

Art exhibition illustrates the truth and beauty of Christ

Parables of the sower of the seeds, the good Samaritan, and the prodigal son provide themes

PCPC's 2009 Arts Festival season was filled with splendid blessings and treasures for the community to enjoy beginning with a tremendously encouraging presentation by former National Endowment of the Arts Chairman Dana Gioia on January 29. An internationally acclaimed poet, Gioia laid out the season's themes in such an articulate way that one of the attendees commented he was "truly opened to the idea that the arts could not only unite the church in some ways, but also might unite the denominations in Christ's gospel truth."

Speaking of Christ's universal concepts in His parables, Gioia pointed out that some truths are so dark and terrible that they need the pleasure of artistry to be willingly received and understood. "Think of *King Lear*," commented Dana Gioia. The elegant evening at Arlington Hall was a wonderful success with Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and non-Christian artists attending from all across the community.

On March 31, Makoto Fujimura spoke to 300 registered artists and patrons at Oak Lawn West. The artist brought a small painting that consisted of about thirty layers of pigments made from precious minerals such as azurite and malachite—over and over each other, all underneath gold leaf with a traditional *sumi-e* ink tree painted on top. It was dazzling and unique. It was easy to understand why he was chosen as the NEA Chairman's Medal Winner for 2008 and *World* magazine's Daniel Award. Fujimura agreed to be PCPC's 2009 Arts Festival's guest juror along with local juror Patricia Meadows. The two art professionals proved to be well suited and hit it off from the moment they were introduced.

Fujimura delivered a challenging presentation to the crowd based on the three themes of the festival: 1) Pursue stewardship of the culture rather than culture wars. He presented his concept through the parable of the sower and the seeds and the need to prepare one's own heart correctly. 2) Pursue generosity in art—generosity actually springs from the arts. He illustrated this point with the parable of the good Samaritan and developed the sanctifying aspect of grace. 3) Grace is given through the arts. Using the parable of the prodigal son, Fujimura emphasized the necessity of giving beauty as a gift with no expectation of return. Yet in the end, *we* are the artwork. Because we are Christians, Fujimura charged the artists to tap into their talents and be a gift to their neighbors. The crowd that evening was energized with enthusiasm!

The festival begins

During the first week of April, guest jurors Makoto Fujimura and Patricia Meadows selected 100 works of art to hang in the show from over 200 pieces delivered. From those pieces, the jurors first chose their favorite in each of the three themes. These three gold ribbon winners each won \$1,000. From the remaining 100, the jurors chose thirty blue ribbon winners with no regard to theme. PCPC member Liz Joe was selected by the almost 2,000 visitors to the exhibition as the viewers' favorite. Her quilt entitled

"Bail Out" was a hand-stitched maze that followed the experiences of the Prodigal Son in vibrant textiles with the exquisite workmanship of thread-painted faces that captured emotions. Mrs. Joe's eight months of hard work resulted in a \$1,000 award and many pats on the back.

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David Gappa, SEED OF FAITH—glass sculpture—Theme ONE Winner



Judy Franklin, THE SAMARITAN'S GIFTS—mosaic sculpture—Theme TWO Winner



THEME ONE WINNER DAVID GAPPA

(non-PCPC member), wrote to PCPC following the exhibit, *"Pete, Lawan, and the entire PCPC staff, I just wanted to take this time to express my deepest gratitude for what you and your organization are doing. You have succeeded in fostering an environment for artists to engage themselves aesthetically within their faith. You have provided an outlet for artisans to tap into the true origins of where our talents began, and allowed us a venue with which to focus our imagery. Focus is the key word here. All too often, 'artists' generate images and/or sculptures that seek out impacts inspired by anger, hate, anguish, lust, etc. Artisans, over the past several decades, have had a disconnect with drawing inspiration from the Creator Himself. As far as I am concerned, the true and only catalyst for who I am and what I create can only be harvested from our Creator Himself. My involvement with the PCPC exhibitions has helped guide me toward finding my voice as an artist, and for this, I am truly grateful."*

After being the jurors' choice as the **THEME TWO WINNER, JUDY FRANKLIN**, a PCPC member, was the topic of a column written by her art teacher at the Creative Arts Center, Katrina Doran, in the Texas Visual Artists newsletter. She said in part:

"Truth and Beauty, as it is revealed in nature and the Bible are what inspire Judy Franklin. Her travels to Italy, Israel, Japan and Spain have had an impact on her creative self-expression. Judy describes herself as a wife, mom, grandmother, artist, musician, and follower of Jesus Christ... I asked Judy Franklin what she would say to others about entering art shows, and she responded by saying, 'By all means do it. I was thrilled just to be accepted. Winning was a real surprise and wonderful affirmation. My friends and family have been excited for me and give me lots of encouragement.'"

THEME THREE WINNER RUTH ESHBAUGH

says of "The Embrace": *"The figures form a triangle as the two embrace. The Trinity is pictured; the Father, the Son and the relationship between the two depicted as an embrace representing the Spirit of God."*

Ruth's work depicts the return of her own prodigal son. She says, *"I am very grateful to Jesus, who never left my side and reminded me that He called me... He has been at work. He was there when I could only roll up in a ball and cry in bed. He did not leave me there. He is faithful and good. My next art piece is about being raised up from depression into joy and fulfillment. It is about worship."*

"What I saw after my name was called in a church full of people [as a winner] was me in the fetal position having been stricken over and over and knowing that Jesus brought me to that place that night. Now that is art."

"It wasn't enough that I won the award, my art was used in worship at my church and at Park Cities. I think He just wanted to drive home the point. I was honored, deeply honored, and I want to say, 'thank you, Lord.'"

Looking ahead

At three years old, the festival is still young, and the fruits may take some

time to mature. But with continued prayer, God's grace, and a lot of work, we will see a vibrant Dallas Christian artistic presence emerge that will help revitalize our culture. But in order for

this artistic renewal to occur in the local church, we need talented, well-trained artists who are committed to using their gifts for the glory of God and an audience that both

Ruth Eshbaugh, THE EMBRACE
mixed media—Theme THREE Winner



understands art's vital role in the church and is willing to support the artists in their work. Next spring we will focus on Christian art in its true sense; how it should glorify God and communicate truth, goodness, and beauty to extending the transforming presence of the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Francis Schaeffer wrote in his classic, *Art and the Bible*, "The first sentence in the Bible is the declaration that the Creator created: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth... therefore, the first reason that creativity has value is that God is the Creator.'"

—Lawan Andersen