented within any type of expression of art. Researcher Brian Schrag suggests that music or movement may be so completely removed from the normal activities of a culture that even members of that culture cannot explain it. He also suggests that a presentation of the arts may be expanded or condensed or require knowledge specific to an event or activity.³³⁶ Many types of conceptual art only exist in the moment, the enactment of the performance changes each time it is performed. These types of expression may be spiritual and a deep reflection of the movement of the Holy Spirit. They can also be a spontaneous creation that the artist performs with no regard to anyone but themselves.

As stated earlier in this research, another common assumption is that arts are a universal language. Author Robin Harris uses the example of music arranged in a minor pentatonic scale. The pastor of the Russian church that she engaged did not allow music composed in a minor key to be played until Harris pointed out that traditional Russian musicians viewed such music as joyous or triumphant.³³⁷ In visual arts, the light blue color is often thought to represent peace or purity whereas dark blue often represents authority. In the American culture, blue often represents sadness or depression. Taking the term literally, singing the "blues" could be a concept that is confusing to another culture. Citing another example, bells are used in many

³³⁶ Brian Schrag, "Ethnoartistic Cocrecreation in the Kingdom of God," in Krabill, *Worship and Mission in the Global Church*, 51.

³³⁷ Robin Harris, "The Great Misconception," in Krabill, *Worship, and Mission in the Global Church*, 83.

cultures around the world for different purposes. In the Buddhist cultures of Asia, ringing a bell may signify the voice of Buddha and a call for the protection of heavenly deities.³³⁸

Many of the essays in Krabill's work reflect the work of ethnodoxologists around the world. Quite a few of the essayists live in the cultures that they study. Universally, each of the authors is thoroughly trained in scripture and remains open-minded towards the arts and presentations of the cultures they work with. Understanding how an unfamiliar culture interprets the lessons of the Bible and places them into a framework of their society is the greatest limitation of the critique method. The work of Merriam, Nettle, and McKinney provide critical insights from the field of ethnology, but they maintain an unbiased approach to the faith systems of that culture. This may seem like a necessary limitation. To completely contextualize the arts of an unfamiliar culture, a researcher – whether Christian or not – needs to approach that culture with as few preconceptions as possible.³³⁹ At some point after beginning a study, the researcher can seek out the work of an ethnoarts/ethnodoxology specialist from that culture to learn more about their artistic expression and religion.

Recommendations

Study Scripture

The need to have a good understanding of scripture is at the very core of this research and this version of the four-step critique method. As the term ethnomusicology implies, anyone involved in this research has musical training combined with some knowledge of the procedures relating to musical anthropology. Put simply, this study focuses on theology, musicality, and

³³⁸ Kelsey Seymour, “The Buddha’s Voice: Ritual Sound and Sensory Experience in Medieval Chinese Religious Practice,” (2018): Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations, 2814. <https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/2814>.

³³⁹ McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals*, 9-10.

anthropology. These concepts are reinforced in the Bible. The passages of Hebrews 5:7 – 6:12 remind each person involved in a worship team that the preparation they have received in their Christian walk needs to be renewed and refreshed to grow. As Kauflin writes, growth leads to sophistication – the level of sophistication that is needed to contextualize worship arts in terms of culture and biblical veracity. James Hamilton discussed symbols and patterns in his research of the Bible: “By the phrase ‘biblical theology’ I mean the interpretive perspective reflected in the way the biblical authors have presented their understanding of earlier Scripture, redemptive history, and the events they are describing, recounting, celebrating, or addressing in narratives, poems, proverbs, letters, and apocalypses.”³⁴⁰ These qualities can be embedded in the art forms of other cultures, whether they are tied to Christianity or another form of religion.

Furthermore, Kauflin suggests that a study of theology should include Biblical doctrine. The secular worldview often associates “doctrine” with political dogma; however, Kauflin points out that Biblical doctrine refers to the concepts taught in scripture.³⁴¹ He refers to the statement shared in Titus 1:9 in which a knowledge of sound Biblical doctrine can be used to teach and rebuke. Worship leaders and creative artists regularly share the gospel message through songs, preaching, and sharing of Biblical creeds. When a congregation is led to participate through song, prayer, or liturgical sacraments, they are participating in a living celebration of God's diligence over salvation. Author and theologian Robert Webber aptly uses the term "ancient-future worship" to describe the remembrance that each person participates in, combined with an acknowledgment of the second coming of Jesus Christ and His rule over a renewed kingdom.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ James Hamilton, Jr., *What is Biblical Theology*, 16.

³⁴¹ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 28.

³⁴² Robert Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*, 55.

In terms of the gospel narrative, worship leaders in America may be part of a local worship community with members from many different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. As mentioned, the New Testament is relatively quiet in terms of how the “new” church should worship; while at the same time the Testament is full of stories in which Jesus, his disciples and apostles entered both Hebrew and gentile communities. Being well-versed in theology is the key to making the first step into a new community – whether at home or abroad. It makes sense that a group of Christian believers from diverse backgrounds can be unified with scripture. Music can be used as a tool for opening conversations that can be built upon. Worship leaders should encourage the use of traditional art forms if both sides work together to ensure that new expression of worship still meet scriptural standards.

Participate in the World of Ethnodoxology

Realistically, a creative arts team may examine the faith practices of other cultures in a cyclical way. For example, the demographics of the local community may require a practice of analyzing the musical styles of sub-cultures of America. This demographic may be changing in ways that people don't see or anticipate. As noted at the beginning of this study, Generation Z – teens to young adults – will be the first generation in which people identifying as "white" will be a minority. The study of ethnodoxology can be channeled in such a way as to study ethnomusicology as an entrance to the anthropology of culture.³⁴³ As the worship team is learning and sharing the words of Scripture, they can acquire basic insights into various world cultures by using music as a catalyst.

³⁴³ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*,

Nettl suggests that studying the music of an entire population is beneficial, yet individual tastes within the community can vary tremendously. The widely performed song “Hallelujah,” by Leonard Cohen was described earlier in this research. It’s estimated that the song has been reproduced approximately 300 times – each reflecting a different take on the original song.³⁴⁴ Certain theologians believe that worship in song should not contain any organized music, rather it should be a time in which each person sings their own "heart song" to the Lord. Tying into the idea of ethnomusicology, Nettl writes: "A music" may be the musical repertory of a society, and we are interested in how it is distributed through the population, but the music of a single individual, the musical *idiolect*, may also be "a music."³⁴⁵ There can be many variations within a culture. The worship team should strive to understand what theological goal drives their study of cultural performance. If a poem or dance from an outside culture is incorporated into a study of Ecclesiastes for instance, then it should be represented as just that, not as an example of the entire culture.

Creative arts can be individualistic or nationalistic. The process of contextualizing religion and social practices begins with an intense study of certain cultures. Caution and respect are key concepts in the study of either the worship or social practices of world cultures and art forms, yet it isn't to say that studying a handful of cultures won't lead to developing a skill set that can be used to approach a new culture. Even the epic works of Krabill, Farhadian, Lomax, and Titon have references to many world cultures, often in terms of identifying key differences between them. The collection of essays or information found in these studies often includes references to the traditional use of fine art and the same traditions used in a Christian context. A

³⁴⁴ Zach Schonfeld, “60 Versions of Leonard Cohen’s ‘Hallelujah’ Ranked,” Newsweek, accessed March 13, 2022, <https://www.newsweek.com/60-versions-leonard-cohens-hallelujah-ranked-303580>.

³⁴⁵ Nettl, *The Study of Ethnomusicology*, 65.

basic understanding may be all that is necessary. The skill that accompanies this learning may be enough to lead others to an increased level of discernment in the future. At the beginning of the series of essays found in Farhadian, John Witvliet suggests: "This volume is an exercise in eschatological imagination formation. Can we imagine ourselves as worship in heaven alongside the people we will encounter? Can we realize that we are already united with them in the Spirit-formed sinews of Christ's body?"³⁴⁶ Consistently studying the relationship between Christian faith and cultural habits will enable creative artists to ask better questions.

Use the Four-Step Critique Method to Increase Understanding

A four-step critique offers both subjective and objective perspectives when observing a fine arts performance. In the mind of the artist, this critique method underscores the need of understanding the heart and motivations of an artist. To some extent, the artist's culture will influence the work. This study uses abstract expressionism as an example of a genre of work that can only be explained by the artist. The methods used to understand non-objective or expressive work led to a standard that can be applied to all works. Comparing the regulative and normative theories of applying scripture, theologians like Dan Block suggest that a single passage of scripture should not be used out of the context of the rest of the book or chapter, yet Christians do this all the time.³⁴⁷ Other theologians such as Hamilton and Kauflin point out that the New Testament offers very little advice on how or what worship should "look" like. Broad analysis of both Testaments exposes the standards that should be maintained, the risk of idolatry at every level, and the openness to creative worship. Prior to Pentecost, Jesus told his disciples that they would receive power to speak boldly of the teaching of Scripture from the Holy Spirit.

³⁴⁶ John D. Witvliet, "Series Preface," in *Christian Worship Worldwide*, ed. Charles E. Farhadian, xxi.

³⁴⁷ Block, *For the Glory of God*, 2-3.

Being filled with the languages of world cultures was the foundation of Jesus' promise. Being able to communicate in the native language is the basis of contextualization.

The Western world has experienced the challenge of welcoming new cultures into houses of worship, as well as adjusting to current trends in music, art, dance, and drama that are home grown. Using the four-step critique method is at once literal and figurative. If the literal message of the gospel narrative is studied and communicated to the church community, then the figural message found in signs, symbols, imagery, and patterns can be understood. The four-step critique method establishes the basic core of the work followed by an explanation of the significance. A sample copy of a typical four-step critique method form is found in the appendix.

Description:

Under normal circumstances, a description provides an overview of the general characteristics of an object. Since the four-step method is designed for an in-depth study, the description takes on the functional role of providing a citation or reference for the work. As stated earlier, the description may suffice if the work of the artist is widely known in the local community or congregation. In that case, the description provides the information for the work to be properly recognized and attributed – especially if the presentation is going to be published or shared over the internet.

Analysis:

The analysis stage of the four-step method focuses on the structure of the work. In visual arts, the analysis is comprised of the basic elements of art and the principles behind their application. Music, dance, and conceptual art presentations have building blocks that can be examined as part of the analysis. The idea is not to confuse the participant but to ask questions

that can be used for further examination. For example, the metrical Psalter is an example of a book of poems that placed words into a type of "metered melody" which allowed participants to sing them.³⁴⁸ The analysis phase examines the type of meter used.

Interpretation:

The first two steps of the critique method establish basic criteria of the art form and its constructs. The interpretation phase seeks to establish the symbolic or typological use of those building blocks. Speaking artistically, the interpretation phase is the place where the reviewer begins to understand the artist and the cultures that they are a part of. At some point, before beginning a four-step critique, the creative arts team will have sought out work that fits the category of expressive worship. In an age of the ubiquitous "word search" the team probably sought to find something to match the needs of their pastor's message. For example, the team may search "expressive Christian ballet," and be pointed in several different directions. After establishing the description and analysis of the piece, they may have to explain the symbolism of the movements.

Evaluation:

The evaluation of the critique may swing from easy to difficult. If the work is by a well-known artist and features inspiration from a well-known passage of scripture, then the work may be easy to evaluate. If the work is from a folk artist in an unfamiliar culture, then the evaluation may be difficult. The team may have to establish the criterion for evaluation. For example, does the work represent the artist's intentions honestly? Is the work appropriate for Sunday worship or for viewing at another time? As the writing of Barrs reflects, all work can reflect the

³⁴⁸ James H. Grant Jr., "How I Introduced Psalm Singing to My Church Without Getting Fired," ed. Wells and Van Neste, *Forgotten Songs*, 99.

the beauty of God's kingdom; the heart of the artist and the appropriateness of the work in certain places require discernment.

Implications for Practice

One of the primary implications of incorporating the four-step critique method into the evaluation of any fine arts performance is that it will improve the understanding of both internal and external presentations. It is widely accepted that studying the work of another culture can lead to a greater understanding of all cultures including the local community. Analyzing the dance and movement of a Native North American culture can hone observation skills and provide teaching opportunities for a youth dance team. Gaining a better understanding of the vocables used during a Polynesian performance will open avenues of questioning for similar performances from Africa.

The greatest limitation comes from a lack of willingness on the part of the creative arts team. If the music team does not have much formal training in music or theology, then they may be reluctant to invest the time to evaluate a performance from a different culture. Rather than shrug off the possibility of including worship practices from other cultures, a leader or pastor can encourage growth in the congregation by sharing presentations that have been thoroughly evaluated by a reputable source. Speaking generally, most music and many sermons come from a source outside of a home church. Keeping the four-step method on the horizon will encourage pastors and praise teams to ask questions about the music they play and the references they use during worship times and celebrations.

A creative arts team that recognizes the need to evaluate works of music, art, and dance may also feel inadequate when it comes to that evaluation. Going back to the lack of training, even a director with a degree in fine arts may feel clueless when it comes to preparing a critique.

This may be influenced by the actual purpose of the critique. Is this a review of a piece that will be copied or performed by the praise team, or is it an original performance that will be projected to the congregation? The same rules for the critique apply. The main difference is how deeply the review will be conducted and whether it contains information that will be used for edification.

The last implication lends itself to the integrity of the creative arts team. The pastor and worship leader should take a realistic assessment of the heart of the people in their congregation that are involved with the arts. It would seem overly critical to thoroughly examine the creative work of another group of artists when the host team of artists isn't operating to the same standard. Reality indicates that in the process of opening their arms to all who enter, churches also become recipients of individuals who lack the skill, integrity, or teachability that a person representing the Gospel should have. The passages of 2 Corinthians 8 serve as a reminder that learning, then applying, what is read in scripture sets the tone for everything the creative artists do with their God-given talent.

Summary

The two main conclusions that influence the need to incorporate the four-step critique method relate to the growing influence and availability of fine arts performances via the internet, and the lack of a reliable tool to analyze these works in terms of their adherence to scripture. The comprehensive studies of Lomax and Merriam illustrate the difficulty in assigning overarching criteria to music and dance of geographic areas when the research of Farhadian notes the influence of single individuals.³⁴⁹ For over a century the four-step method has been used to break down works of visual arts into building blocks and artist inspiration. This method

³⁴⁹ Farhadian, *Christian Worship Worldwide*, 4.

was fine-tuned to the idiosyncrasies of creativity; therefore, it appears to be a tool worthy of use in any other category of fine arts.

There are numerous studies of secular and Christian fine arts. The review of literature addresses the historical precedence of religious themes in the art forms of nearly every culture. A basic observation is that most cultures believed that they should “bring their best” before the local god or deity hence the art forms that were created were elevated to an important place in society. For this reason, those art forms often lasted through the millennia and the descriptions were recorded for teaching and study. The rise of Christianity proved to be the same. During the first century, the early Christian church mimicked the synagogues of the Hebrew nation, and the images that were created reflected both Hebrew and Christian sources.³⁵⁰

Incorporating the four-step critique method into the evaluation of worship practices around the world provides a foundation in which questions can be generated. During the description phase, the information necessary to create a citation, reference, or request to publish can be derived. The use of another artist's work or representation is often freely accessible in places where teaching and learning occur. To show a level of diligence that reflects the importance of the Gospel, a worship team should make every attempt to give credit where it is due. The description phase is also where a Biblical reference would be made. Many hymnals have a reference to scripture printed below the title of the work. This reference may not have been designated by the composer; however, it often provides a foundation for teaching.

The analysis of the work has a twofold function. During this phase, the structure or building blocks of the work are examined. For a musician, it may be the melody, timing, or key

³⁵⁰ Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 37.

signature. For a dancer, it may be space or style of movement. The second component of the analysis relates to the Biblical representation of worship. The language that makes up the structure of a Psalm becomes the building block of the song itself. In many cultures the language is key to the understanding of the song, however, other cultures may use a vocable where the form of the sound has meaning.

The third phase of the critique method may be the most crucial for teaching. In visual arts, the interpretation may reflect how or why certain colors or objects are placed in the image area. The photograph of the “Migrant Mother”³⁵¹ alluded to earlier has the face of the mother placed in the most dynamic location of the picture plane. The phrase “Hallelujah” – meaning “Praise the Lord” in Hebrew was emphatically placed at the end of each stanza.³⁵² In each case, the symbolic placement of key elements illustrates the importance of those elements to the meaning of the total work. The interpretation phase is the place in which scriptural lessons, or the worship experience are described based on symbolism or content. If a congregation is viewing a presentation from an unfamiliar culture, the interpretation of the work must accompany the presentation, or it becomes solely a matter of entertainment.

Simply put, the evaluation phase of the critique focuses on the significance of the work. Previous recognition of the artist or composer is often thought about as adequate. To the contrary, this research points out that a meaning arrived at through popular consensus may be different than the intention of the artist. The actual words of the artist are important. For example, the *Didache* was published in the first century, A.D., however, Christian cultures have

³⁵¹ Lange, “Migrant Mother: Nipomo, California.” 1936.

³⁵² Cohen, “Hallelujah,” *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

since argued the interpretation and application of baptism – a key teaching of the Apostles.³⁵³

The evaluation becomes significant if the reputation of the artist or the uniqueness of the work means the reviewer must investigate additional research related to the work. Often anthropological or missiological work has been done regarding the culture or artists in question.

An ethnodoxologist would be well-aware of the mistakes made by cultural anthropologists and missionaries before the late 20th century. Fortunately, many efforts were made over the last 70 years to correct the mistakes made and contextualized studies are readily available for many world cultures. Even though first-person documentation and exchanges have been recorded for cultural communities, the interviewee may lack a certain amount of credibility. An evaluation can be influenced by the relationship of the expert studying the arts of the culture and the community.³⁵⁴ In an effort to attain perfect immersion in culture, anthropologists unwittingly influenced that culture.

Just as the creative arts field is ever-changing, the foundational beliefs of each system of Christian worship have evolved. The complete Bible is printed in approximately 700 different languages – the New Testament alone is double that. It is unrealistic to believe that there are not discrepancies between these versions simply because not all language shares the exact same words. The Native North America New Testament described earlier is also an example of a variation of the Bible that uses a native vernacular to express concepts like traditional beliefs. With more and more teaching documents like this being produced by local cultures, the symbolism and the message of the Bible will become increasingly infused with traditions that may lead to syncretism. As Jerram Barrs repeatedly states, the heart of the artist who created the

³⁵³ White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship*, 20-21.

³⁵⁴ McKinney, *Globe-Trotting in Sandals*, 96.

work should be held accountable to a standard of worship.³⁵⁵ In the 21st century, every work presented for worship likely contains an explanation from the artists who created it.

Communication technology suggests that a simple cell phone can be used to record and transmit fine arts presentations around the world. Although language barriers will exist, a worship team should feel confident that most works will have some form of critique available – even if it's informal.

³⁵⁵ Barrs, *Echoes of Eden*, 62.

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The Four-Step Critique Method for Fine Arts

The Four-Step Critique Method is a process in which a fine arts presentation can be evaluated. This method can be used to guide the examination of a visual art, music, or dance from most sources. The objective is to create a review that minimizes opinion or bias.

DESCRIPTION: Name of the artist; title of the work; name of the book, album or recording that the work is a part of; date (if available); the medium; the repository.

Not all this information is available for every arts presentation. In the case of music or dance, the name of the composer may be different than the performer. Other information such as licensing or copyright information should be included here.

ANALYSIS: The analysis is a “black and white” assessment of the building blocks or structure of the work. This is a literal examination void of conjecture.

Visual Arts Analysis – Art elements (colors, lines, shapes, etc.) and Art Principles (balance, emphasis, variety, etc.)

Music Analysis – Key signature, melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, dynamics, texture, form, etc.

Dance Analysis – Body, action, space, time, energy, etc.

Conceptual Art – Artist/performer presentation, environment, elements that are atypical of standard genres.

INTERPRETATION: The key to an interpretation is to ask good questions. The interpretation is the way in which the items in the analysis are reviewed for their meaning. The artist’s description of their own work is critical.

Visual Arts Interpretation – The artist’s use of a flame or the color blue may be symbolic

Music Analysis – The meaning behind the lyrics can be literal or symbolic. The meaning can also change each time the music is performed adding importance to the contextualization of the work.

Dance Analysis – The piece may depict a story or emotion.

EVALUATION: In many cases, the evaluation may reflect the importance of the artist, or the event being portrayed. Any work of art may have a significant place in society that elevates it beyond the original intention.

Visual Arts Evaluation: The impact of the artist on history or their contribution to the arts world is often acknowledged.

Music Evaluation: The reputation of the composer, the impact the piece has on society or the music world, or the social or political bearing of the lyrics may be incorporated.

Dance Evaluation: Often a classical dance accompanies a classic piece of music in such a way that both the dance and the music are etched in history. Dance and movement may have symbolism that art or music alone may not have.

SPECIAL NOTE – CONCEPTUAL ART: The art world is fueled by creative imaginations that strive to be different and unique. When combined with evolving technologies, there are countless examples of arts presentations that are difficult to define. Art forms from around the world may not fit into neat categories. However, the four-step critique method was designed to work with abstract art forms; hence it can be applied to most forms of art.

The Four-Step Critique Method and the Bible

There is a strong historical precedence of art presentations being used for worship. By using the four-step method overlaid with biblical standards, an art form can be evaluated as a form of Christian worship or as a representation of the world that God created. This list should be used with the basic four-step critique.

DESCRIPTION: This is where the book, chapter and passage of scripture is identified.

ANALYSIS: The analysis focuses on the literal elements of the passage. Symbols may be included – especially if they are symbols that have a different meaning in other cultures.

INTERPRETATION: During this phase, care should be taken to compare literal symbolism and biblical themes. Often, the arrangements of elements represent a cultural tradition that may reflect a meaning or emotion, but not be appropriate as worship.

EVALUATION: If the performance or presentation is intended for Christian worship then the evaluation may be the first step in a review. The artist, culture and dynamics of the presentation become the precedence in which the artwork is selected for sharing with a church community. By necessity, the evaluation may need to include a translation or backstory that has been created by an expert that is familiar with the culture and their Christian heritage.

CONCEPTUAL ART DEFINED: A conceptual art performance is a loosely defined performance of music, dance, drama, or art that concentrates on an idea or message rather than a set of standards. A conceptual artist may improvise or alter the creation of the work. Conceptual art may take place during the creation of the artwork - if there is an end product, then it may be meaningless. Abstract art may be considered conceptual if it lacks any sort of planning or precedence, however, abstract artists and composers generally plan their work.

CONCEPTUAL ART AND WORSHIP: There is an opinion that worship can and should be from the heart and not confined to the words of a hymn or prayer. True heart song may be the most pure - albeit conceptual – form of praise. Many cultures honor God in worship through this process. The artistic form of worship does not follow a pattern or history, rather the tradition conforms to the day, time and participant.

