

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

I am, by vocation and experience, a local church pastor. Being raised in a non-church-attending family gave me a particular perspective on church life when I began stumbling along as a follower of Jesus at the age of nineteen. That perspective has become a deep passion for connecting the life of the local church community – and its worship and missional life in particular – with contemporary culture. As a ‘pragmatic-intuitive’ I have been able to provide a practical working framework around any new personal understandings of ways by which I might strengthen the ability of the local church to sustain its community in their following of Christ in the world.

This ‘sustaining’ has not been constrained by my being brought up in a traditional mainstream church setting. I came to faith more than thirty-five years ago and discovered my creativity and organisational and leadership skills about the same time. I have not been satisfied with the status quo in church life since then.

I have no idea why I thought of creating a Stations of the Cross installation. I am not aware of ever having seen or participated in Stations of the Cross previously, or to have even read about it. I still have absolutely no artistic ability, and then knew very little about the arts generally. My initial motivation was to find a vehicle for expression for the small but increasing number of artists and other creatives of all hues who were gathering at Cityside Baptist Church in the late 1990’s. Stations of the Cross seemed like a good way to do that. So we took it up.

The next decade saw many more creative people join and participate in our community, most with sad stories to tell of how their craft had been ignored or abused or misunderstood by church communities or individuals. They found trust, openness and acceptance at Cityside, as well as encouragement to participate and use their skills in worship and mission without having to include anything that was overtly Christian. At the same time I was on a very steep learning curve, soaking up all I could about the creative process and how artists worked and how we could provide sanctuary for them and still maintain a specifically Christian context for them and their work. They were, and continue to be, my teachers.

The projects we entered into were not without critics – usually people outside our community, and often those ignorant of the objects they were criticising – yet I always wanted what we did as a church community to be sustaining of *Christian* faith and spirituality. I wanted to see transformation in the lives of artists and of those who participated as viewers or in some other way. An art exhibition, a new-media night or an electronic music concert in themselves held little appeal for me. I wanted spiritual depth and real connection with the emotions and realities of the stories of people, Christian or not. I wanted what we did to have integrity. I didn’t want art as a hook to draw people in so we could then hit them with something else. Nor did I want kitschy art that reproduced *sacri monti* panoramas or Sunday School-like works, regardless of how ‘realistic’ they might

be. I was convinced - again intuitively - that the more 'interpreted' and 'translated' a work was, the better it would connect with people who had never considered Christian faith as worth investigating. I felt strongly that there was a need for us to put some mystery back into the Christian story and works that were less realist would do this more profoundly. My experience in churches had been that a painting about the crucifixion needed to contain three crosses with men nailed to them, on a hill, if it was to be acceptable. The feeling was that nothing worthwhile could be conveyed in any other way.

Rapidly it became obvious from comments made verbally and in writing that people who participated in producing and 'consuming' some of the projects we put together were often encountering God in some unexpected but significant and, to me, very rewarding, ways. The question was how and why was this happening? Was it random? Was it valid? Was it really God? Was the experience different depending on how much experience or knowledge a person had of Christian faith? Was there danger in presenting work with so little obviously Christian 'content'? Did allowing such a broad range of interpretations amount to encouraging heresy? Was this 'stuff' really helpful in the journey of Christian spiritual formation, or merely froth and bubble as was often alleged? Could the arts be more than just supporters of the real message that would come later in verbal form? Could music, drama or painting, as well as being beautiful and personally up-lifting, also be an appropriate vehicle for substantive theology and personal transformation?

Worship Writers

So it was that I searched the literature to see what anyone had to say about using art in spiritual formation and art as a medium for engaging with God. I discovered that much had been written about how to use art in worship and art in churches, and especially about the dangers of doing so. I could find almost nothing that explored if or why such approaches might be of value, or what was happening in these encounters between people and art. In *Future Church*¹ which Walton describes as "a journey into what could be ... as to future possibilities", he covers the arts, creativity and worship, but doesn't make any attempt to connect the three. Worship, he says, "can involve singing, dancing, playing an instrument, praise and giving."² The arts are referred to only in relation to creative ways of accessing the culture, never to worship itself or to spiritual formation.

The front cover of *Dynamic Worship*³ describes itself as a "manual for strengthening the worship life of ... congregations". Despite being a very practical book it has nothing to say about the arts in worship, or about the principles that might shape worship. It covers issues such as "A Choir's

¹ Anthony J. Walton, *Future Church: Church by Design* (Wellington, New Zealand: Global Tribe Publications, 2002).

² *Ibid.*, 207.

³ Kennon L. Callahan, *Dynamic Worship: Mission Grace and Power* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994).

Development”,⁴ “hymns that share the Good News”⁵ and “putting sanctuary seating in the proper perspective”.⁶ Likewise, the excellent books over the last three decades by well known writers in the worship field, such as Stuart Murray,⁷ Brian McLaren,⁸ Sally Morgenthaler,⁹ Marva Dawn,¹⁰ and James White.¹¹ All reflect deeply on the current and future shape of the church and its worship (among other issues) but make no significant reference to art in spiritual formation or as a medium for engaging God.

Emerging church writers - Brian McLaren, Jonny Baker.¹² Steve Taylor,¹³ Dan Kimball,¹⁴ Alan Hirsch,¹⁵ Mike Frost, Eddie Gibbs,¹⁶ and Ryan Bolger, to name just some – might be expected to pick up these themes, as the arts figure prominently in most references to new and emerging forms of worship. These writers make very worthwhile contributions to our understanding of the changing church context in which worship and mission may take place, and what those activities could look like in that context. They also encourage the use of arts in worship. None go beyond giving explanation and description of essentially pragmatic practices when it comes to worship. This is true even of titles that could be expected to delve more deeply into the pastoral and formational aspects of worship, such as *Experience God in Worship*¹⁷ and *Art and Soul*.¹⁸ The latter does include a brief section with the promising heading “Art as a means of worship”, that it quickly acknowledges “is an aside, rather than a main focus.”¹⁹ In *The Sky is Falling*²⁰ Alan Roxburgh forges a significantly helpful integration of Turner’s work on liminality and *communitas* with his own on church

⁴ Ibid., Chapter 4.

⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁶ Ibid., Chapter 10.

⁷ Stuart Murray, *Church after Christendom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2004).

⁸ E.g. Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000).

⁹ Sally Morgenthaler, *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Believers into the Presence of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995).

¹⁰ Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), Marva J. Dawn, *A Royal 'Waste' of Time: The Splendour of Worshipping God and Being Church for the World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999).

¹¹ James White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, third ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000)

¹² <http://jonnybaker.blogs.com/>.

¹³ <http://www.emergentkiwi.org.nz/>; Steve Taylor, *The Out of Bounds Church? Learning to Create a Community of Faith in a Culture of Change* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Youth Specialties, 2005).

¹⁴ Dan Kimball, *The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003).

¹⁵ Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church* (Erina, NSW, Australia: Strand Publishing, 2003).

¹⁶ Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005).

¹⁷ Michael D. Warden, ed., *Experience God in Worship* (Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing, Inc., 2000).

¹⁸ Hilary Brand and Adrienne Chaplin, *Art and Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts* (Cumbria, UK: Solway/Paternoster, 1991).

¹⁹ Ibid., 81.

²⁰ Alan Roxburgh, *The Sky Is Falling: Leaders Lost in Transition* (Eagle, Idaho: ACI Publishing, 2005).

leadership and church transition, but doesn't connect either with the world of worship.

*Worship at the Next Level*²¹ extracts chapters from the writings of more than a dozen different authors. In chapter twelve, "Art for Faiths Sake", Clayton J Schmidt gives a helpful introduction into the ways art should be used in worship, but confines his comments to art as a tool for assisting worship. Robert Webber's essay (chapter six) provides useful insights about some of the values that will, or should, shape evangelical worship in the next generation. His discussion does not deal with how the arts might be used in worship nor analyse how or why worshippers might respond to that use. (This is also true of his other major works on worship.²²)

Len Sweet in chapter seven references his useful EPIC approach to worship – Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven, and Communal – that he develops in other writings.²³ Sweet states that the changing contemporary culture demands that mainline Protestant worship move from providing rational responses to experiential ones; from a few representatives leading the congregation to broader participation; from being word-based to being image-driven; from isolated individualism to worship that promotes community. Among contemporary writers he probably comes the closest to providing a foundation on which my interests and work could stand. He clearly understands the milieu in which the Church is currently operating, and offers insightful perspectives on how the Church needs to respond to and participate in that environment. While drawing on broad resources to successfully press his case, Sweet's work tends toward being a sociological and theological expression of how worship should connect with people in the emerging culture. He does not look at how people respond to art in a worship context, or respond to worship itself. This is also true of his other works and is the gap into which I will speak.

Art and Worship

In the last few years some journals and magazines have carried articles discussing liminality and worship and, more often, the arts in worship. They have tended to be brief and either very academic or 'surface-skimming' in approach.²⁴ Timothy L. Carson has a very helpful chapter "Betwixt and Between: worship and liminal reality"²⁵ in his excellent book, but the chapter is less than four pages

²¹ Tim Dearborn and Scott Coil, eds., *Worship at the Next Level: Insight from Contemporary Voices* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2004).

²² Eg. R. E. Webber, ed., *Music and the Arts in Christian Worship*, 7 vols., vol. IV, Book 1 and 2, *The Complete Library of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Star Song Publishing, 1994), Robert E. Webber, *Worship Old and New: A Biblical, Historical and Practical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1994).

²³ Leonard Sweet, *Experience God in Worship: Perspectives on the Future of Worship in the Church from Today's Most Prominent Leaders* (Loveland, Colorado: Group Publishing Inc, 2000).

²⁴ An exception to this, in both content and year of publication, would be: I. Randall Nichols, "Worship as Anti-Structure: The Contribution of Victor Turner," *Theology Today* 41, no. 4 (1985), 401-9.

²⁵ Timothy L. Carson, *Transforming Worship* (St Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2003), Chapter 7.

long! I have not been able to find any significant discussion of art *as* worship or what it is in art that worshippers respond to, or how art shapes their faith journey. The intersection of art and pastoral ministry appears to be a rarely considered topic.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the chapter I wrote in a book co-written with two friends²⁶ and also reproduced in *Worship at the Next Level* as chapter ten, does hint at some of the origins of my current research interests. What is surprising is that despite extensive searching I have been unable to find more than passing references in other places to the issues I raised in 2000. There seems to be very little literature investigating or reflecting on how people respond in worship and what they respond to. There is a very long list of ‘how to’ books available in the worship section of any Christian bookshop or on-line directory. There is very little however that looks below the surface and asks deeper questions about how and why people respond the way they do in worship, and the implications of that knowledge for how we shape our worship. While a considerable body of research and study exists in the field of ritual, there is a lack of debate about the methodological underpinning and larger framing ideas that shape our worship, and in particular the connections between art and worship. This lack is clearly demonstrated by McLaren in a chapter on strategies for engaging with the postmodern world. Thus while his strategy twelve advocates that “we must rely more than ever on art, music, literature, and drama to communicate our message”,²⁷ he then approvingly quotes Dennis Haack of Ransom Fellowship:

Story, song and image can be used as points of contact to explore the big issues of life without compromising the integrity of the gospel. Popular culture (TV, film, pop music), the very heart of the postmodern ethos, can become the beginning point for exploring the claims of Christ and thus serve as the postmodern equivalent of the Athenian altar to an unknown god. Modernity required an apologetic that was essentially rational; a postmodern apologetic needs to be essentially rooted in glory, with a greater emphasis on art, narrative and image (without for a moment being anything less than rational).²⁸

This reflects an attitude that I find abusive of the arts and creativity since it sees them as little more than tools for evangelism and persuasion, and fails to appreciate the intrinsic value of art: art is worthwhile in itself. To limit the arts in this way generally results in the view that the work must include the name of Jesus, or an image of the cross along with substantial text so that ‘the message’ is stated without possibility of ‘misinterpretation’. Any sense of beauty, spirituality, creativity, deep engagement, mystery, and that the Holy Spirit may be actively present in a medium or work, or God encountered in a work, is ignored. Art is capable of much more than just communicating a message: it is capable of conveying the voice of God and providing an encounter with God.

²⁶ Mike Riddell, Mark Pierson, and Cathy Kirkpatrick, *The Prodigal Project: Journey into the Emerging Church* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2000).

²⁷ McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side* 181.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 181.

While primarily interested in using drama as its art form, a similar attitude is exhibited in the approach of the Willow Creek Community Church to its worship. Carol Wade writes:

Drama is used to set up a pedagogic moment, servant to the pastor's message; it is not intended to function pedagogically on its own, nor is it intended in any way to function in a sacramental mode. Drama is not considered a suitable way to preach the Gospel when the goal is to raise a question and provide an answer that gives clear assurance and a "how-to" application; the drama sets up the problem, the message offers the solution.

Pritchard²⁹ offers the following critique, "Creekers generally seek to avoid complexity and they believe nuances are dispensable. Creekers often use visual stimulation as a substitute for thought and do not value verbal precision." He also points out that in Willow Creek's overall use of the arts there is "a potential lack of willingness to upset or confront Harry" and thus a high priority is placed on entertainment, with the result a "cheerful Christianity".³⁰

This is in stark contrast to the experience described by Mike Riddell on viewing "*Black Phoenix*", a work using the full-size prow of a fishing boat ravaged by fire, by New Zealand artist Ralph Hotere:

This was resurrection broken out of verbal confines, bludgeoning the imagination and challenging any resistance. No sermon I have ever heard has approached the power or lingering effect of that artwork. Here was no abstract discussion of rumours of immortality; this was immediate, visceral and inescapable. I was broken open by it, and left overwhelmed and exhausted. It was a religious experience, in the deepest sense of the term. How was it, I pondered later, that I had been moved at this level by an encounter entirely devoid of specific content? Why should the burnt-out hulk of a fishing vessel evoke such deep meditations on mortality?³¹

It is my hope that the work that follows here will contribute to the discussion and stimulate those more able than I am to give the Church a greater awareness of what may be going on in the worship it curates and offers publicly, particularly how it engages the arts. I write from within my own experience as a participant, primarily, in the Baptist family of churches in New Zealand and, more latterly, Australia. I feel competent to comment on the non-liturgical style of worship found in these and many other churches. I am much less able to comment on the use and impact of art in the worship and mission of the more liturgically oriented mainstream churches.

²⁹ Quoting G. A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Service: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).

³⁰ Carol Wade, *Stories of Resurrection: Traces of God in New Community* (Yale University, 2003 [cited 11 June 2006]); available from http://www.yale.edu/ism/colloq_journal/vol2/wade1.html.

³¹ Mike Riddell, "Deep Currents of the Heart," in *The Rite Stuff: Ritual in Contemporary Christian Worship and Mission*, ed. Pete Ward (Oxford: The Bible Reading Fellowship, 2004), 76.

In the West we are in the midst of a massive upsurge in interest in using the creative arts in worship and mission. We need to undergird that interest with reflection on the implications for pastoral ministry and spiritual formation. Without this analysis we are in danger of repeating the short-termed and shallow responses of the past that relied heavily, if not entirely, on pragmatism. It's time the Church understood worship as an art, rather than a project, and especially not as a project that uses art.

I will begin by describing the community of faith that developed *Stations of the Cross 2003*.³²

³² I will use the phrases *Stations*, *Stations 2003*, *Stations of the Cross 2003*, (*in italics*) to refer to the *Stations of the Cross: contemporary icons to reflect on at Easter 2003* installation. When the words are in plain type they will refer to the generic category.

CHAPTER TWO HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Cityside Baptist Church

Cityside Baptist Church is a new art work mounted on an old pedestal. Its history dates back to 1864, yet the name and current congregation are not much more than a decade old.

The 'pedestal', Mt Eden Baptist Church, flourished for almost 100 years on the edge of Auckland's inner city. Eventually the expanding commercial heart of the city left the building surrounded by shops, offices, factories and showrooms and most people traveling in to services from the suburbs. In 1960, after two years of discussions, the remaining handful of elderly parishioners decided to close the church and offer the buildings to the Baptist denomination to be used as a City Mission catering for street people and the homeless.

Worship life continued under the name of Auckland Baptist City Mission Church and comprised street people, City Mission staff (their attendance was initially compulsory!) and others with an interest in the work and clientele. Pastoral and worship leadership was provided by a succession of City Missioners - after each had coped with the pressures of running a large social service organisation the previous six days of the week.

By 1990 the City Mission itself had passed its peak as a very large organisation and was in decline. The church was struggling to maintain its life, and in what was described to me as "a last ditch attempt to see if a vibrant church could be regrown on the site", I was invited to be the Minister. I commenced my ministry in February 1993.

The weather board buildings were old, small, and badly chopped about by poorly executed alterations carried out by the City Mission. Various attempts had been made to make large open spaces suit a myriad of changing needs from clothing storage to drop-in centre and offices. The City Mission continued to operate its social services from the more recent addition leaving the church with not much more than an office and an auditorium in a wooden building built in 1908. By encouraging people to leave without feeling guilty if they didn't want to be around, the Sunday worship numbers dropped from an average of thirty to six. The name was changed to Cityside Baptist Church. The arts and artists were verbally acknowledged and practically valued; questioning, participation, and creativity were encouraged; spiritual formation, journeying, minimal structure and anti-institutionalisation were taken as a norm. Acceptance of all ages, stages and types of people was a weekly reality.

Stations of the Cross at Cityside Baptist Church

By 1996 Cityside was just starting to find its way as a new church. Numbers were small, around twenty to thirty adults at morning worship. I was passionate about building a worshipping community that would support and encourage all forms of creativity, and particularly artists. I had no experience in and very little understanding of the arts or art, but knew intuitively that they were important. In the previous few years several artists had started coming to Cityside. Often on

my mind were the questions “how can I encourage these artistic talents and how can we connect the Christian faith with the surrounding culture?” One morning around Christmas of that year I literally woke up saying to myself, “Why don't we do a contemporary series of the Stations of the Cross and open them to the public?” I have no idea where the concept came from and I'm not even sure how I knew about the Stations of the Cross. I was a first generation Christian whose experience of Christian worship was almost totally confined to Baptist churches. My experience of the Christian Church didn't go much further than that.

My original concept, floated in a letter to fourteen Citysiders on 6 January 1997, was to follow a labyrinth³³ pattern with the stations located within this somehow. Any form of creative art would be acceptable, other churches could be invited to view the art, and we could meet at Galbraiths Ale House afterwards to reflect on the experience. A meeting over lunch on Sunday February 9 found enough support to proceed and the installation opened on Maundy Thursday 27 March, less than six weeks later!

That first year we removed all the furniture and pews from our then ten metre by eight metre worship space and lined the walls to several metres off the floor with shiny black polythene. The art was hung on a central dividing wall constructed for the purpose, and the works were lit with candles and bed lamps sitting on the floor. The art comprised a wider variety of media than almost any year since - three televisions running two video loops, a single television and loop, seven televisions in a 'cross' stack running two video loops, walk-through tunnels, interactive face wiping, oil on canvas, calligraphy, mixed media, and a cartoon. The installation was advertised widely, mainly through churches of all denominations, and three hundred and seventy punters³⁴ turned up. Verbal feedback about the experience was overwhelmingly positive.

The basic concept remained unchanged over the following six years. The artists, who may have no formal training or any previous experience of producing art, were charged with reflecting on the biblical story that is assigned to the station they have chosen and interpreting that reflection in a form (using any media) that others can then reflect on. Sometimes I included traditional non-biblical stations e.g. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus, and Jesus falls for the first, second and third times, but generally, and particularly in recent years, I have stuck to the biblical story more closely.

Artist and Station Selection

Subsequently, in the light of the earlier experience, each October I would distribute among the congregation a printed list of the fourteen stations and biblical texts I had selected for that Easter. The list included tasks beyond the actual art, such as soundtrack, promotional graphics and preparation of installation notes.³⁵ Any Citysider could contribute by signing her or his name

³³ A labyrinth is a pathway that is walked as an aid to meditation and prayer. It is an ancient tool for spiritual formation.

³⁴ ‘Punter’ is a term commonly used in emerging and alternative worship circles in the Western world to describe a person who attends or participates in the worship.

³⁵ See appendix C.

alongside the station of choosing. There was no censorship and neither the content, style nor medium of the pieces was checked beforehand in any way other than to ensure adequate space and technical services such as electricity were available.

'Control' of the content of the works came from an awareness of relationships and the range of sensibilities within the Cityside community as only people from within our community were invited to contribute. We had several hard discussions as a community about what people see as acceptable and what they don't. This has not been written down and is not legislated, but all artists are aware of the story they stand in – they are part of a community that looks back, and looks forward.

The only parameters set for artists were those of size of the work and intention of the artist.³⁶ As curator I did not see the art until it arrived to be hung or placed in the space. The event is as much about providing a platform for Cityside's artists as it is about providing a contemporary remediation (I will discuss this term in chapter three) of an ancient sacred art form to help people interact with the Gospel story.

Current Stations Design.

The current design requires that the Cityside auditorium is stripped of all furniture and the considerable wall hangings and art. Black fabric four metres high (although we have experimented with silver paper and black polythene previously) lines the walls. The space is designed and walls are constructed to form a pathway around the art. This design varies considerably from year to year and isn't repeated. An enclosed area is set aside for reflection and communion. The art is then placed and lit by individual spotlights and an original soundtrack runs in the background. It is open from 6pm or midday until midnight, Wednesday to Friday of Holy Week. In 2003, to cope with increasing numbers of punters, we extended the hours to include Saturday.

Concept and Principles

While the concept has remained the same over the years, the design, promotion and curation has improved and developed with each installation. The number of punters coming through has risen from 370 to 1100. The budget has risen from \$500 in 1997 to \$4000 in 2003. This comes primarily from Trusts and private individuals. The church itself does not contribute funding directly but picks up incidental costs such as photocopying and administration. This independence from the Cityside Baptist Church, of funding, is primarily a value on my part that prefers all Cityside projects to be run and sponsored by those with a commitment to them rather than simply being funded by 'the church'.

My previous experiences of church have often included expensive projects

³⁶ The intention, or brief, is that the artist will reflect on the biblical text and use that internalised reflection as the inspiration to produce a concrete work of art that will enable a later viewer to interact with the biblical story via that work.

dreamt up by an individual or small group who then expect the church to fund their proposal, usually on the strength of a simple majority vote. This issue is complicated further when the 'vision' to be funded comes from the Minister. This unequal power relationship can tend toward being abusive and gives the ideas that originate with employed staff priority and value above those of pew-sitters. I give people the opportunity to be involved financially if they want to, but don't expect them to be. I have long been committed to the concept that if I believe God has given me a vision for a project then God will also provide the funding required rather than my expecting someone else to fund my ideas whether they like them or not.

Our presentation has become a well known and anticipated event each Holy Week in Auckland. Up to sixty Citysiders are directly involved in making each project happen. There are now many other groups and churches around New Zealand and across the world who, inspired by our efforts, have begun to do something similar. In 2003 I had correspondence with and gave support to a large nondenominational church in Los Angeles³⁷ that staged a wonderful set of sculptured Stations around an outdoor promenade between their buildings; an ecumenical group in Glasgow³⁸ who used a Baptist Church building; a Christchurch (New Zealand) couple³⁹ who opened their very interactive stations for the third year, taking over all the rooms in an entire large suburban church building; a woman in Seattle⁴⁰ who curated a very interesting Stations of the Cross in a Quaker context; another inner city Auckland church making its first foray into an art exhibition on the Easter theme⁴¹ and an alternative worship group in Dunedin⁴² (New Zealand) offering its third major Easter exhibition in a community gallery space. Many more have followed.

Stations of the Cross: History.

According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*⁴³ the term "station" had three different usages in the early Church, although none has clear origins. The Latin *statio* comes from *stare*. In other words to stand, halt, take up a position. Over time it came to mean a gathering at a specific place for a specific purpose. *Statio* also means a partial fast or a day on which a partial fast took place, and in military terms the word described an outpost and the lookouts assigned to it.

Like the term itself, the broader practice of Stations of the Cross arises from a convergence of various paths. The sites associated with the events in the life of Jesus, particularly the events leading up to his death, naturally became very significant for his followers once he was no longer with them. Pilgrimages to these sites began in the early centuries of Christianity, perhaps immediately after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Despite this early and ongoing commemoration, by the fourth century the site of his burial was lost. Helena, the

³⁷ Crossroads Church, Corona. Personal correspondence.

³⁸ Brett Nicholls. Personal correspondence.

³⁹ Peter and Joyce Majendie, Opawa Baptist Church and Side Door. Personal correspondence.

⁴⁰ Aimee Buchholz. Personal correspondence.

⁴¹ Darlene Adair, Auckland Baptist Tabernacle. Personal correspondence.

⁴² Jenny Long and Mike Riddell, Soul Outpost. Personal correspondence.

⁴³ B. Brown, "Way of the Cross," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Catholic University of America Faculty (Farmington Hills, Michigan: Thomson Gale, 2002), 832 col. 2.

mother of Constantine the first Christian Roman Emperor, went looking for the 'Holy Sepulchre' around 325 C.E. and found it following a dream. After clearing the site to expose the cave-tomb she built a church around the site and people began visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, as a form of pious act or devotion.

By the Middle Ages, retracing Christ's journey, from his arrest in the garden through to his death on Calvary at the 'actual' spots those events took place, was the practice of many, and the desire of many more. A trip to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was determined by priests and confessors to be a penance for a serious sin. At the same time soldiers coming home from the Crusades (1095-1290) began building tableaux in their home towns in Europe to remind them of the places they had seen in the Holy Land. This devotion became known as the Little Jerusalem. The first clearly defined set of stations outside of Palestine was built in Bologna at the church of San Stefano in the fifth century but it took until the fourteenth century for the practice, of creating sites that sought to replicate first century locations, to be widespread and accessible to the masses.

Spiritual Benefits

Gaining indulgences⁴⁴ from a trip to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem wasn't easy. It required lengthy and expensive travel to and through a region that was even more dangerous then than it is today. A man would have to leave his family for up to two years to make the trip and his wife and children would never know when or if he was going to return. Full indulgence was only available if he returned. Women and children, the sick and elderly, the poor, the weak, could rarely make this journey.⁴⁵ To overcome this difficulty and make this devotion more accessible, the Holy Sepulchre, the tomb of Christ, was replicated all over Europe by various Church organisations and monasteries. These replicas followed the building fashion of the area and time in which they were built since the meditation on the Passion was considered most important - not the architecture. Markers were placed around and outside the church to suggest the events that took place on the way to Calvary. So the spiritual value and devotional experience of a trip to the Holy Land became accessible to many more Christians, and without their having to travel far from home.

The process of making available the spiritual benefits of these holy places of devotion was further expanded when in 1342 the Franciscans took on the responsibility of caring for them. They saw it as part of their mission to encourage devotion. Doing so was considered an opportunity to reflect on the Passion of Christ, not just as a source of indulgences. They began to erect

⁴⁴ “Authoritative grants from the Church's treasury for the remission or payment in whole (plenary indulgences) or in part (partial indulgences), valid before God, of the debt of temporal punishment after the guilt of sin has been forgiven.” (The “Church's treasury” refers to “the merits and good works stored up by Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints of the Church both living and dead.”) P. F. Palmer and A. Tavad, "Indulgences," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, ed. Catholic University of America Faculty (Farmington, Michigan: Thomson Gale, 2002), 482 col. 2.

⁴⁵ Mary of Kempe (c1373-after 1438) was one woman who did.

comparatively simple wooden crosses to mark the stations in ordinary parish churches throughout Europe and the known world. Only stations erected by the Franciscans were indulgenced.

Varallo

In 1493 a most remarkable combination of architectural, artistic and devotional endeavour came together at Varallo in the Sesia River valley north of Milan. Bernardino Caimi, a Franciscan friar who had recently returned from looking after the holy sites in Palestine established himself at the new Varallo convent among the sparse population that lived in this rugged, mountainous area. On the mountain behind the convent he decided to build, for the local villagers largely cut off from priestly pastoral care and instruction as well as visitors, tableaux depicting the stages of Christ's Passion. Pilgrims who exerted themselves with the climb up and around this 150 metre high mountain would be rewarded along the way with access to an expanded set of stations of the cross housed in small chapels. Neil MacGregor describes the result as a "Christian theme park where everyone - the unlettered and the poor, children and women along with great prelates - could participate in the Passion of Christ."⁴⁶ Caimi's intention was to construct an accurate replica of Jerusalem and its surrounds for those who could not travel to the Holy Land. The inscription over the entrance to the Holy Sepulchre reads, "The Milanese friar Bernadino Caimi designed the sacred places of this mountain, so that those who cannot make the pilgrimage see Jerusalem here."⁴⁷ The Sacro Monte (sometimes described with the words reversed as monte sacro) or Sacred Mountain of Varallo was relatively modest in Caimi's conception but developed considerably in the century following his death. By 1514 there were more than twenty-one chapels on the site. Two centuries later more than forty buildings at this New Jerusalem told the story of redemption from Adam and Eve to the Passion.⁴⁸

Each chapel contained detailed, lifelike and life-sized combinations of sculpture, painting, collage and relics recreating in minute detail the Gospel events that lead to Christ's Passion.⁴⁹ At the site of 'Gethsemane' were the "chapels of the Agony in the Garden, of Jesus waking the disciples who did not watch with him, and of Christ's arrest and Judas' kiss."⁵⁰ Each building housed elaborate paintings and clothed, life-sized characters carved in wood with moveable limbs. The first building Caimi developed was the Holy Sepulchre that copied exactly the dimensions of the Jerusalem Sepulchre, which tradition held to be the original tomb of Christ.

Preparations for the Varallo Journey

Unlike today's theme parks or even tours of devotional sites, the journey to New

⁴⁶ Neil MacGregor, *Seeing Salvation* (London: BBC Worldwide Limited, 2000), 141.

⁴⁷ Alessandro Nova, "'Popular' Art in Renaissance Italy: Early Response to the Holy Mountain at Varallo," in *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450-1650*, ed. Claire Farago (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 113.

⁴⁸ Rudolf Wittkower, *Idea and Image: Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, 4 vols., vol. 4, *The Collected Essays of Rudolf Wittkower* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 176.

⁴⁹ See appendix H, fig. 1.

⁵⁰ MacGregor, *Seeing Salvation* 140.

Jerusalem was tightly structured and began at the base of the mountain in the church of Saint Maria delle Grazie at Varallo. Here the pilgrims heard sermons delivered by the friars using as visual didactic aids the intricate frescoes on the rood-screen wall dividing the church. Preparation included confessing all sins, being taught how to approach the devotional aids in the correct frame of mind and encouragement to “participate in the suffering of Christ by weeping, beating himself or herself, and touching the simulacra.”⁵¹ Despite the desire to reproduce as detailed and faithful as possible replica of the original Palestinian Holy Sites at Varallo, there was no attempt to pass this off as anything but a reproduction of the Holy Land - an aid to devotion. Friars stressed this fact to pilgrims and every chapel carried an inscription assuring pilgrims that it was similar in every detail to the one in Jerusalem. Thus the double message of accuracy, but not replacement, was maintained.

Despite this apparent effort on the part of those in charge to separate ‘fact from fiction’, it is also clear that for most pilgrims it was the verisimilitude that attracted them in the first place. Their meditation led to a deeper understanding of the Passion and elicited an emotional response. Freedberg says:

The aim, of course was to engage the spectator in a directly empathetic relation with the scene This is no longer the representation of the scene, but the presentation. Only the grille prevents the spectator from moving among these actors and from discoursing with them; but that interposition, that barrier, only serves to heighten the sense of realism. One cannot get to prove that they are just stuffed or wooden figures; one must believe, and one does believe, that they are real, however much one may wonder at the kind of craftsmanship that makes the figures appear so vivid. They are beings just like us and we are like them.⁵²

I will come back to this issue of verisimilitude and the effects on the viewer of presentation or representation, again in chapter five.

The Varallo Experience

Following the preaching and teaching of the Passion story pilgrims moved up the mountain visiting the numerous chapels housing the devotions. They were not able to move at their own pace nor to wander freely. Franciscan friars experienced in guiding pilgrims in Jerusalem now directed the responses of pilgrims in the New Jerusalem. Yet they were encouraged to interact specifically and physically with the tableaux. The original chapels had no separation between ‘props’ and pilgrims, and a multi-sensory response was sought. As they looked at the scenes and mingled with the elements of the tableaux they were encouraged to recite the Lord’s Prayer or the Creed; to use their imagination to hear the sound of the hammer nailing Jesus to the Cross; to smell the spices in the tomb. At the Nativity they were encouraged to kiss the feet of baby Jesus; to join the procession with the Magi; to take the baby in their arms at the Purification. A devotional text widely read from the early fourteenth century encourages pilgrims to “kiss the beautiful little feet of the infant Jesus who lies in the manger and beg His mother to offer to let you hold Him awhile. Pick Him up and hold

⁵¹ Ibid., 140.

⁵² David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 196-7.

Him in your arms. Gaze on His face with devotion and reverently kiss him and delight in him.”⁵³

Constructing the Real

The veracity of the devotional experience relied on Caimi and the other friars direct experience of the 'real Jerusalem' and their ability to accurately reproduce that at Varallo. Many reproductions of the Holy Sepulchre existed around the world, but this was the first attempt to reproduce the topography of Jerusalem and place the sites within it. Attention to detail was all-important, and significant in assuring the pilgrim that the events reproduced were 'real' events. So the Last Supper station was real because it took place at a table exactly like the one reproduced in minute detail here; detail verified by a friar who had seen the original in Jerusalem. The distance from Calvary to the Sepulchre was correct because the friar had walked and measured it himself. This witness to personal experience (by the friar) thus enabled the spiritual engagement of the viewer in a different time and place.

Tableaux were built with a commitment to detailed realism. They were three-dimensional re-enactments of the events of Christ's last week on earth intended to move the observer to respond emotionally as if personally involved in the event. Figures were carved from wood or clay or chalk and given glass eyes, moveable limbs, wigs and beards of real hair, and real clothing. Often the frescoes behind the figures would have real fabric drapes. Facial expressions conveyed strong and clear emotional reactions. Some of the by-standers surrounding the biblical figures appeared in contemporary local dress. Brickwork, sand, and shrubs were real. Later chapels removed the viewer from the scene. An ornamental screen on a side porch separated the viewer, who had to view the scene through a peephole. This was done in order to preserve the correct viewpoint and perspective for the action and ensure maximum impact.

Many distinguished artists such as Gaudenzio Ferrari, Tanzio da Varalla, Giovanni d'Enrico and Morazzone worked on the chapels over the next two centuries, providing a setting in which no pilgrim could ignore the drama of redemption. In 1686 Canon Torrotti recorded that as many as ten thousand visitors made the pilgrimage each day.⁵⁴ The final chapel (number forty-three) would not be completed until 1818.

Other *Sacri Monti* were built in other parts of Europe over succeeding centuries, but none with the same stations as at Varallo, and usually not as closely tied to the Via Crucis.⁵⁵ Their purpose often inclined more toward protecting the true faith than encouraging interaction with it. This was particularly true when, following the Council of Trent (1545-63), San Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of

⁵³ The *Pseudo-Bonaventure*, quoted in Nova, "'Popular' Art in Renaissance Italy: Early Response to the Holy Mountain at Varallo," 117.

⁵⁴ George Kubler, "Sacred Mountains in Europe and America," in *Christianity and the Renaissance: Image and Religious Imagination in the Quattrocento*, ed. Timothy Verdon and John Henderson (New York: Syracuse Press, 1990), 415.

⁵⁵ The terms "Stations of the Cross", "Via Crucis" and "Way of the Cross" are used interchangeably.

Milan, responded to concerns that some particular areas in his region were under threat from the heresy of the Lutheran Reform. Borromeo sited *Sacri Monti* strategically at the mouths of Alpine valleys to maximise pilgrim traffic, and their construction followed his strict rules.⁵⁶ So the *Sacri Monti* with their complex and lavish tableaux stations of the cross grew up in a few distinct places⁵⁷ alongside the developing establishment of simple stations across Europe in many parish churches. By the end of the twentieth century Europe would be able to catalogue 1812 “holy mountains, calvaries and devotional complexes”.⁵⁸

One other development is worth mentioning before considering the development of these simpler stations in more detail. The Scala Santa indicates the intensity of the desire by pilgrims for interaction with anything that might connect them with the story and suffering of Christ.

Scala Santa

After almost 1000 years of use and two further centuries of neglect, the fire damaged, disused and decaying remains of the Lateran Palace⁵⁹ of the Roman popes was demolished in the late 1500's. All that Pope Sixtus V (1585-90) spared in his pursuit of modern fashion in architecture and urban design was the *Sancta Sanctorum* ('Holy of Holies') - the private papal chapel. Inside this space, among the many relics, stood the eighth century lifesized Christ figure known as the *Acheiropoieton* ('image not made by human hands'). This painting, supposedly begun by St Luke and completed by angels, sat in the entrance to the *Sancta Sanctorum* at the top of an elaborate enclosed stone staircase (known as the *Scala Santa*).

The origin of the stairs is in some doubt, but it is clear that by the Middle Ages they were believed to be the 'stairs of Pilate' that Jesus had climbed on his way to be condemned. Under Sixtus they became a focus of devotion and penitence, and today pilgrims still climb them on their knees, reciting prayers and following Christ in suffering at the very place it occurred. But, as McGregor notes, “Scala Santa offers an intense experience, but a partial one.”⁶⁰ Pilgrims wanted more. The Franciscans recognised the potential impact and power of physical symbols on the spiritual experiences of the faithful and had already begun responding. They created a still broader range of experiences in the Italian foothills with other *Sacri Monti* and even further afield with the more minimalist Stations of

⁵⁶ UNESCO, *Decisions Adopted by the 27th Session of the World Heritage Committee in 2003* [website] (UNESCO, 2003 [cited 21 January 2007]); available from <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/decree03.htm#dec8-c-35>.

⁵⁷ Nine of these in Northern Italy, constructed over a period of 230 years, were designated “World Heritage Sites” by UNESCO in July 2003. Ibid.

⁵⁸ Amilcare Barbero, ed., *Atlante Dei Sacri Monti Calvari E Complessi Devozionali Europei (Atlas of Holy Mountains, Calvaries, and Devotional Complexes in Europe)* (Sacred Mount of Crea, Italy: Istituto Geografico De Agostini, 2001).

⁵⁹ So named because it was built on land once owned by the wealthy Laterani family. Constantine's wife inherited it and Constantine donated it to Rome's Christian bishop who built a cathedral, St John Lateran on it. It later became the pontifical palace.

⁶⁰ MacGregor, *Seeing Salvation* 139.

the Cross. More minimalist perhaps, but no less significant in their impact on the spiritual formation of those experiencing them.

Contemporary Stations of the Cross

The number and title of the stations has varied greatly over time and it wasn't until the 1450's or 60's that the term *station* was first connected to the devotion (reputedly by William Wey, an English pilgrim to the Holy Land). In Bologna in the fifth century there were only five stops on a *via crucis* but in other places the number rose higher than thirty. In 1731 after 400 years of popular use of the Way of the Cross as a devotion, Pope Clement XII Corsini fixed the number at fourteen and gave them the titles that continue to be used today:

1. Christ is condemned to death by Pilate
2. Jesus is made to carry the cross
3. Jesus falls for the first time
4. Jesus meets his blessed Mother
5. The cross is laid on Simon of Cyrene
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
7. Jesus falls for the second time
8. Jesus speaks to the women
9. Jesus falls for the third time
10. Jesus is stripped of his garments and receives gall to drink
11. Jesus is nailed to the cross
12. Jesus dies on the cross
13. Jesus is taken down from the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the sepulcher

There has been some modern debate over the lack of reference to the Resurrection of Christ and some liturgists and theologians add it as a fifteenth station, while others see the sepulchre of station fourteen, from which Jesus was resurrected, as sufficient stimulation to meditation. I have always resisted the sometimes very strong pressure to include the resurrection in our list of stations, as I feel Protestants are too keen to move quickly over the pain and suffering and get to the joy and renewal part. This was typified by a high-tech, very expensively produced Good Friday service I attended in a Pentecostal church where the service began by the congregation singing the hymn "Up From the Grave He Arose"! Our installation always officially closes on Easter Saturday, before the resurrection, and I refuse to move ahead until the time is right. Station fifteen is always listed in the installation notes with an invitation to return to the same building and celebrate the resurrection of Christ on the Sunday. We set the scene for this by not removing all the art but simply clearing some spaces around it for people to gather, making some open space, and removing the covers from the windows to allow in as much light as possible. Thus the resurrection is celebrated among the reminders of Holy Week. It is given a context by taking place among the remnants of the stations.

From the very early Stations of the Cross, art has been used to represent scenes and to recall the emotion of the event depicted. Carved reliefs, sculpture, and painting are common, but strictly speaking it is the small plain wooden crosses, blessed by a priest authorised for the task, that constitutes the Stations. The

stunningly beautiful and moving *Way of the Cross* in glazed ceramic tile by Henri Matisse that takes up two walls in the Chapel of the Rosary of the Dominican Sisters at Vence, France, is considered to be one of the outstanding achievements of a twentieth-century artist. However it is not officially recognised, and cannot be used for indulgences, because it lacks the fourteen blessed wooden crosses that would validate it.

Following Vatican II (1962-65), the Way of the Cross continues to be indulgenced. The new *Enchiridion of Indulgences* grants a plenary indulgence to those who follow the four-fold pattern it sets out. This involves using only “stations of the Way of the Cross (that have been) legitimately erected.”⁶¹ Each station must be marked by a wooden cross even if it is already elaborately decorated and carries pictures or sculptures. A sincere meditation and vocal prayer on the Passion and Death of Jesus is offered at each station, and movement from one station to the next must be carried out by the penitent. It appears that earlier requirements not to stop more than briefly unless for communion, have been rescinded. The *Enchiridion* also allows those unable to move around the stations or to get to a church at all, to gain their indulgence by spending at least thirty minutes in pious reading and meditation on the Passion and death of Jesus. As Johnson says, “What began as a death-defying trip to the Middle East has become, over the centuries, a devotion that can be followed without ever leaving a hospital bed.”⁶²

A very contemporary, and surprising, update to the Stations of the Cross occurred as recently as 1991. During Holy Week that year Pope John Paul II took part in The Way of the Cross at the Coliseum in Rome. There he broke with tradition by omitting the three falls of Jesus, the pre-crucifixion encounter of Jesus with his mother, and the incident of Veronica wiping Jesus' face. These five traditional stations were replaced with Gospel incidents from Jesus' final days. Now the Roman Catholic Church has officially sanctioned a set of Stations that are entirely drawn from biblical incidents.

John Paul II's list that year read:⁶³

1. Jesus prays in the garden of Olives
2. Jesus is betrayed by Judas
3. Jesus is condemned to death by the Sanhedrin
4. Jesus is denied by Peter
5. Jesus is judged by Pilate
6. Jesus is flogged and crowned with thorns
7. Jesus carries his cross
8. Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene
9. Jesus encounters the women of Jerusalem
10. Jesus is crucified
11. Jesus promises to share his reign with the good thief

⁶¹ Kevin Orlin Johnson, *Expressions of the Catholic Faith: A Guide to the Teachings and Practices of the Catholic Church* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994), 94.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶³ Bill Huebsch, *Scripture Stations of the Cross: In the Footsteps of Pope John XXIII* (New London, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1999), 1.

12. Jesus is on the cross with his mother and disciple below
13. Jesus dies on the cross
14. Jesus is placed in the tomb

In a transition that brings us to the stations presented by Cityside Baptist Church artists in 2003, Huebsch comments in his introduction to these new stations:

In most churches around the world, the tablets or statues depicting the Way of the Cross will not follow the order set down in this new scriptural version. That should not stand in the way however, of the Church's desire to root its divine worship in sacred Scripture.

When using this version in a traditional setting, it is best not to alter Church art but rather to commemorate these stations as though the art depicted them. The effect of the worship will be no less profound.⁶⁴

To expect viewers to be able to look at art that depicts, say, 'Veronica wipes the face of Jesus', and use it to reflect on 'Jesus is flogged and crowned with thorns', is a very demanding expectation. Huebsch clearly sees this as achievable, and not something that will diminish the impact of the meditation.

This perspective moves us a long way from the realistic representations of the *sacri monti*, toward the contemporary stations presented by Cityside Baptist Church artists in 2003. Discovering just how profound the effect of these stations might be is part of the purpose of this research project: can a contemporary Stations of the Cross installation make a useful contribution to the spiritual formation of its viewers?

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1.

CHAPTER THREE REMEDICATION AND LIMINALITY

I have usually referred to the process of taking an action or ritual from the past, or from the not-Christian culture, and putting it in the context of historically contemporary Christian worship, as reframing, or context reframing e.g. using the Stations of the Cross, or a track by The Rolling Stones in worship. This term and the concept behind it arises from the counselling technique of neuro-linguistic programming, in which the meaning of an event is changed by the context in which that event takes place.⁶⁵ So a broken leg is a bad thing until it is seen in the context of preventing a son having to go to war. The event or experience is reframed. Bread is a lunch food until it is seen as the carrier of the real presence of Christ. The context changes the meaning taken from the object. It has long been my opinion and practice that for worship to connect with contemporary worshippers, reframing must be taking place regularly, if not constantly. The events, symbols and rituals of our everyday lives need to be reframed if worship is to be meaningful and open us to the possibility of an encounter with the Divine.

Stations of the Cross 2003 can be seen as an exercise in reframing. The essence of an ancient devotional practice is put in the context of an urban building in 2003 and contemporary media are employed. The Christian story is set in an historical context, but lived out in a contemporary one. Without points of contact between the ancient story and the reality of contemporary life there is nothing 'alive' about the faith. Bolter and Grusin in *Remediation: Understanding New Media*⁶⁶ alerted me to a way of looking at and understanding this process that is both deeper and wider than reframing. They describe it as "remediation".

Remediation

Paul Levinson first used the word remediation to mean "the 'anthropotropic'⁶⁷ process by which new media technologies improve upon or remedy prior technologies",⁶⁸ but the word quickly became applied to a variety of other settings as well. Teachers describe the need to remediate students who are not keeping up as well as they should be; environmental engineers remediate damaged ecosystems; and city planners remediate run down inner city areas. The origin of the word is in the "Latin *remederi* – to heal, to restore to health."⁶⁹

While retaining its link to the Latin, Bolter and Grusin define it somewhat differently to Levinson as "the formal logic by which new media *refashion* (italics mine) prior media forms."⁷⁰ This is the way in which one medium is understood as having reformed or improved on another. Levinson saw media

⁶⁵ Michael Frost, *Jesus the Fool* (Sydney: Albatross Books, 1994), 70-85.

⁶⁶ Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999).

⁶⁷ ie 'to resemble the human'.

⁶⁸ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* 273.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 59.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 273.

evolving and overcoming the limitations of the prior medium. In contrast to this progressive evolution, Bolter and Grusin understand that old media can also reshape new media. The process works both ways. “Newer media do not necessarily supersede older media because the process of reform and refashioning is mutual.”⁷¹ As an example, text has not been simply superseded by the moving images of video. Text can contribute to the medium of video with titles and written explanation of what is happening in the video, or the use of moving text to create an effect. The use of text in this way on the 1992/3 U2 tour ZOOTOV⁷² is a prime example.

The Fly⁷³ is information meltdown – text, sayings, truisms, untruisms, oxymorons, soothsayings, etc., all blasted at high speed, just fast enough so it's impossible to actually read what's being said The imagery used ... was created by blending video noise with stop motion animation sequences of the band members ‘filmed’ on a photocopier Some of (the) meltdown messages included “Taste is the enemy of art”, “Religion is a club”, “Ignorance is bliss”, “Rebellion is packaged”, “Believe” with letters fading out to leave “lie”, and “Everything you know is wrong”.⁷⁴

Remediation, a reshaping of one medium by another, always operates under the assumption that two competing and contrasting desires are trying to be met. These competing emotions are the desire for “immediacy” and the desire for “hypermediacy”.

Immediacy

Immediacy is the growing desire in our culture to have any interface with media disappear, in other words, to become ‘transparent’. We want the experience to be immediate, unmediated. We go to the movie theatre in order to enter a make believe world that for a time anyway, we do believe is real. We want to be immersed in the medium and to have any sense of an intermediary disappear. We want what is described as “a willing suspension of disbelief” to be our regular experience with any media we encounter. And we even want to have the ‘willingness’ disappear if at all possible. The desire is to not encounter the media at all but to go direct to the emotional response produced by the media. We will gladly pay a price as willing collaborators in order to achieve this end. This absorption is a common theme in movies like *Bladerunner* and *Lawnmower Man* and many science fiction novels,⁷⁵ and is pursued by scientific researchers in the once headline grabbing field of Virtual Reality. Despite the lack of recent headlines the research continues worldwide under the banner of ‘presence research’. This is particularly true of the arena of Immersive Art where the goal

⁷¹ Ibid., 59.

⁷² David Mallet, *U2 Zoo Tv Live from Sydney* (Australia: Universal Music, 2006), DVD. Note that the name of this tour appears as Zoo Tv, ZOOTOV, ZOO TV in various official references.

⁷³ A song by U2.

⁷⁴ Various, *U2: Zootv* ([cited 13 January 2007]); available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoo_TV_Tour#_note-3. Also personal knowledge.

⁷⁵ For example Neal Stephenson, *Snow Crash*, Paperback ed. (New York: Bantam Spectra Books, 2000).

is “as near a complete impression of immersion in the image space as possible.”⁷⁶

While this desire may be clearly visible in our contemporary technological media-soaked culture, it is not new. Renaissance art and early photography both demonstrate the desire for immediacy. The artists trusted linear perspective (‘seeing through’) to take the viewer out of the picture frame to a place beyond the canvas. The photographer worked to produce an illusion of three dimensional space by her ‘life-like’ reproduction and the removal of the painter from the process.

Bolter and Grusin describe the characteristics of this pre-digital immediacy as three-fold - linear perspective, erasure (of artist and medium), and automation (of reproduction process).⁷⁷ Linear perspective, with its mathematical measuring of space, worked to enable the painter to reproduce something that was intended to look as much like the reality observed by the viewer as possible. But perspective alone wasn’t enough. The canvas and the paint needed to disappear as well. Trompe l’oeil art where 3-D architectural features appear real on 2-D surfaces is a good example of the effort to make the viewers reality continuous with the painted one. To remove the artist entirely from the process of reproducing linear perspective was considered the ultimate in achieving transparency and therefore the immediacy of ‘being there’. Photography allowed this to happen, and in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries debate centred around whether the automation of photography so erased the artist that it could not be considered an art form.

Digital technologies build on these older forms in the same, but now heightened, quest for transparent immediacy. Virtual reality and computer video games are the most obvious illustrations. Both try to take the viewer to a place where the medium and the equipment needed to create or convey the medium disappear and the experience is encountered ‘first hand’. In both of these media, as in all others, transparency is increased by interactivity - particularly by automatic or mechanical interactivity or representation that by its nature doesn’t require the intrusion of an obvious artist or technician into the mediation. Immediacy can also be encouraged by finding ways to more intimately involve the viewer in the image. Video artist and sound sculptor Brian Eno defines interactivity as “unfinished”.⁷⁸ From this perspective makers of art and culture are moving from providing completed experiences to providing the elements needed for people to put together their own experiences. This is nothing new. Michelangelo’s famously ‘unfinished’ sculptures⁷⁹ were said to be deliberately left incomplete. This allowing of the viewer to ‘finish’ the art by making some choices

⁷⁶ Oliver Grau, *Ancestors of the Virtual, Historical Aspects of Virtual Reality and Its Contemporary Impact* [website] (2000 [cited 01 January 2007]); available from www.unites.uqam.ca/AHWA/Meetings/2000.CIHA/Grau.html.

⁷⁷ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* 24f.

⁷⁸ Brian Eno, *A Year with Swollen Appendices: Brian Eno's Diary* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1996), 90, 401-403.

⁷⁹ *St-Matthew, Bearded Slave, Awakening Slave, and Atlas*, among others. Early 1500’s.

imaginatively or practically that contribute to the outcome of the interaction heightens the perception of transparent immediacy in the experience.

Although researchers generally use the term ‘immersive’ rather than transparent immediacy, and ‘presence research’ rather than Virtual Reality, these researchers and computer game designers are well aware of the effectiveness of interactivity in achieving “as near a complete impression of immersion in the image space as possible.”⁸⁰ The research into how this can be better achieved looks back to the broken and fragmentary history of illusion through panoramas⁸¹ and the creation of immersive spaces, and in particular to the Sacro Monte at Varallo referred to in chapter one of this work. Grau comments, “On some days, pilgrims would arrive at the chapels in their thousands and the monks leading them through the installations found it necessary to continually remind them that this was not the real Jerusalem.”⁸² Mimesis, achieved by the fusing of a three-dimensional foreground with a two-dimensional backdrop, together with the interaction of the viewer, provoked an immersive experience that transported her psychologically to another time and place.

Stations of the Cross 2003 never deliberately aims for transparent immediacy. There is no attempt to convince the viewer that the medium or artist doesn’t exist. There is also no attempt to pretend that what is presented with the installation is in any way a reproduction of the original setting of the story of Jesus. The fact that it is happening in a wooden church building in downtown Auckland in 2003 is not disguised. But it could be argued that the desire of many viewers to encounter God in this multi-sensory re-telling of the story does in fact elicit an emotional response that produces the effect of transparent immediacy in the viewers.

It could also be argued that some of the more abstract works, for example stations three,⁸³ nine,⁸⁴ and twelve,⁸⁵ while presented in a context of the wider Christian story and more narrowly defined by the station they are representing, are completely open to interpretation by the viewer. The viewer is invited by this lack of specificity to interact directly and to have an authentic emotional response. Knowing the biblical story is not critical to that response.

The question that is important for me here, and one I will address later, is to ask if this response can have any Christian content and if it can move people forward in their journey of following Christ. While theorists may dispute that unmediated presentation is even possible, for Bolter and Grusin it “remains

⁸⁰ Grau, *Ancestors of the Virtual, Historical Aspects of Virtual Reality and Its Contemporary Impact* (2000 [cited 1 January, 2007]).

⁸¹ For example the *Sedan Panorama* of 1883, in Berlin. Said to be the most expensive image of its day this 360 degree painting and 3-D interior occupied more than 650 square meters and was painted by fourteen painters with the intention of immersing the viewer in the scene and its story.

⁸² Grau, *Ancestors of the Virtual, Historical Aspects of Virtual Reality and Its Contemporary Impact* (2000 [cited 1 January 2007]), 3.

⁸³ A large two-coloured panel with an indeterminate shape on it. (See photograph in appendix H, fig. 14.)

⁸⁴ A large abstract painting. (See photograph in appendix H, fig. 21.)

⁸⁵ Six abstract panels. (See photograph in appendix H, fig. 24.)

culturally compelling”.⁸⁶ The examples of Michelangelo mentioned earlier suggest it has a very long history, and *Stations* stands in that tradition.

Hypermediacy

In tension with the desire for immediacy is the desire for hypermediacy. If immediacy is the desire for removing or erasing any sign of the act of representation, then hypermediacy is the desire to *multiply* acts of representation. This stacking up of media one on top of another (or beside), in direct contrast to immediacy, makes the media highly visible. A web page is perhaps the most obvious contemporary example of hypermediation. Web pages are the digital equivalent of decoupage, montage or collage. They stack, overlap and juxtapose images, text and video ‘pages’ on a screen. No attempt is made to have this interface become transparent or intimate, nor to hide the artist’s involvement. Hypermediation creates by borrowing, rearranging and multiplying what already exists. What is new is the current arrangement and juxtaposition of contents rather than the content itself.⁸⁷

Hypermediacy is a “visual style that, in the words of William J. Mitchell (1994), ‘privileges fragmentation, indeterminacy, and heterogeneity and ... emphasises process or performance rather than the finished art object.’”⁸⁸ This combining of often diverse multiple media and random access to it is what is most commonly understood by hypermedia, sometimes called multi-media. It would be easy to assume that hypermedia appeared with the development of television and computers, that digitisation was necessary for hypermediation to take place, but the logic is evident in prior and other forms of representation. Magazines and newspapers that have a frenetic quality to their design and layout - like early editions of magazines *Wired*, and the now defunct *Mondo 2000* - are examples of this trend. These magazines use colour, overlays and the piling up on top of each other and of images and text to create an effect. “Hypermediacy expresses itself as multiplicity.”⁸⁹ Hypermediacy can also be seen in early illuminated manuscripts and the sophisticated form of cathedral altarpieces. Cathedrals themselves can be viewed as hypermediated spaces that enclose stained glass windows, statuary and text inscriptions.

But there is no doubt that the rise of the digital revolution in the 1960s and 1970s opened the floodgates for hypermediacy. Text lines as code on computer screens were replaced by the images and icons of the graphical user interface (GUI). ‘Windows’ on the computer screen allowed for random access to layers of complex systems that incorporated text and image side-by-side and overlapping. The computer itself became transparent as GUI designers made it operate like the more familiar and intuitively accessible typewriter, paintbox or drawing table. Two dimensions rapidly became three, with movement *within* them, not just around them, becoming possible.

⁸⁶ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, 30.

⁸⁷ Although Marshal McLuhan and others might argue that the re-arrangement does in fact influence, or change the content.

⁸⁸ William J. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 8. Quoted by Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, 31.

⁸⁹ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, 33.

While with immediacy, erasing or making automatic the act or representation is the desired outcome, with hypermediacy the outcome is to make highly visible, multiple acts of representation. Bolter and Grusin argue that this visibility is an attempt to “reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience”⁹⁰ and that our being made aware of the medium or media reminds us of the desire in us all for immediacy. “At the end of the twentieth century, we are in a position to understand hypermediacy as immediacy’s opposite number, an alter ego that has never been suppressed fully or for long periods of time.”⁹¹

The logic of hypermediacy understands creativity as the rearranging of existing forms. Collage and montage are good examples, where the viewer is not expected to deny the medium but rather to acknowledge it. Rock music – particularly the lavish multi-media stage shows of groups like U2 – and the World Wide Web are contemporary culture’s most obvious and influential outworking of hypermediacy.

Replacement - whether by erasure, as in a world wide web page replacing a previous one; juxtaposition, of several pages on the same screen or clippings on the same canvas; or multiplication, as in pages piling on top of each other - is an essential tool of hypermediacy. One element is replaced by another. In its most extreme form one medium is replaced by another. For example, a web page of text opens as a video clip; a hypertext word opens as a photo album.

While it is too early to settle the argument as to whether or not *Stations 2003* achieved transparent immediacy, through either individual or the collective stations, the elements of hypermediacy are clearly evident. The variety of media used, the environment of the whole installation and its multi-sensory nature show a highly visible, overlapping and juxtaposing rearranging of diverse media. For example, station one used audio recordings, foodstuffs, text, and painted panels to connect the Last Supper in Palestine with the final meals of condemned men in contemporary USA.

Hypermediacy and immediacy are the twin logics of remediation. The process of remediation “is a defining characteristic of new digital media.”⁹² Bolter and Grusin describe a variety of levels at which this might take place. At one end of the spectrum old media are presented in a new digital guise that makes them more accessible or able to be manipulated - as in an internet viewing via computer screen of Leonard Da Vinci’s *Last Supper*. The old medium isn’t altered significantly or added to, it is just made more easily accessible. But the desire is still to make the medium disappear and the screen image of the painting appear as the painting.

Sometimes the desire is to emphasise the difference between old and new rather than to erase it. So the Bible on CD-ROM doesn’t just provide access to the text; it can search for words and verses faster than flipping through a concordance

⁹⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁹¹ Ibid., 34.

⁹² Ibid., 45.

can, and it provides links to commentaries, the ability to cut and paste, and carries multiple translations side by side.

At a more aggressive level a medium can attempt to remediate by altering the original medium. Rock band U2 used this form of remediation with their concert *ZOOTV*. Here text, television, film, and live artists were taken out of their usual contexts and combined into a montage. The show made no attempt to hide the fact that it was being watched on a massive number of television screens that formed a backdrop to live singers and musicians. New meaning was being provided by a new setting. In a technical sense the band has continued this movement through to their latest tour, *Vertigo*, where thousands of coloured L.E.D lights mounted in the floor of the stage were fed a video signal that triggered a colour wash response rather than a video image.⁹³

Even further away from remediation as a simple re-presentation is remediation that absorbs the older medium entirely - or at least tries to. No medium can ever completely absorb another. Even the newest technologies remediate a previous medium. Interactive computer games remediate cinema movies. Digital effects in movies remediate earlier special effects achieved in non-digital ways. Virtual Reality remediates film.

Giving a new twist to the old adage, “nothing new under the sun”, Bolter and Grusin comment that no new medium can make a total break with the past. They will always “function in a constant dialectic with earlier media.”⁹⁴ So as new and different as new digital media seem to be or are promoted to be, they always owe some respect to previous media, whether digital or not.

It is important to understand that the ultimate goal of remediation is to “achieve the real”.⁹⁵ This doesn’t mean to reproduce what is real in a metaphysical sense but to produce in the viewer/subject “an immediate (and therefore authentic) emotional response.”⁹⁶ Paradoxically, the two logics of remediation attempt to produce this emotional response in opposite ways.

Transparent media aims for immediacy by attempting to remove any awareness of the media from the viewer’s perception. It tries to deny that any mediation is taking place. The viewer is supposedly offered a direct emotional response to the scene or situation. What she is experiencing is real because it generates a real emotional response. So the viewer enters the computer generated world of the game *Doom*, and the attempt is made to remove the sense of media by interactivity and reality-like graphics and sound. Ironically the more like reality the game gets, the more it is compared with the previous media that it has improved on. So erasure defines itself by that which it seeks to erase!

⁹³ *Vertigo 2005//U2 Live from Chicago* (Australia: Universal Music Australia, 2005), DVD.

⁹⁴ Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, 50.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

Piling Up of Images

In contrast hypermedia seeks to achieve the same result by the opposite technique – that of heaping up media. “The excess of media becomes an authentic experience, not in the sense that it corresponds to an external reality, but rather precisely because it is (*sic*) does not feel compelled to refer to anything beyond itself.”⁹⁷ Unlike transparent media, this experience is achieved not through sustained looking but through a series of brief looks: glance not gaze. Whether live or on video, ZOOTV by U2 didn’t pretend to reflect an external reality; it produced an authentic emotional response by overwhelming the senses with media that couldn’t possibly be taken in by a sustained gaze. Only brief moments, glances, were available and the emotional response generated bore no direct link to the content of any of the media. Hypermediation produced the response. It is significant that hypermediation - the piling up of images and other media - can be considered capable of achieving unmediated, direct experience.

There is a tension here between considering a visual space as mediated and as real i.e. sitting beyond mediation. This has been described as the difference between “looking *at* and looking *through*.”⁹⁸ An example is someone looking at a collage. In looking, the viewer “oscillates between looking at the patches of paper and paint on the surface of the work and looking through to the depicted objects as if they occupy a real space beyond the surface.”⁹⁹ Whereas modern art wants to hold the viewer at the surface of the work, the ‘artist’ working with hypermediacy wants to have the viewer acknowledge the medium as such and “to delight in that knowledge.”¹⁰⁰ This is achieved by heaping up and juxtaposing media.

In the *Stations 2003* experience the responses of many viewers to their use of the reflective space in the installation is instructive. This small, minimalist space with its candles, crucifix, low lighting levels, quietness, isolation and Communion elements often produced the kind of direct experience sought with hypermediation. Those who responded similarly to the overall installation with its obvious hypermediation likewise had this experience. Apparently God could be found in the quietness as well as the storm; in the heaping up of media and in the stripping of it away.

Authenticity of Experience

Neither of the two logics of remediation is objective. What one individual or group determines as authentic experience may not be deemed so by another individual or group. Authenticity is subjective and socially constructed. Immediacy and hypermediacy appeal to us in two dimensions - epistemological and psychological. In its epistemological dimension hypermediacy is opacity, obscurity of meaning. “The viewer acknowledges that she is in the presence of a medium and learns through acts of mediation ...”¹⁰¹ On the other hand immediacy is also about transparency and erasure; that somehow the medium can

⁹⁷ Ibid., 54.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 71.

be removed and the viewer be experiencing the objects directly. In its psychological dimension, hypermediacy allows that to *experience* the medium is to have a real experience. Immediacy allows that the *feeling* that the medium has been erased is authentic experience. So both hypermediacy and immediacy have in common an appeal to authenticity of experience. This is what links and draws them together as remediation.

This common appeal is the result of social constructivity. What seems transparent is a social construct; the outcome of a piling up of media depends on the social construct in which it occurs. A child may see a Disney cartoon character with the eyes of transparent immediacy; an adult will not. A U2 fan may experience an authentic emotional response from being saturated in media at a ZOOTOV concert; others will be offended and distanced by what they experience as noise and bright lights. One *Stations of the Cross* viewer will be moved to tears when confronted by a picture of Jesus attached to a toilet seat,¹⁰² another will be affronted and see only blasphemy. Generally, perhaps universally, immediacy occurs as the result of what is perceived as a positive emotional response. The experience may be confronting and challenging, but it isn't seen negatively. So those to whom the image of Jesus pasted on the toilet seat is sacrilegious can not achieve immediacy in that setting. For them the experience 'jars' too much.

Remediation doesn't just mean the new replacing the old. Old media can also remediate new media. An example would be the television image that looks like a World Wide Web page or a linear movie that incorporates computer generated graphics. Even text that describes a painting or work of art could come in to this category (although technically this is known as *ekphrasis* – “the literary representation of a visual representation.”¹⁰³)

In what seems to be a somewhat circular statement, Bolter and Grusin define a medium as “that which remediates. It is that which appropriates the techniques, forms and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real.”¹⁰⁴ It is barely possible today for us to imagine a medium existing without reference to other media. By this definition *Stations* is itself a medium, as is each of the individual stations. With *Stations* the remediation is also a refashioning of the traditional forms of Stations of the Cross existing in contemporary churches around the world. *Stations of the Cross 2003* is a mediated space in which the logic of hypermediacy predominates. The sights and sounds of the overall installation and the dominant biblical story are supported by remediations of smaller stories. These stations refashion and recall the pericope that make up the bigger story. They build layer upon layer, providing a hypermediated place where an emotional encounter may occur. Remediation, regardless of when in history it is being considered, always operates under whatever assumptions and constructions about authenticity are prevalent in the culture of the time. What the culture assumes about the value and

¹⁰² Station Six. See photo in appendix H, fig. 17.

¹⁰³ W.J.T Mitchell quoted by Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, 45.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

achievement of immediacy and hypermediacy will affect how it responds to remediation and what forms of remediation surface in that culture.

Questions about the visibility versus erasure of the artist and media; the impact of montage, juxtaposition and stacking up of images; the effect of borrowing from other media and ideas; and the level of emotional response from the viewer, will all be significant ideas from remediation to hold up against *Stations of the Cross 2003* and the participants' responses to it.

The logic of remediation is one of two main theoretical concepts that I will use to frame my discussion and analysis of *Stations of the Cross 2003: contemporary icons to reflect on at Easter*. The second is "liminality".

Liminality

During the 1960s, Scottish-American cultural anthropologist Victor Turner, working with his wife Edith, took a term from Arnold van Gennep's turn of the century work¹⁰⁵ (1908 in French) on rites of passage and applied it to a broader range of social situations. The term was *liminal*, from the Latin *limen* meaning 'a threshold'. Van Gennep isolated and named rites of passage as a category of the rituals common to all societies everywhere. These transitional rituals involve movement from separation, to margin, through to reaggregation. "The first phase detaches the ritual subject from their old places in society; the last installs them, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, in a new place in society."¹⁰⁶ The phase between the two, the time on the margins, is what Turner describes as the liminal phase or the period of experiencing liminality.

Van Gennep used the term to describe the process of young males in Central African tribal societies moving from adolescence to adulthood. This involves the young boy being sent away in to the countryside alone to fend for himself (separation) and emerging some days later as a recognised and accepted fully-fledged, sexually active, adult in the society (reaggregation). So temporary marginalisation leads to an irreversible change in the participant's role and place in the society. Once transition has occurred there is no going back to the original condition. The Turners transferred this understanding to a much broader range of situations, particularly religious ones, and described in detail what is experienced during the transitional or liminal stage - the mid-transition in a rite of passage. "Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial."¹⁰⁷

It is the institutions, roles and status that society grants us that define and describe our life. These structures of society shape whom we become. From birth they influence our identity and determine how we act in everyday life. But there is a dimension of life that falls outside these structures or, more specifically, between them or on the margins of them. To be made redundant from your job

¹⁰⁵ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedon and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

¹⁰⁶ Victor Turner and Edith L. B. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 249.

¹⁰⁷ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 95.

would be an example of falling into this dimension. The social structures of having a job, going to the workplace, being defined by what you do, receiving regular income, having conversations about your work, are all removed. You are hopeful of another job, but have not yet entered into that phase. You are between jobs and between the structures, the constructs, of society. You have left behind what previously defined your life. You haven't yet moved forward. To be found in the gaps between these structures is to be in a liminal existence, living on the margins: to be on the threshold. Turner describes this as "anti-structure" i.e. between the structures.¹⁰⁸

To be in a liminal state is to be liberated in a way that may be experienced either positively or negatively. It is a no-man's-land experience. The person has moved beyond what has gone before, but has not yet fully arrived at what is ahead. This experience may have been entered upon voluntarily or thrust upon a person by a crisis of some sort. Turner believed that the liminal phase was of crucial importance in the ritual process and explored it more seriously than other anthropologists of his day. He expanded the understanding of liminality to include almost any experience that temporarily suspends your status or routine: to be unable to find your car keys as you head out the door to an important appointment thrusts you into an experience of liminality, as does receiving the news that a loved one has died, or being involved in a bus accident, or trapped in an elevator. Taking the concept even further, Turner made connections between the "leisure genres of art and entertainment in complex industrial societies and the rituals and myths of archaic, tribal and early agrarian cultures."¹⁰⁹ He argued that these genres were all places where liminal experiences could occur.

Communitas

These moments of anti-structure, or more specifically "social anti-structure" as Turner describes it,¹¹⁰ when experienced with others, lead to liberation from social norms and to the positive experience of what he calls "communitas". The mid-point of transition in a shared ritual, described as the liminal period, is a time when those involved experience a spontaneous shared, unmediated, communication. They find a new identity as a group through the shared experience. This communion, triggered and stimulated by the unexpected escape from anticipated routine, transcends class, race, background, employment, education, age and gender, and is not rational. It is communitas – "an essential and generic human bond."¹¹¹

Temporary escape from routine may create the opportunity to bond with strangers. Such an experience can border on the euphoric and be unforgettable. "It is richly charged with affects, mainly pleasurable. It has something magical

¹⁰⁸ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, 108.

¹⁰⁹ Victor Turner, "Variations on a Theme of Liminality.," in *Secular Ritual*, ed. Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), 43.

¹¹⁰ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, 250.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 250.

about it. Those who experience *communitas* have a feeling of endless power.”¹¹² There is also a level of anxiety attached to any liminal experience. The future is uncertain, outcomes unknown.¹¹³

But these experiences are transitory. They can be nothing more. If the lack of norms and the feelings of suspended status last more than a few moments or hours or days (depending on the circumstance) then apprehension and unease set in and the transition to closure in a new state is disrupted, perhaps for all time. Endless liminality is very disturbing and probably psychologically and emotionally destructive.¹¹⁴ “Intrinsic to enjoying liminality is an expectation of closure, and the sooner the better.”¹¹⁵ Being stuck with others in an elevator that has broken down can be a liminal experience that results in *communitas*, as can becoming lost while tramping. Both happen with the expectation of positive resolution. To know that there is no way out leads to a quite different experience. If the movement into anti-structure doesn’t continue through to structure again, it is not an experience of liminality. The result will be trauma and recrimination. Permanent indeterminacy can’t be lived with; some structure needs to emerge at some point.

[F]or individuals and groups, social life is a type of dialectical process that involves successive experience of high and low, *communitas* and structure, homogeneity and differentiation, equality and inequality In other words, each individual’s life experience contains alternating exposure to structure and *communitas* and to states and transitions.¹¹⁶

While Turner differentiates between what he calls “existential”, “ideological” and “normative” *communitas*,¹¹⁷ it is sufficient here to say that all forms of *communitas* move toward being normalised in order to maintain social control. Spontaneity ceases and order increases. So what was experienced on a pilgrimage or in a service of worship (Nichols would say that liminality is “the condition for hearing and receiving the gospel.”¹¹⁸) is systematised and organised in order to preserve it. Within this structure *communitas* may again arise. *Communitas* and structure can cycle continuously and can be experienced by individuals or groups.

Turner has applied his understanding of liminality and *communitas* to the

¹¹² Ibid., 251.

¹¹³ This has certain similarities to the idea of “flow” put forward by Csikszentmihalyi. See Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

¹¹⁴ Trubshaw distinguishes between “temporary liminality” and “the more-or-less permanent outsiderhood”. Bob Trubshaw, *The Metaphors and Rituals of Place and Time - an Introduction to Liminality* [website] (2001 [cited 11 January, 2006 www.indigogroup.co.uk/edge/liminal.htm]).

¹¹⁵ William M. Johnston, “Liminality: Episodes of Temporary Marginalization,” in *Encyclopedia of Community* (Great Barrington MA: Berkshire Publishing, 2003).

¹¹⁶ Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 97.

¹¹⁷ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, 135.

¹¹⁸ Nichols, “Worship as Anti-Structure: The Contribution of Victor Turner”, 408.

experience shared by random strangers brought together by a journey, in particular a pilgrimage.¹¹⁹ In the same way liminality can be applied to an encounter with the *Stations of the Cross 2003* which, by the nature of participants travelling to the venue and then walking from one station to the next, can also be understood as a pilgrimage, even if those participating are unaware of the connection. Whether *Stations* respondents understood their experience in these terms and if so, what affect that understanding had on their experience, will become clearer as the survey results are interpreted.

¹¹⁹ “Pilgrimages are journeys to special sites, taken for the purpose of purifying the soul and cultivating the spirit; they provide different forms of edification for their participants.” Linda Seidel and others, *Pious Journeys: Christian Devotional Art and Practice in the Later Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Chicago: The David and Alfred Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago, 2001), 67.

CHAPTER FOUR THE 2003 STATIONS OF THE CROSS EXPERIENCE

Stations of the Cross: contemporary icons to reflect on at Easter in 2003, was the seventh consecutive installation of its kind that I had curated at Cityside Baptist Church. It was the first year I was able to use a separate entrance and exit corridor and had an expanded space available to work with. These improvements were the result of renovations done during the previous year. Having said that, the main space was still relatively small at approximately ten metres by twelve metres at its largest points. Ceiling height is approximately 4.5 metres, dropping to 2.2 metres above three metres of floor down one side. The building is basically a ninety year old traditional steep-gabled wooden church that has been badly messed with inside by careless functional alterations.¹²⁰

Space Design

For *Stations of the Cross 2003* the rectangular, level-floored sanctuary space was stripped of all its contents, including wall hangings. Walls were lined to approximately four metres high with a continuous strip of matt-black fabric (weed control cloth). Windows behind and above this level were blacked out before being covered with cloth. The environment created for the art was our most ambitious set up yet. Twenty five people using ten wheelbarrows and as many brooms took less than ninety minutes to move fourteen tonnes of beach sand in from the footpath and spread it over the entire floor to a depth of about 100mm., on top of a black polythene sheet underlay. Timber stands for the fourteen stations were put in place, following a path winding through the space. A three metre by two metre waterfall built from used corrugated iron was placed across one corner and 150 New Zealand native trees, bushes and grasses placed around the space. The art was installed and lit with individual low voltage halogen lighting. The general concept was to create a gloomy, New Zealand-style ‘Garden of Gethsemane’ into which the icons of the last week of Jesus’ life would be placed, leading participants on a journey through that narrative.

A ‘reflective space’, i.e. a place for relatively private individual reflection on the experience, was created down a few steps just off the main installation space, in what is usually the small entrance foyer to the church building. This had an artificial turf floor covering and a range of black fabric-covered couches to sit on. Bread and wine were available for self-service communion beneath a large suspended crucifix. The space was candle-lit. At the opposite end of the building an ‘exit space’ was created using black cloth curtains and handmade sculptured lamps. Original ambient soundtracks were created for the main space and the exit space.

Punters entered up the usual entrance ramp from the street, and into the small foyer of the building adjacent, but connected, to the one used for the installation. Here they were welcomed and given a set of installation notes, a brochure of the related biblical texts (produced specially by the Bible Society) and invited to take

¹²⁰ See sketch plan and exterior photograph in appendix G, and H, fig. 4.

off their shoes and socks and carry them in a jute bag provided. (The bags were manufactured by Bangladeshi women offered this employment as an alternative to prostitution.) After a short transitional corridor the main installation space opened out. It was down a few steps and people had something of a 'grandstand view' of the installation from the small landing before moving down and onto the sand. At this point the ambient soundtrack was audible and the journey around the stations began. The reflective space could be accessed at any time and was down several steps off the opposite end of the main installation space, although not immediately visible due to the trees and shrubs. Visitors from previous years would expect some kind of reflective space in this area.

After moving around the stations for whatever period of time was wanted, and backtracking as often as desired, visitors exited up an internal ramp through a dark area lit only by a series of small neon cross lamps, and into the main exit space. Here they were provided with the opportunity to purchase their jute shoe-bag and thus support the Bangladeshi women, make a donation, fill in a response form, replace shoes and socks, read related literature, or just wait, before finally passing back through the entrance foyer and onto the street from which they had come.

This setup was considerably more sophisticated and complex than those of previous years. Until then the art had generally just been placed around the outer walls of the emptied and blackened space and a soundscape provided. Each year had seen an increase in sophistication from the previous one, such as from lighting with bedlamps to low voltage halogens. This was partly due to financial constraints only allowing for gradual improvement, but more so because I chose to work within reasonably tight financial boundaries so that we were forced to think carefully about how we used our resources. There was also an inevitable 'ramping up' of expectation by participants and a desire to make each year's presentation 'better' and different to the previous one. I needed an outlet for my creativity and ways to keep the large group of volunteers stimulated, so looking for more interesting ways (that were still manageable within our financial and resource constraints) to fulfill the brief was an annual activity.

The individual artist brief has always been to reflect on the biblical text relating to the segment of the Holy Week story selected; to interpret that personal encounter with the story in any media of the artist's choosing (within certain given parameters of space); and to make that interpretation available to the public in order to encourage reflection on the Holy Week events, during Holy Week. This year would be no different, but I was looking for a way to broaden and deepen the experience so that it would become more interactive and lead to more significant encounters with the Christ of the story. I hoped that a multi-sensory experience would encourage that response.

Evaluation

Following the event I wrote an evaluation for the Cityside Church community and our sponsors. I noted that once again the overwhelming highlights of this installation were the very positive comments from a large number of people about the impact it had on them. Approximately 1100 people came through (slightly up on 2002) and the 120 comments in the book (plus more than 130

survey forms) recorded some significant, even life-changing, encounters with God through interacting with our remediation of the Easter story. I also noted that the use of the newly available extended building and the design of the installation worked very well. In particular having a major entrance and exit space separated from the garden, greatly improved the flow of people. Using the church foyer as a separate reflective space also worked very well and freed up more space for the art. I wondered if this increased space and subsequent lack of congestion actually encouraged more chit-chat between punters. I often found groups standing talking to each other in the space (often while their children played in the sand!). Interestingly this almost never happened in the Exit Space, nor the Reflective Space. The garden itself turned out to have quite high levels of ambient noise with the waterfall, station one soundtrack, and the four-source main soundscape all contributing. The lack of the usual central ‘cave’ as a reflective space allowed a higher level of general lighting spill to occur between installations. Perhaps the combination of all these factors led to what felt to me to be a less reflective experience than in previous years. That feeling may have been influenced by the distractions of maintaining and running the installation, and survey responses did not support my interpretation.

Standards

Overall I thought the general standard of art was slightly higher than in previous years, although it still included a very wide range of skill levels. At the ‘finer’ end two pieces (stations three and seven) were to become finalists in the fifteenth national Wallace Art Awards (These are the biggest and longest-surviving annual art awards in New Zealand), and one piece (station seven) would be purchased by the James Wallace Charitable Arts Trust for its collection. Publicity was helped by an item on the national Television One 6pm news.

I received three letters of complaint about *Stations*. None from people who attended. A member of the Cityside congregation contacted and brought to the installation a man who had written me a letter complaining about the Catholic influence (i.e. Stations of the Cross) threatening the Baptist Church.

Financial:¹²¹

Publicity/Promotion	\$1400
Garden	\$2700
General Admin	\$550

No artists were paid for their time or materials.

Costs over both installations were offset by:

\$1000 CreativeNZ
\$195 Citysiders
\$ 620 Offering Jar (with Shoe Bag donations removed)
\$4000 Anonymous Trust

The shortfall was picked up by an anonymous donor.

¹²¹ As well as the garden stations we ran a set of six digital stations in a derelict shop front in a commercial part of the city. This was an attempt to engage people well outside the church and to give Christians who were digital artists an opportunity to use their skills in a ministry context. There was some overlap with expenditure and the combined direct costs were around \$7000.

Attendance Figures (Garden Stations only):

Wednesday 215 punters (225 last year)

Thursday 196 (174)

Friday 453 (529)

Saturday 201 (not open)

Survey Responses

I wasn't sure how many people would be willing to take the twenty to thirty minutes needed to fill in a survey form as they left the installation. I provided tables and chairs in the small exit space where people could sit and write, and ran a small invitation to do so in the installation notes. I hoped I might get twenty good responses from the fifty forms I initially printed. Those forms all went in the first few hours and in response to regular verbal requests I printed 100 more. In the end I stopped at 137 responses, despite requests for more forms. People wanted to respond. This was on top of 120 brief written responses in the comments book. I was surprised and overwhelmed by such a magnificent response. Did this generosity reflect the desire of people for a vehicle to reflect on and process the experience?

My next surprise was discovering that the vast majority of the responses were at length and in depth. I had expected a high rate of minimalist responses where punters had simply 'ticked the boxes'. As I read through these responses trying to decide which ones to use for my analysis, I was very moved by the obvious effort and care that people had taken in responding. At times I was moved to tears, not only by the impact *Stations* had had, but also by the fact that people had been willing to respond in such intimate ways. I felt as if I was handling sacred documents and found it very hard to put any aside as 'not useful'. As a consequence I will draw on all of the responses for my research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SURVEY RESULTS IN THE LIGHT OF THE METHODOLOGY

A total of 137 viewers of the installation filled in survey forms.¹²² The responses ranged from the very brief to the extensively detailed. They arrived up to six weeks after the event. Some were written by people apparently unmoved by any aspect of the installation, many others were brimming with emotion and self-reflection. Surprisingly, overall the comments suggest that the piece of art itself - the medium or media it is constructed in, its size, the artist's intention, the quality of the artistry, and even the specific theme of the work - has little or no bearing on what the viewer takes away from her interaction with that work. In other words there is no formula that can be applied by an artist or curator in order to guarantee an emotional response.

Why and how people respond is to a large degree mysterious, although I will suggest some conclusions from my research later on in this chapter. This mysterious quality was very clearly demonstrated in the Stations of the Cross installation from the previous year. A theological student described to me in a personal email the profound way he 'encountered God', not from any of the art, but through the small handwritten 'Emergency Exit' sign that hung on the wall to indicate what was available behind the wall covering. This sign happened to be between stations seven and eight. It was at that point of being half way through reflecting on the Jesus journey, that would eventually take Jesus to the cross, that the student realised that Jesus could have 'exited' whenever he wanted. But Jesus had chosen to stay until the end. Until crucifixion. This anecdote is a clear reminder that no formula guarantees a positive emotional response or is guaranteed to mediate the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of participants. So it is no surprise that outcomes reported from engaging with *Stations of the Cross* are as varied as the art and the viewers are. As I will show, the surveys suggest that regardless of the style or quality of the work, if the art is given a context in the Christian story, interacting with it will lead to an experience that for many people can be described as a spiritual encounter.

The Surveys

Reading the surveys was an emotionally exhausting and yet exhilarating experience. Apart from there being a large number of responses, many people wrote at length about their innermost feelings as they encountered the art, and as they encountered God through the art. Sometimes it is clear that they are struggling to know how to use words to describe their experience. Some couldn't move beyond the superficial. Others wove their significant personal circumstances into their experience of the stations. But regardless of the depth or difficulty of the response, all chose to respond. With no more prompting than a small invitation printed in the back of the installation notes, and a pile of surveys and pens in the exit space, they chose to spend between ten and forty-five minutes to write about how they felt:

"I completed this form late at night and its messy – sorry. I woke up with

¹²² Eight artists also filled in a different form (see appendix M.b.) describing their process. I had planned to draw on these responses but realised that they took the work in a different direction. My concern is primarily with the responses of viewers rather than the intent of the artist.

a clear picture in my mind of the ‘offense’ of the gospel I had felt and experienced it the moment I saw the toilet [station six]. Having to reflect and write it down has been more helpful than I expected. Perhaps an opportunity could be built in more often.”¹²³

This was written by a woman over sixty years of age who hasn’t attended church for several years. I was reminded of the sacredness of the documents I was handling, and that they had a power to move me in ways I had not anticipated. That power has not diminished with the passing of time.

Responding to Art

Why and how people respond to works of art has been the subject of much writing and discussion over the last half millennium, and never more so than the last half century.¹²⁴

In a book that declares his desire to understand how viewers respond to all forms and levels of images, not just ‘high art’, David Freedberg says:

People are sexually aroused by pictures and sculptures; they mutilate them, kiss them, cry before them, and go on journeys to them; they are calmed by them, and incited to revolt. They give thanks by means of them, expect to be elevated by them, and are moved to the highest levels of empathy and fear. They have always responded in these ways; they still do. They do so in societies we call primitive and in modern societies; in East and West, in Africa, America, Asia, and Europe.¹²⁵

Fifteen years later Robin Jensen would adopt a similar perspective when referring to art in a Christian context:

When we consciously attend to an object, especially an art object, we will have some kind of reaction to it. The response may be subtle or it may be strong. It may be positive or negative. We may be turned off, aroused, repulsed, delighted or disappointed. We may be moved to tears, frightened, bored or baffled. Our responses may be different from those of the person next to us. But no matter how we respond, we are slightly or significantly different for having had the viewing, or the hearing - for having paid attention.¹²⁶

Every respondent to *Stations* would support Jensen’s view. Without exception they made some response, and there was no going back from that response.

Elkins comments that it is likely that someone cried when viewing the very first painting, and someone has been crying ever since.¹²⁷ He also describes similar

¹²³ All survey quotes are contained within double speech marks, whether block or running quotes.

¹²⁴ See James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 259-64.

¹²⁵ Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*, 1.

¹²⁶ Robin M. Jensen, *The Substance of Things Seen: Art, Faith and the Christian Community* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 3.

¹²⁷ Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 151.

emotional responses from classical antiquity to contemporary art and culture,¹²⁸ and interestingly notes the ‘dry’ periods when tears were not culturally acceptable as a response to art. Elkins suggests that today we are in an era when a focus on the technical aspects of art doesn’t encourage an emotional response. Freedberg sees the issue as one of repression - we are embarrassed by the primitive nature of our potential responses and so suppress them:

Much of our sophisticated talk about art is simply an evasion. We take refuge in such talk when, say, we discourse about formal qualities, or when we rigorously historicize the work because we are afraid to come to terms with our responses – or at very least, with a significant part of them So we repress them¹²⁹

Freedberg suggests that Christianity was responsible for making tears acceptable and commonplace. In the fourth century the Bible was seen to support Anthony Abbott’s urging of people to “weep with the joy and sorrow of God.”¹³⁰ Crying was “an officially recognised form of worship.”¹³¹ Tears were considered to belong to God and to shed them was to have the reservoir punctured by God and your joy escape and return to God. This is worship that is recognised and accepted by God because the tears are recognised as God’s own tears coming back. Tears of compunction (which became known as the doctrine of compunction) could be a sign of devotion, repentance, grief, love, guilt, hope or joy on the part of the worshipper. They were a visible sign of God’s presence in the world.

In 2003 we have left this understanding well behind. Our scientific approach to analysing, dissecting and deconstructing has pushed such beliefs to the edges and beyond, of mainstream Christian faith. Thus we lack the vocabulary to describe the devotional experiences we have. Despite this lack, many respondents in 2003 would indicate a similar depth of emotional response.

Art and Emotion

From the fifth to the fourteenth century art was predominantly of a religious nature and designed for religious purposes, to be experienced privately or corporately (but generally the former.) By the end of the Middle Ages (fourteenth century) painting had developed in a new direction and “was specifically intended to produce an intense emotional experience.”¹³² One visual strategy that attempted to draw the viewer in (to not only the painting but to the experience being portrayed - in other words transparent immediacy), was to draw figures from the waist up instead of full length. This made them seem closer. Details from scenes were painted rather than the whole scene. Moments of high

¹²⁸ Ibid., 151f. Greek vase paintings and grave stelae from around 500 B.C. clearly show individuals and groups crying. These new gestures appeared at the same time that large scale paintings of a tragic subject matter were beginning to appear.

¹²⁹ Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* 429.

¹³⁰ Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 152, 262.

¹³¹ Ibid., 152.

¹³² Ibid., 154.

tension were captured on canvas.¹³³ Often two small portraits would be hinged in a diptych. On one side would be Jesus, suffering, and on the opposite Mary would be watching him and crying. Diptychs would be used for meditation as the viewer entered in to the suffering of Jesus and Mary. This desire for transparent immediacy, an element of remediation, was a desire to not just sympathise with the story depicted, but, as Elkins says:

The aim of the prayer was to identify with them bodily, to try to think of yourself as Jesus, or as the mother of God. You would look at such an image steadily, sometimes for days on end, burrowing deeper into the mind of the savior or the Virgin. Finally you would come to feel what they had felt, and you would see the world, at least in some small part, through their eyes. At that point their tears would be your tears - as compunctive doctrine had always said they were.¹³⁴

The achievement of such a depth of empathy is a key element in determining the effect a work will have on a viewer. We have seen this to be true from the *via crucis* to the *sacri monti*, spanning many centuries. We have yet to discover if, regardless of the methodology and vehicle, it is this close identifying of viewer with object in *Stations 2003* that leads to spiritual transformation. Can this identifying take place without the illusionist technique of verisimilitude?

Tears Today

The opening up of tourism and travel in Europe in the early nineteenth century exposed unprecedented numbers of people to great works of art for the first time. Many stories are recorded of these tourists having physical responses - tears, swooning, excessive sweating, fainting, falling over, constricted breathing, vomiting - to the viewing of art.

The tide of unbalanced tourists swelled in the 1850's and 1860's, when increasing numbers of Americans visited Europe with their guidebooks in hand, trembling in anticipation of Great Experiences Currently the center of hysterical tourism is the hospital of Santa Maria Nuova in Florence. Each summer during the tourist season, it admits dozens of patients suffering from ailments brought on by the local art.¹³⁵

In gathering research for his recent book,¹³⁶ Elkins advertised minimally in the USA for people to contact him if they had responded to a painting with tears. More than 400 people replied, despite there being a general distrust and scepticism in contemporary culture about the power of art to elicit emotional reactions. It is these letters and his conversations with art historians, curators and conservators (who mostly wished to remain anonymous or not to be quoted) that form the foundation for his analysis of why people feel emotion, expressed particularly through tears, when viewing a painting. Alongside these letters and

¹³³ E.g. Gerhard Seghers, *The Denial of Peter*, c1620-25; Andrea Mantegna, *The Dead Christ*, c1500.

¹³⁴ Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 155.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44. This is usually described as The Stendahl Syndrome after the novelist Stendahl who suffered with this kind of reaction during his January 1817 visit to the galleries of Florence.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

conversations he describes incidents in the life of twentieth century American painter Mark Rothko and draws on the comments left by visitors to the interfaith Rothko Chapel in Texas. These comments, more than 5000 in all, are responses to what at first appear to be a series of fourteen large plain black canvases. Elkins work covers a wide range of contemporary responses to art from different eras, and also delves into the historical responses of artists and viewers to art in previous centuries. With both of us interested in the response of viewers to works of art, there are parallels to my own research and I will draw on him where appropriate.

Both Elkins' work and my curating of *Stations 2003* took place in a time when, in the West at least, showing strong emotional reactions to art is not generally acceptable.

A huge cultural change, like a tidal wave, has brought us to this affectively neutral place and marooned us here. From our dry desert island we look out at the ocean with suspicion The emotionless air of the twentieth century has come to seem entirely natural: we're inside it, we breathe it, we take it as the normal condition of life.¹³⁷

The exception to this lack of an emotional response would be an angry public reaction to what is deemed offensive (usually from a religious point of view, e.g. Andres Serrano's 1989 *Piss Christ*.)

Our lives today are different to those of the fifteenth or eighteenth century, and we can't go back to those times, but it is helpful to know that in other times, a broader range of emotional responses was not only understood but anticipated.

We can't know what went on in a worshipper's mind in [those earlier centuries.] . . . But we can be sure there were people back then who would have thought it was fundamentally eccentric, naïve, or misguided to look at a painting and feel nothing.¹³⁸

Stations of the Cross 2003 Responses

My surveys of viewers at the *Stations of the Cross* installation did not include asking if they had shed tears in front of any of the art, or at any point in relation to the installation. Drawing on Elkins' material for a brief survey of emotional responses to art through history provides a context for studying the responses of viewers in my setting. It also puts the survey responses in the context of a time in history that is described as one when tearlessness is generally believed to be a more appropriate response to art than tearfulness is.

Tears also do not necessarily imply a spiritual response, or an encounter with God. Although they can be indicative of such experiences, they are certainly not the only indicator of such activity. Similarly a lack of tears shouldn't be confused with the lack of a meaningful response. While there were works that drew an obviously more consistent emotional response than others, overall the surveys clearly demonstrated a very broad range of responses to all works.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid., 163.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 163.

¹³⁹ See graph of breakdown of responses to individual stations, Question 10, in appendix O.i.

Strongly Polarised Responses

Station six¹⁴⁰ (*Jesus is Mocked and Beaten*, subtitled “King of the Lose”) featured a bright blue painted toilet bowl with a picture of Jesus on the underneath of the upraised toilet seat, and, not surprisingly, drew the most negative criticism.

“A little too bizarre for me.”¹⁴¹

“Absolute disgust – some things are beyond the pale. The apparent explanation did little to assist.”

“A picture of the saviour in a toilet bowl seems incongruous at best; certainly approaching desecratory.”

“[I was] surprised at using a toilet to define Jesus”

“[It was] slightly annoying. While I welcomed the stimulus of the station it was in-your-face, and I admit I find this antagonising.”

“Shock at the juxtaposition of images – Jesus and the toilet; Jesus in the toilet - felt jarring, disrespectful.”

“My brand of Christianity shies away from depicting Our Lord in a toilet bowl.” (Roman Catholic male)

“Don’t do any more toilet jokes!”

“Some of the stations I found offensive e.g. ‘King of the Lose’.”

“The toilet bowl and pictures was unhelpful.”

“[It] annoyed me because it was so ... clichéd in a political sense.”

“Station 6 was a bit of a shock.”

But some people also responded positively, in the sense that they were willing to allow that this station might draw them into some liminal moment of being challenged by a God-encounter. They were open to the possibility of this experience being something ultimately positive or formative:

“Initially I thought this was a cheap shot – trying to get attention! Then with some reflection on the explanation – a willingness to expand my thoughts – to be challenged.”

“[This station affected me because] I’ve never given myself permission to cross such a boundary....”

“It shatters the great secular/sacred divide. It’s raw and breaks against the soft, simple Jesus of Sunday School.”

“[This was a spiritual encounter for me because] it calls me to repentance

¹⁴⁰ See photograph in appendix H, fig. 17.

¹⁴¹ All quotes from surveys are reproduced as they were written, unless changes were needed to ensure understanding. Where changes have been made, or words added, they are marked by []. Spelling corrections, expansion of abbreviations used, and altered capitalisation and punctuation are done only where needed to enhance what I understand as the intended meaning of the respondent, and have not been indicated.

when I see the shame and ugliness in it.”

“It connected with my own spiritual journey of redefining my faith; of a moment from past ‘black and white’ thought and absolutism to my redefinition of what spirituality, ‘church’ ... is.”

“[It] sort of hit you in the face. I think my initial reaction was offense and then I thought - its perfect.” (Over 60 year old female.)

“Some disgust - but I think this was necessary. It’s a shocking piece, but again in a good way. Powerful.”

“This was my favourite station, it was so simple.”

“All of life holds possibilities for a spiritual encounter so the earthiness of this one was quite natural.”

“As always I found several of the stations too cryptic, or not meaningful to me ... the other stations were ‘nice’, number 6 was shocking. I felt that this was the perfect response. I found the artists deep and meaningful explanation interesting It was a good opportunity to reflect, be still and worship.”

For others there was a more direct linking of their feelings with the toilet as a symbol for a baser function:

“[This station affected me] because I treat my relationship with Christ often as wasteful shit.”

“A toilet is such a vivid image of filth and disrespect and to have a picture of Christ in it! It reminded me of how God allowed himself to be lowered. I felt convicted about the way in which the world treats Jesus Christ and my response to that.”

“[It] reminded me of the saying ‘Christ wasn’t crucified between 2 candles on an altar but between 2 thieves on a rubbish dump.’ This takes me closer to the dump!”

“This station’s wide juxtaposition of waste/sewer and sacred was effective in stirring my imagination.”

“It was simply an awareness that yes! This was it – the lowest of the low. Jesus bore all this crap for me. (Excuse me).”

But not everyone was moved by this station:

“[Overall it] was a well produced, high quality, professional production. Maybe more shock/impact could have helped.”

Hypermediated Art Works

This station is a clear example of hypermediation. It piles up images and media, defying definition as to what it really is. Equally clearly it places those interacting with it in liminal situations. They are on a threshold from which they

will move one way or the other, but either way they will be changed and unable to return to the place of understanding they had previously occupied. They will not leave the experience the same as when they arrived at it. At some level viewers were grappling with the heart of the Christian message, about who Jesus is, even if they were not aware of that process at the time. Their conceptions and preconceptions of Christology, the atonement, and discipleship were being challenged and questioned. A confrontation was taking place.

Another example of the artist using remediation is station number eight¹⁴² ('Jesus talks to the Women'). This consisted of three large panels (approximately 81.5cm x 121cm) of clear Perspex layered, and held 10cm apart from each other by threaded steel rods at three corners. The back layer of Perspex carried repeated black and white photocopies of the artist's new born baby crying; the middle layer was covered with torn-out contemporary newspaper headlines of war and violence (mostly from the then current Iraq war); and the top layer carried the relatively unfamiliar biblical text of Luke 23: 27-32¹⁴³ in white lettering.

This was one of the two stations most often described by respondents as having the greatest impact.¹⁴⁴ Elements of hypermediacy can be seen in the physical layering of materials - images and text - and the use of newspaper headlines to act as slogans that are juxtaposed with the birth of a baby. The iconic shape of a cathedral stained glass window is borrowed and remediated in the curved-top shape of the layered Perspex sheets. The shape alone suggests 'ecclesiastical stained glass window'. No attempt is made by the artist to obscure the fact that the text is newspaper clippings, or that the baby images are anything other than poor quality black and white photocopies. Despite this lack of attempt at immediacy, many viewers described experiences that were clearly liminal and involved their reaching a significant level of intimacy and transparent immediacy in relation to the work:

"[It was] simple, easy to understand. Looks through what Jesus said to what's happening today."

"The multi-layered effect had resonance. Made my thoughts focus on different metaphorical levels."

"[What affected me most was the] combination of images, contemporary headlines, bible text, babies, merged into universal timelessness of suffering."

¹⁴² See photograph in appendix H, fig. 20.

¹⁴³ "don't cry for me/cry for yourselves and your children/for the time is coming when they'll say/lucky the women who never conceived!/lucky the wombs that never gave birth!/lucky the breast that never gave milk!/then they'll start calling to the mountains/ 'fall down on us!'/calling to the hills/ 'cover us!'/if the people do this to a live green tree/can you imagine what they'll do with dead wood."

¹⁴⁴ The other was station seven. See appendix O.i. for the graph of relative impact on viewers of each station.

“The words on different layers were intriguing. I had to focus and stop to absorb them. The thinking and concentration involved were kind of meditative.”

“Incredible pain and sadness at the evil in the world today. The consequences of people’s lives made me cry.”

“[I was affected by] it’s depth, multi-layering, causing me to see, transfer, this phenomenon to other aspects, bits of the real, the world.”

“I was reintroduced to the language of the gospel-persons, and brought into their interaction myself, now.”

“Layers of meaning built on each other and added a lot of weight to the bible verses.”

“I appreciated it very much as the different layers (depths) of communication were presented physically. The bottom layer wasn’t seen until a close inspection was made.”

References to the stacking up and layering of images that is so important in hypermediation, are cited in these comments - “layers of meaning”, “multi-layering”, layers of communication” - and clearly affect the way these viewers responded. They were aware that the layering was influencing how they felt about the work.

Empathetic Responses

Many people described their personal situations and recent experiences as the reason that this station most impacted them. For some of them the medium was erased and raw emotion remained:

“As a newish mother I identified with this station – with the general feeling of wanting to protect my child and with the specific horror of what’s happening in Iraq.”

“[I was drawn by] the contemporary politics and the personal connection mother:mother.”

“I work with refugees who lived through these situations (or their children), understand the fragility of life – a bit close to home.”

“I felt quite emotional about [this station] – spent time today with a friend and baby in a bad situation, the war etc...all quite raw emotions brought out by it.”

“[This most affected me] because I am a woman and love babies and can’t imagine being glad not to have them.”

“[This affected me most] because I’m a mother! Unexpected reaction. I don’t think I have ever heard this speech from Jesus before.”

‘I am a mother and this connects to my deepest heart.’

“The words were powerful and the simplicity of the presentation dramatic. I am also a woman and a mother.”

“[This affected me most] because I could identify/empathise with the emotions tied to the events portrayed.”

“[What affected me most was] the thought of motherhood, empathy for mothers in Iraq – the words in the programme – how bad life would have to be to ...”

For others it was the juxtaposition of unlikely elements that carried the most impact:

“The pictures of newborn baby and up to date captions on the Iraq war affected me most.”

“Newspaper clippings and the artists story [about her baby].”

“It connected Jesus and the war in Iraq forever in my head.”

The effect on the viewer could be profound even if there was no obvious personal connection made between viewer and work, or the experiences of viewer and artist:

“I related the words of Jesus to a woman and a mother. In the context of the current war it was powerful.”

“I was attracted by the visual style – words on Perspex, 3-dimensional.”

“[I was drawn by] the connection to present situations.”

“[This station affected me because] I could understand the words; the clear yet symbolic construction. Women and children are always the most vulnerable.”

Many of these people reported experiences that could be described as liminal: experiences that would change how they viewed themselves and their futures; experiences from which they could not go back:

“I imagined what it would be like for a mother. I couldn’t imagine the desperation of asking mountains to fall on you.”

“It brought the words of Jesus right into the present. I felt tearful for women with children all around the world, but especially war-torn countries.”

“As a woman you are drawn to the image of a baby crying – then drawn in further.”

“I felt like it demanded some response from me – provoking.”

“Brought me face-to-face with one aspect of my own sinfulness. I think this is an encounter of the spirit in me with the Spirit of God.”

“[This station affected me] because I want to be a mum and I spent 5 months looking after my newborn nephew. I felt that connection between mum and son and he’s not even mine.”

Spiritual Encounters

An empathetic response, that of experiencing a connection between something in the life of the viewer and something in the piece of art, was the most dominant reason given for what I would describe as a positive spiritual encounter. I define this as a response that encouraged the viewer to an increased understanding of the atoning work of Christ, or to greater devotion and deeper commitment to following that Christ. I deliberately left ‘spiritual’ undefined in the survey, allowing for the broadest possible range of responses and subjective interpretations.¹⁴⁵ If the viewer considered her response to be a ‘spiritual’ one, then it was.

Interestingly, while this connection and empathy between the life experience of the viewer and content of the art would seem to me to be a most obviously significant factor in determining how a viewer responds, it was not one of the reasons discussed by Elkins as a cause for tears. The closest he gets to describing empathy is with the first of his three reasons that people cry in front of paintings: time. By this he means time in all its aspects and inflections. Time that shows no change. Time that reminds of many changes. The passing of time. Time that is out of joint or frozen. The life-timing of the artist producing the painting. A reminder of times past, passed, lost, or yet to come, and so on.¹⁴⁶ He reports receiving a letter from a woman who made two visits to Michelangelo’s Medici Chapel in Florence, seventeen years apart and was moved to tears by the realisation that it hadn’t changed in that time, and would not have changed since Michelangelo abandoned it centuries earlier. Time had stopped, and this realisation was sufficient to move her to tears. Yet apparently none of his 400 respondents was moved to tears by an obvious connection between the content of a painting and a specific incident in the viewer’s own experience. At least none reported that connection. Nor did any of the 5000 writers of comments in the Rothko Chapel visitors books collected from the gallery opening in February 1972 through to the time of Elkins visit, comment on being moved by that kind of empathetic response.

In contrast to the Rothko Chapel viewers, it was the connection between the experience of the viewer and the content of the art work that produced the most common and strongest emotional and spiritual responses in viewers responding to the *Stations of the Cross*. Some of their responses are listed earlier in relation to stations seven and fourteen, but other stations elicited similar emotional responses:

¹⁴⁵ Question 16: In what ways would you describe your experience of this station as a spiritual encounter?

¹⁴⁶ Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* Chapter 8, “Crying Because Time Passes.”

“[My response was] sadness at the needless killing of people.” (Station eight)

“Sadness, empathy.” (Station eight)

“Quite sobering. Some of it almost upsetting, especially stations eight and fourteen.”

“Station ten was poignant. I thought it was more representative of the Easter sacrifice than the others.”

“Deep feelings of thankfulness.” (Station one)

“A mixture of feelings [encountering this station] – sadness, elation, feeling of “God did this for me? Amazing when I am so flawed, imperfect, a sinner.” (Station three)

Unmoved

There were also those who were apparently unmoved at any level by their experience of the stations, and those who described it almost wholly in negative terms:

“The sand annoyed me, as did the reflective space and the overwhelming smell of candle wax that accompanied it. I felt as though I was in a museum.”

“I don’t know that I would describe it as a spiritual encounter, but certainly a nice wander through some people’s interpretations of the Easter Story.”

“I think it would have helped if there had been someone at the door to answer questions.”

“It might have helped if people had been able to have a discussion about it somewhere.”

“I feel it would have been more helpful if all the artists explained why they expressed themselves the way they did. Some did it well but others left me confused.”

“I guess I find it harder to interpret pictures than words.”

“I think the intent was good but I feel overall it missed the mark.”

“I felt like I was on holiday in summer visiting an art gallery.”

“About 1/3 of the stations were totally above me and even after reading the background of the station and talking to others, I still couldn’t relate.”

According to Jensen, “the act of seeing leaves a mark, some kind of impression.

If we are disappointed by what we see, if it does not attract us, if we do not find it beautiful or fascinating, we probably won't be very much affected by it and we will go elsewhere."¹⁴⁷ This is particularly true of negative experiences. They drive the viewer away rather than draw her in. In contrast if the viewer is attracted or fascinated in some way then she will come back to it even if just by 'picturing' it in her mind. This coming back to an image is what begins "to shape us in small or significant ways."¹⁴⁸ Just what (or who) initiates and leads us toward this response is unpredictable. We cannot choose what we will 'see', or what we will choose to not see. "Thus it happens quite often that seekers who think they know what they're after are suddenly taken down a different path, drawn by a vision of some kind that powerfully affects them in ways they had not expected."¹⁴⁹ This range of ways of responding to the installation was reported by viewers in relation to individual stations and to the whole.

Most respondents who commented about the installation in strongly negative terms did not record much else in the way of responses. This would seem to support Jensen's analysis outlined above. While these viewers resisted being shaped by what they were seeing and appeared to travel no further than their initial reaction, Jensen suggests that some transformation is unavoidable. For example, an older female who stayed in the installation for fifty minutes responded that she had no response to the stations, found them hard to understand, and said she hoped "that the effect of this stations exhibition will manifest in the future." Most of her form was blank. It is difficult to believe that she could spend fifty minutes in the installation and be unaffected by it.

Perhaps the most interesting, and certainly the most detailed, response to the issue of apparently being unmoved by any aspect of the installation, was from a forty six to fifty year old woman who regularly attended an Anglican Church. She spent almost an hour in the installation, on her second visit:

"I found this year hard to understand. I like to believe I have an open attitude to different ways of expressing faith. I appreciate Cityside Baptist (have visited) for its honesty and difference. I like things that stop God being boxed. I hope that the effect of this Stations exhibition will manifest in the future.

I was so moved by last years Stations that I came twice and have meditated on parts all year! But this year it was much harder to understand. I am expecting (hoping) that some things will be more apparent in time. I do wonder if Cityside has grown spiritually more than I have during the last year and I have been left behind."

I find this response confusing and saddening. I don't understand why she spent such a long time in the installation, and why she returned, if it was giving out so little for her. Perhaps it reflected her commitment to trying to find an encounter with God in the installation. She clearly worked very hard to find some meaning beyond the obvious, and was looking to encounter God, but in her terms was

¹⁴⁷ Jensen, *Substance of Things Seen* 5.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

denied that. My sadness is that she saw the problem as being within her. She was not able to trust her own level and process of maturity and spiritual insight. Here was someone who wanted to encounter God in a significant way but was apparently unable to do so, and blamed herself for that.

Many people had difficulty in understanding their encounter with the installation or a specific work within it, as a 'spiritual experience':

"[I found it] reflective, stimulating, surprising. I didn't really find it a spiritual encounter. I don't really feel I have a new or heightened awareness of the story."

"It was a spiritual event in the sense that it encouraged me to contemplate historical events that are said to carry spiritual significance. I'm not sure that I understand what 'spiritual' means anymore."

"I didn't understand some stations. I thought barefeet on the sand was great. Plants everywhere was cool. Very impressed by the whole setup."

"Not so much spiritual as a feeling of the spirit of humanity and the love of God that links us."

"[It was an] intellectual rather than a spiritual encounter."

"Not a spiritual encounter, rather an emotional one."

Despite often writing at some length in other parts of the survey about what God had spoken to them about, some still answered the direct question, "in what ways would you describe your experience of this station as a spiritual encounter?" in the negative, or as 'doubtful'. It seems that many people lacked the vocabulary and perhaps the experience and, until now, the permission, to understand or describe what had happened to them as a spiritual encounter:

"Not much of an effect. Not very spiritual. The art was really well done, but some things I couldn't see where the artist was coming from. [One station evoked] sadness; there were real headings of people suffering in real situations ... I saw people suffering for myself."

A thirty six to forty year old woman who had done some theological study, said,

"In no way would I describe it as a spiritual experience", but also

responded by writing:

"An hour with the Lord! I especially enjoyed the reflective space with candles in the sand and communion."

Others made comments similar to this respondent:

"Although I did not directly 'encounter' God, I believe I was experiencing something from God – some encouragement, some truth, that will affect the way I journey in coming days."

A woman between twenty one and twenty five years old from an Open Brethren congregation could say of her experience, particularly with station seven,¹⁵⁰

“The skeletal man was a sober (and scary) image of how demanding the Christian walk is I have been thinking recently about what my own expectations of self as a ‘good Christian’ are, and the absolute impossibility of ever doing enough for Jesus ... yet so many weak and imperfect people have been ... crucial to God’s plan of salvation – which gives me hope!”

Yet when asked if she would describe her experience as a spiritual encounter could only say,

“Not sure – see it as a mental and emotional encounter. Possibly not a spiritual one until I talk to God about it”

A woman aged between thirty one and thirty five, not a Christian and with no experience of church, wrote of her encounter with station six:

“I think it was more of a cognitive encounter [rather than a spiritual one] due to the text.”

But she had previously written,

“I felt sadness and empathy. I am of the age when I am ready to have children but I often think about the kind of world I would be bringing them into [This station particularly affected me] because of my age and gender. I think that bringing children into the world is the most important thing many people will ever do in their life and people should realise the responsibility.”

There were also those who began their surveys expressing how minimal the effect had been on them; how negative an experience it was; how the installation had missed the mark, and by the time they had completed the survey were giving very long and detailed descriptions of the way a specific station had impacted on them. The process of writing apparently brought an element of reflection that uncovered a response that they weren’t previously aware of:

“I think the overall intent was good, but I feel that overall it missed the mark The overall feeling was impact. It was brilliantly executed ... expressed a truth with a visual image that will not be forgotten ... spoke to my soul and spirit.”

“I would never have thought [until now] of a painting as an expression of God’s love for me.”

“[I had no spiritual response] rather an emotional one ... and the fact that there was no commentary nor any guiding lines to follow meant one could wander and be gob-smacked!”

For some who struggled to understand their encounter with a piece of art as an

¹⁵⁰ Station seven: Jesus is helped by Simon of Cyrene. Life-size metal skeleton sculpture. See photograph in appendix H, fig. 19.

encounter with God, it was easier to see it as such if they connected it to the more familiar (and more often described as spiritual), experiences of praying, taking Communion, even lighting a candle:

“Having space for reflection and the Lord’s Supper at the end was great. Quiet place to come before God with the feelings evoked in this experience – pray and renew my hope.”

“I really benefited from spending 20 minutes partaking of communion and praying, lighting a candle etc in the reflection room. It cemented the spiritual meaning of the art exhibits for me and allowed me space to connect with God – something that doesn’t happen often enough for me.”

“I was most impacted in the reflective room, by the candles and the cross, and my awareness of sacrifice and spiritual vigil was prompted.”

“Not sure if I see this as a spiritual experience. I see it as a mental and emotional encounter [that is] possibly not a spiritual one until I talk to God about it or reflect on how he has used the art to help me to where he wants me to go. I found the ‘contemplation space’ very helpful in this regard.”

“The reflection room, candles and lighting and communion elicited the strongest response from me.”

“I found the communion bit at the end the most ‘spiritual’ part, in the sense of putting things together and taking it back to the ritual of bread and wine – a chance to reflect further.”

Time Spent Looking

The time people spent with any particular station was generally quite short. The time at the station deemed to be most significant was generally three to five minutes, rarely more and often less. (The accuracy of this may be affected by the difficulty of judging time accurately after the event.) One viewer responded to the question about time with,

“Long enough! I’m not sure if chronological time is important in this context.”

Another said,

“Three – four minutes [at one station]. There wasn’t much to see but there was a lot to think about.”

Elkins would be appalled at this ‘commuter’ approach to viewing the stations. According to attendants and guards at the Rothko Chapel the people most moved are those who stay for significant periods of time, i.e. more than a few minutes, but who don’t get involved in meditation or prayer. Rather they “look intensely, and for a long time.”¹⁵¹ Viewers who responded to the *Stations of the Cross 2003*

¹⁵¹ Elkins, *Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 10.

often practised a different approach, but the effect of spiritual formation was no less significant for them.

Many people would say they find movies, books, and music more emotionally moving than art. With the latter there is movement, suspense, the passing of time through narrative, the ebb and flow of suspense, and uncertainty about what will come next. In contrast a painting captures a fixed moment in time. It is static. Therefore it can be absorbed in the blink of an eye. Unlike a movie, viewing a static work of art is over before it draws the viewer in. Elkins takes the opposite perspective from the responses he analysed. He refers to many people and their relationship with paintings that have lasted years and decades. “If you see a picture in the blink of an eye, then you have missed it. It takes ten or fifteen minutes just to inventory the plants and animals in *Ecstasy of St Francis*”¹⁵² Elkins declines to enter in to a discussion of the impact of still photographs. According to him there is only one reason why people cry in front of a photograph – “they know the person or the place.”¹⁵³ Again the surveyed viewers of *Stations of the Cross 2003* would challenge Elkins’ interpretation. Somehow even a brief interaction with a work was able to produce a significant spiritual experience; a moment of liminality.

This young adult woman says she spent two or three minutes in front of a station:
“One of those ‘penny-drop’ moments when you see something in a new light. So obvious and simple and yet you never thought of it in that light before The idea ... really stuck with me.”

From an older woman who spent five or six minutes with each station and forty-five minutes overall in the whole installation:

“... [O]ne of the most moving and refreshing experiences I’ve seen Very moving. Reminded me of spiritual pilgrimage. Enveloped me.”

A middle-aged male, in stating that he had spent just three to four minutes in front of station fourteen, said,

“There wasn’t much to see but there was a lot to think about.”

He went on to say of the station:

“Thought provoking ... very arresting. The connection between Mary and Jesus, and the sinless Jesus as the ‘perfect beautiful doll’ was very striking. I wanted to keep thinking about that.”

An analysis of the total time people estimated they spent in the overall installation indicates that more than half of punters spent thirty minutes or less.¹⁵⁴ At an average of considerably less than two minutes a station for most people, that would barely register on Elkins’ chart as an encounter of any significance. Jensen is more generous. Speaking of any conscious attention given to an object,

¹⁵² Ibid., 141. Painting by Giovanni Bellini, 1480-85.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 131.

¹⁵⁴ See appendix O.h for an analysis of time spent in the installation.

no matter how fleetingly, she describes how we are inevitably affected.

Maybe only a single atom of our consciousness has shifted; maybe a landslide has taken place in our souls. Indelible memories may be fixed or recovered. We may not be aware of much impact, or we may recognise that this was a significant moment. Still, something happens.¹⁵⁵

Context

Like all experiences with art, the *Stations* experience is affected by the context of the viewing. While the individual station installations and the overall garden environment may not be immediately familiar (or ever become familiar) the quasi-liturgical context, framed as it is by the mostly familiar Easter meta-narrative, provides a radically more fertile soil for emotional responses to bloom in. Elkins' respondents were mainly describing encounters with single paintings in mixed contexts – predominantly neutral galleries and museums that could be described as sterile.

Stations was more than a single work of art. It was an environment made up of a soundscape, and a garden landscape – sand, trees, shrubs, a waterfall – as well as fourteen pieces of art. It is clear that there were people for whom the overall context of the installation was very important. The context either strengthened their response to, or understanding of, a particular station, or it provided a broader context for their encounter with God. For the latter group this response was often made during time spent in the reflective space:

“Stations 1 and 5 had triggered contemporary interpretations and when I came to Station 8 it smacked me full in the face. I felt my stomach contract and my mouth become dry.”

“It was profoundly moving. Massive body shock from chaotic death environment to still reflection space. It was historical and replaying the story again and again – moving back to Jerusalem 2000 years ago etc. It was here and now, me and my life, this entire world. In short it transcended.”

“The ones leading up to [station seven] probably helped me to be in a more receptive place – I was more fully attentive. Then at the stations after the dominant one I paid more attention - maybe more open to encountering something on a different level.”

“My response to the whole Stations was one of feeling somehow responsible, connected and involved in this story and it's retelling. Of Jesus as a person – connected to him as a person-person. This was new. It was vital to take communion as a result. Physically ingesting the elements is important, intermeshing material/symbolic and making it more real. Like a seal after I have witnessed with my eyes ... [it is] too draining to think for longer.”

¹⁵⁵ Jensen, *Substance of Things Seen*, 3.

Immersion

Some people found themselves responding to the whole installation rather than a single piece of art. In these cases a level of transparency that allowed a response to the Easter story was achieved by the montage and juxtaposition of diverse media - directly by remediation:

“The montage effect [really moved me] - the expansive sense of assimilating the meaning of the individual images and words and phrases with each other. Original. Striking.”

“I found the stations spoke to each other across the room. Confronting and reminding. Sometimes the effect was philosophical - a wondering and pondering, a time for free associating about the significance of Jesus’ words. Other times the effect was personal - Good grief this man is dying a brutal death.”

I don’t think it is possible to over emphasise the significance of the role that the total multi-sensory, interactive, remediated environment, framed by Holy Week, played in pushing viewers to formative liminal places. The art objects placed individually or in a different context would not have had the same impact. Sarah Farrar says:

Installations offer a heightened, focused experience of often commonplace materials. They can present a kind of magical realism; an amalgam of fantastical and logical components rich in sensory detail. Experiencing such environments, we frequently find ourselves oscillating between an examination of objects – attuned to nuances of form, colour and texture – and a search for meaning or narrative in their selection and arrangement.¹⁵⁶

Another group of responses suggested that the overall environment was as important as, or more important than, the art works. For these viewers – probably better described as ‘experiencers’ or ‘immersers’ since they were feeling their response through several senses other than sight or intellect – remediation was a multisensory experience. Taken separately the elements of the experience would have had minimal impact, but collectively the stacking up of sensory experiences created an intimacy that enhanced their receptivity to an encounter with God. While no attempt was made to re-create a first century scene, or to manipulate the emotions through the senses, their experience of the total environment took them over a threshold into a liminal place where the artist and the art became secondary. This is not to imply that it was some sort of transcendent or ecstatic condition, but rather a place of increased openness to what God might have to say to them about their following of Christ:

“I already came with a strong awareness of the Easter story, but I have entered into it anew. The atmosphere and the lighting and plants and the tactile experience of walking on sand enabled me to ‘be there’!”

¹⁵⁶ Sarah Farrar, *Reality-Technicians: Everyday Sorcery in Installation Art in New Zealand* [website journal] (Unknown [cited 14 September 2006]); available from www.artlink.com.au/articles.cfm?id=2784.

“The sand [and environment] connects you to the experience – you seem to be a participant more than an onlooker – it is more tactile and visual and auditory – touches more senses. The plants are soothing so I absorbed more detail.”

“More realistic setting. I felt like a participant rather than an observer. The sand drew in my senses to experience it.”

“Thought provoking, especially the Morepork¹⁵⁷ which for me sets the scene when Jesus was in the garden. There would have been different night-time sounds. Simple yet profound that night time comes on while the Son of God takes on the sin of the world.”

“The atmosphere of the sand and plants was wonderful. It created a really reflective atmosphere.”

“I spent the most time wriggling my toes in the sand and grinning stupidly at the plants”

“I really liked the SAND!!!”

“The sand, plants, darkness gave me a link to nature. I really enjoyed that. Finding some nature in the concrete of Mt Eden.”

“The overall atmosphere of the dark garden was probably as powerful as the images. Garden of Gethsemane. The sounds of the Morepork and water etc all helped.”

“The lighting, sound, garden, feel of the sand all heightened my response to the stations.”

Not everyone experienced the space as a quiet, reflective environment:

“The overall mood is contemplative and almost peaceful – but some of the images, some of the sounds – are shocking. It doesn’t let you look on passively and ignore the importance. It demands engagement and consideration.”

“I felt crowded out by the mix of sounds being played in the garden. This ruptured any sense of ‘peacefulness’ for me but helped me feel the mix of emotions I imagine Christ felt in the garden - ruptured beauty.”

“I feel I’ve had the chance to walk Jesus steps through the garden and so get a sense of his inner turmoil just prior to his arrest. This is a nod toward the garden I guess, an acknowledgment of its effectiveness.”

I am not concerned at any dissonance there might be between the message given

¹⁵⁷ A Morepork is a native New Zealand bird, similar to an owl. So named because its call sounds like its name. The call of the Morepork occurred occasionally on the soundtrack. See appendix P.

or intended by the artist or art, or even the overall installation, and that received by the viewer. Margaret Miles discusses this dissonance at some length in relation to the architecture of Gothic cathedrals.

Can we possibly assume that ... an exact translation of intentions and ideas into building materials that the message received by medieval people necessarily would have been identical with the message given? Although some overlap must have occurred, it is safe to assume that the message given by the architect and the message received by an illiterate medieval worshipper could have been significantly different.¹⁵⁸

It is reasonable to assume, and the responses already reported confirm this, that on many occasions the message received was different to that given. But even when the message received wasn't overtly Christian, it always came within the context of the installation, i.e. the Christian story, presumably in the same way that the cathedral was a 'container' for its message.

Pilgrimage

Perhaps another significant difference between the Elkins and Rothko Chapel viewers and those of the *2003 Stations of the Cross* is that the latter made their responses while on a journey. Each piece of art was set in the context not only of a multi-sensory environment (garden and soundscape in this case), but also of an ongoing narrative. This narrative was followed by moving, with sand between your toes, the scent of plants and sand in your nostrils, and sounds in your ears, in the company of others, through a garden. The story was entered into through the garden. Each encounter with a work of art was experienced as part of the journey. The story unfolded as your journey did. The whole installation could not be viewed from any one point. It would have been very difficult to experience an individual piece of art without considering it in its context of the wider installation and therefore the gospel story:

“Just one station on its own wouldn't carry the same impact as the whole lot together.”

“The other stations led me to be more open to allowing the impact of number 8 and 14.”

“The others were a build up to number 11 - without them the impact on me would not have been so great.”

“The ones leading up to station 7 probably helped me to be in a more receptive place. I was more fully attentive. Then at the stations after the dominant one I paid more attention - maybe more open to encountering something on a different level.”

¹⁵⁸ Margaret R. Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 6f.

From an architectural perspective, John Dixon Hunt has named the different ways people might move through a garden: “procession”, “stroll”, and “ramble”.¹⁵⁹ The procession is more ritualised than the other two and suggests a specific path and purpose that can be repeated by various people at various times.

The route - that is both the movement itself and its reasons and objectives - is encoded, its prescriptions laid down in some formal record such as social or religious convention or in written text (like liturgy), the following of which implicit or explicit guidelines constitutes the performance of that ritual. [Procession] implies some higher objective than the mere performance of the rite and with a wider reference than the site of the ritual itself.¹⁶⁰

Hunt sees the stroll and the ramble in opposition to the procession. The stroll requires self-conscious activity with a geographically focused purpose in mind; the Rambler finds pleasure in movement itself and in having no preordained route or destination in mind. The clear intent and purpose of a procession makes it different from a stroll or a ramble. *Stations* comes under Hunt’s definition of a ritual procession (which may also contain elements of a stroll, and to a lesser extent, of a ramble). No understanding of the meaning of Stations of the Cross is necessary for a visitor to move through the ritual; the design of the garden itself does that, but for those with a church background, or understanding of the sequence, the landscape connects them with the content of the story and the feelings evoked by that content. Because of this sequence it is possible to undertake only a segment of *stations* and still access the fuller meaning of the wider context of the ritual.

Effects of Pilgrimage and Journey

Victor Turner has written extensively about the liminality experienced by individuals and groups when on a pilgrimage or participating in a religious ritual.¹⁶¹ Pilgrimage involves leaving home and travelling to somewhere else. Often the destination will be unfamiliar and experienced in the company of a larger group of people who do not know each other.

In the Christian context pilgrimage - which may be literal or metaphorical - is a journey freely chosen and one that continues to offer, but not force, choices. Pilgrimage is an act of grace. Any positive benefit, spiritually or otherwise, while perhaps subconsciously hoped for, is not expressly anticipated. Part of the benefit of such an activity is the opportunity the experience offers for a clarifying of perceptions about life. Objects, words, symbols which may have been familiar take on new meaning and significance as they are encountered in the context of time away from the mundane structures that have previously defined the travelers responses.

¹⁵⁹ John Dixon Hunt, ““Lordship of the Feet”: Toward a Poetics of Movement in the Garden”, in *Landscape Design and Experience of Motion*, ed. Michel Conan (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Publications, 2003), 188.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁶¹ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. Also see bibliography.

While the pilgrim may return to the same mundane life from which she came, everyone knows, including her, that she has moved forward in her devotion and has not remained where she was prior to the experience. So the involvement in pilgrimage carries an initiatory quality even if that was not what was sought or considered originally. The commonality of the experience and the ensuing deepening of Christian discipleship generates *communitas*, as does the common participation in the event and in particular the act of the shared ritual of communion.¹⁶²

Stations 2003 was deliberately set up as a journey. People had to travel from their home or some other place in order to participate in the stations that were localised in a particular place away from their home. They could choose when and with whom they would do this. They then went on a journey around the stations. Even for those who previously had regularly worshipped in this space *Stations* was a new and very unfamiliar setting. The entrance and exit were moved, the carpet replaced with sand, the chairs and pulpit with trees and shrubs, and the light with darkness. The journey had many ritualised elements to it, described in this chapter. Following this relatively brief encounter with the Stations of the Cross, they continued their journey by car, bicycle, public transport or on foot, eventually returning to their home.

There are clear connections between this process and that described previously by Turner as a mode of liminality experienced by pilgrims, particularly those to European sites, over many centuries.¹⁶³ These pilgrimages to sacred sites were characterised by their being at a distance geographically from both the pilgrims' home, and work. While initially an activity restricted to the pious wealthy, the rapid development of a vast network of trails and shrines¹⁶⁴ accompanied by improved access to sea transport, led to their increased use by the poor. "Such pilgrim centers and ways ... can be regarded as a complex surrogate for the journey to the source and heartland of the faith."¹⁶⁵ As could *Stations of the Cross*, in Auckland, in 2003.

A trip to Cityside Baptist Church on Maundy Thursday was unlikely to have been understood by many as their participation in a pilgrimage in the classic sense (although one 55 year old female ex-Pentecostal now not attending church did report that the *Stations* experience "reminded me of spiritual pilgrimage.") The experience of *Stations 2003* was even less likely to be interpreted as a penance, or considered hazardous. While traversing Auckland City on a quiet

¹⁶² Ibid., 1-39.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶⁴ Grau, *Ancestors of the Virtual, Historical Aspects of Virtual Reality and Its Contemporary Impact* (2000 [cited 1 January, 2007], 3. "The success ... was so enduring that the movement of Sacri Monti spread though Northern Italy, as a sort of wall of pictures along the Alps. It was, so to speak, a counter to the Reformation and the idea was exported to other parts of the Catholic world."

¹⁶⁵ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, 6.

Good Friday is much less physically hazardous than it would be on a busy work day, stepping out of the usual comfort zone of what is familiar and predictable could be considered hazardous in other ways.

Although the efficacy of visiting an art installation in Mt Eden for devotional development purposes is not clearly agreed to by all, there is still significant residual connection to pilgrimage. Clearly most people who visited did so deliberately and with some intentionality. The transition from urban street to the *Stations of the Cross* environment would have been registered at multiple levels, even if subconsciously, by everyone who made the journey. Underfoot went from firm to soft and sandy; feet went from being safely inside shoes and socks to experiencing the texture of cool sand; the air changed from warm and dry to cool and damp; sounds from traffic and conversation outside changed to waterfalls, bird call, and the juxtaposed sound bites of the recorded soundscape; light was artificial and low level contrasting with the daylight or night time outside; the viewer was 'inside' and no longer 'outside'. But the outside - of a different context (a sandy garden) was now inside; and the elements of sand, waterfall, and native trees and shrubs, were also juxtaposed in an unnatural way. They aren't normally found together. So for viewers to just step into the environment of *Stations of the Cross 2003*, was to enter a liminal phase. To do so with others was to experience *communitas* within that liminality.

Pilgrimage and Liminality

Turner comments that "liminality is not only *transition* but also *potentiality*, not only 'going to be' but also 'what may be'...."¹⁶⁶ Viewer responses to *Stations 2003* regularly referred to experiences and feelings that described anticipated change as a result of encountering something in a station or the overall installation. Some even saw it as what could be described as a pilgrimage:

"It was dark, I couldn't see ahead, I felt the cold damp sand on my feet. I didn't know how the stations would be depicted and I put myself in the disciples place - in the sense that they were not in full knowledge of how this evening would end."

"Entering into the garden I could imagine being there and feeling part of the unfolding events."

"[T]he overall setting of the...dark interior, wet, sandy floor, lots of plants and everyday indoor/outdoor things (!?) took the passion scene out of the old station settings and made the idea of a journey more poignant and immediate and painful."

"The experience felt separate from the normal pattern of life - after a busy day I stepped onto the sand and was in another space and able to reflect."

The most significant difference between the initiation rites Turner reported as liminal experiences and the experience of *Stations of the Cross* viewers may be that in the latter case individuals chose to participate. There was no tribal or peer

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 3.

pressure put on anyone. By Turner's definition an initiation rite is "an irreversible, singular ritual instrument for effecting a permanent, visible cultural transformation of the subject"¹⁶⁷. Though *Stations* may approach a pilgrimage in its execution, even a pilgrimage is not, by Turner's definition, a fully liminal experience. They are what he would describe as "liminoid" or "quasi-liminal"¹⁶⁸. These terms refer to activities that, while bearing many close similarities to the liminal, are by his definition, actually subsets of the liminal. So he sees "theater, ballet, film, the novel, poetry, music and art, both popular and classical in every case" as liminoid because they are produced for consumption by individuals and lie at the periphery of culture rather than at its core. They are optional. Of pilgrimage in particular he says, "since it is voluntary, not an obligatory social mechanism to mark the transition from one state or status to another within the mundane sphere, pilgrimage is liminoid rather than liminal."¹⁶⁹

While Turner's definitions may remain as the foundation for the contemporary discussion of liminality, the term has become more broadly used in recent years. Liminality is now understood to describe the less pure, even dismembered, components of Van Gennep's and Turner's original foundation-forming definitions.¹⁷⁰ The experiences of many viewers at *Stations 2003* can therefore still be described as that of occupying liminal space, despite the absence of compulsion or obligation.

Pilgrimage and Communitas

Although many of Elkins' respondents no doubt viewed the same art in the same galleries at some point, unlike *Stations* viewers they did not have the opportunity to experience it simultaneously or to talk about that experience with each other. Punters entered into the *stations* journey voluntarily and as individuals, but with many people knowing at least one or two fellow 'pilgrims'. One outcome of sharing the experience of the space with others, at the same or relatively close times, is *communitas*, a significant characteristic of all liminal spaces. This "commonness of feeling"¹⁷¹ or sense of unity and oneness arises from viewers sharing a similar ritual experience even if their emotional responses to it are different. In the case of *Stations*, the common bond of having at least some understanding of the gospel story, combined with the ritualised common experience of the garden and stations, provided a shared affective encounter. In turn this created an unstructured, temporary social grouping that would not have otherwise existed. *Communitas* was the outcome.

Turner describes three forms of *communitas*:¹⁷²

1. Spontaneous, existential *communitas*
2. Normative *communitas*, and
3. Ideological *communitas*.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 253.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 254.

¹⁷⁰ See for example Johnston, "Liminality: Episodes of Temporary Marginalization."

¹⁷¹ Turner and Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*, 13.

¹⁷² Ibid., 252.

The first covers the type of experience available at *Stations*, while the second and third describe attempts to capture and formulate the first. It is my opinion that *communitas* did make a significant contribution to what was experienced at *Stations 2003*. Viewers were aware of the commonality of their experience even if only a few people were actually in the installation space at the same time. No respondents mentioned the impact the shared aspect of the experience had on them.

A Broader Context

As mentioned previously, interacting with the *Stations of the Cross* installation took place within a ritualised liturgical context. The broad context, known to most participants even if at a rarely expressed level, is of the Church calendar.¹⁷³ The calendar was developed from the Jewish one found in Leviticus 23 and mostly settled during the first centuries of the Church. It is used to give shape to the actions and activities of Christians. Over a year the calendar guides them through all of the significant high points of the Christian story. In a preliterate culture, where the church was the focus of an individual and a community's life, these high points were largely celebrated through visual representations. These visual representations took people on a journey. Matthew Shoaf states in his introductory chapter to the exhibition catalogue of art from the Middle Ages, *Pious Journeys*:

Whereas we are constrained to admire from afar the carved details on the folding ivory diptych from late fourteenth-century Paris as it stands within its plexiglass case, viewing of the narrative scenes carved on the panel's inner surfaces was originally an event in which physical manipulation of the diminutive panels played a meaningful part The sequence of gestures that opened and closed the tiny panels occurred on accordance with a timetable that was imposed and maintained by the Church and that was organised into rounds of hourly, daily, weekly and annual activities.

Thus, we need to recognise that the experiences such an object mobilised for its viewer positioned individual action within the larger temporal unit of Christian narrative as it was celebrated in the Church calendar, and we must think of looking as a regulated activity, limited but repeatable, personal as well as collective, with its explicit connotations of dutiful conduct.¹⁷⁴

While less structured and directed than the intricately carved fourteenth-century diptych that Shoaf refers to,¹⁷⁵ *Stations of the Cross 2003* would have been experienced within the broader context of the Christian calendar by most, if not all, of the viewers. They would have been aware of the Christmas story and the general themes of Easter. Many would have had a much richer context of personal knowledge and experience to place it in. The elements of remediation in a station that drew on references outside the immediate context, e.g. station fourteen with its 'baby Jesus' reference, would have combined with these other

¹⁷³ Also known as Church year, Liturgical calendar, and Christian year, there are variations between East, West and Roman Catholic approaches.

¹⁷⁴ Seidel and others, *Pious Journeys*, 3.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4. *Diptych with Scenes of the Passion of Christ*, circa 1370-1380.

broader contextual elements and contributed significantly to the depth of encounter with the stations.

Ritual

There were other ritual elements specific to *Stations 2003* that reflected the ritualised liturgical elements familiar to participants in the personal and collective liturgy that holds the Church calendar together. All of these elements would have been perceived at some level by all participants. Whether consciously or not, they would affect how people responded to the stations. Punters were invited to take off their shoes before entering the installation. This was primarily so they could feel the sand between their toes and not get it in their shoes. The action also connotes sacredness, and holy ground (Moses and the burning bush). Perhaps the action of removing shoes also denotes a crossing of the boundary between personal and private space. Such an action may even have an overtone of humility, perhaps even humiliation. (Taking off shoes and socks is something usually only done in the privacy of one's home, not in a public space with others. People are aware of their socks and feet not necessarily being pleasant smelling.)

This ritualised preparation for the journey into *Stations* reflects the use of objects throughout the history of liturgical observance. The fourteenth-century use of liturgical combs for hairbrushing were to “remind Church officials and their attendants that pious action required an appropriate mental state”.¹⁷⁶ Special vestments served the function of transforming the person before leading liturgy. These ritual actions expressed the transition to liminal space. The same effect was achieved by the removal of shoes and socks, the carrying of the bag, the entering along a narrow corridor, and stepping down into the garden that was *Stations of the Cross 2003*. These were ritual-like actions that marked the entering into an individual and yet collective liturgical experience, and symbolised the move to liminal space and opened up the possibility of *communitas*.

Shoes were placed in a jute carry bag made by resource-poor Bangladeshi women coming out of a life-style of prostitution, and carried throughout the journey through *Stations*. This action has echoes of Jesus sending out the disciples, the Samaritan woman at the well, the alabaster oil anointing of Jesus' feet, the woman caught in adultery, the common (mis)understanding that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute, and Jesus' willingness to consort with the marginalised of his time.

Exiting *Stations* required a re-dressing - wiping sand off the feet (another obvious biblical reference), replacing shoes and socks, and walking up a ramp and re-entering the outside world. This physical transition from one physical context to another could be described as being hypermediated. Punters experienced the multi-layered stacking up, overlapping, montage, collage, and juxtaposition of not only physical objects, but also history and biblical story, and

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 6.

personal history and story. This often led to a significant emotional response. A very clear example of remediation.

Immediate Context

Earlier I made a comment about the impact of stations ‘speaking to each other across the room’. Did the stations collectively have a greater impact than the sum of their parts? This also raises the issue of the placement and immediate context of each work. Is the reason for the strongest responses to stations seven and eight due to the fact that they were located halfway through the journey? Because people have had time to adjust to the environment but are not so overwhelmed or tired that they have lost interest? Or was the effect cumulative, and found an outlet at stations seven and eight? I don’t believe any of these were significant factors. There was also a strong response to station one and station fourteen, as well as to the overall installation.¹⁷⁷ The comments from viewers about these stations suggest that what evoked moments of liminality was a complex mixture of some momentary, and, while often unexplainable, no less profound, connection between the viewer and some aspect of the theme or content of the art. An element of the hypermediacy obvious in every work made a connection with something in the viewer’s experience and allowed a condition of transparent immediacy to exist, usually momentary, that led to an experience of liminality that lasted for varying lengths of time.

“Initially curiosity [drew me in], then it made me really think about Christ carrying the cross for me and to value that - and to start thinking about me carrying the cross for Christ...It is relevant to my spiritual journey at present. It slotted in to a context of something already happening and enlarged/expanded that place for me...It inspires me to face life with much more courage.”

“That thing where the historical event of Jesus and his death turned up in my immediate life circumstance. I wondered at all the news headlines we get bombarded with and how they wash over us without effect? They must stain us. I thought about how these same people who are actually experiencing atrocities in this present time, must also often experience bombardment by those same headlines, describing their own trauma and colouring their own fear.”

“[A] feeling of being there - in a nightmare.”

Spiritual Formation

All of the 137 respondents described some experience from interaction with the art of *Stations 2003*. While some comments indicate an analysis of the works viewed, most reflect a willingness to ‘use’ the works for self-reflection, and “to see one’s own world in a new way.”¹⁷⁸ Remediation is at the heart of *Stations*. That this led to many liminal experiences that were spiritually forming as well as informing for viewers is a credit to the commitment and desire of the viewers.

¹⁷⁷ See appendix O.i. for the relative response to each station.

¹⁷⁸ Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture*, 136.

Margaret Miles describes what was an experience repeated over and over again, albeit unknowingly, by viewers of *Stations of the Cross: contemporary icons to reflect on at Easter*, 2003:

I *use* an image when I choose to allow it to address me. Something about the image strikes me as important, not as general or universal communication but as a particular message to me, at this moment, during this time in my life. Thus far, however, I have not used the image critically. The critical use of images involves understanding the particular message received from the painting; ultimately it means being able to articulate the relevance of this message to my present affective life.¹⁷⁹

Clearly most visitors to *Stations of the Cross 2003* were willing to allow this affect, and the written responses indicate an ability to move to critical use of the experience for their spiritual formation.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 137.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

The aim of this project, as stated in my Supervised Research Project proposal, is “to analyse the *Stations of the Cross* installation as an example of remediation and its value as a technique for spiritual formation.” I added that I would “also draw on Victor Turner’s theories concerning liminality”.

I mentioned earlier that I had not attempted to define for those filling in surveys, what was meant by a “spiritual experience”, and I have sometimes referred to the experience of a viewer as an “encounter with God”. This raises fundamental questions about revelation and whether there can be revelation beyond Scripture; revelation in imagination, and specifically in art. Or are the contemporary viewers of the *Stations of the Cross* fooling themselves that they can encounter God in remediated liminal twenty-first century interactions with objects?

David Brown argues for revelation that continues beyond the incarnation to the present day:

Even at his point of greatest contact with humanity, God exposed himself to the limitations of a specific culture and its assumptions, and thus necessitated continuing developments in how Christ would be appropriated in subsequent centuries.¹⁸⁰

He also argues compellingly that while the stories of Scripture must be held in high regard, “even the stories within Scripture have not stood still.”¹⁸¹ The imaginative ‘rewriting’ that many of these stories have undergone does not reduce their value or the seriousness with which we should approach them. “One of the principal ways in which God speaks to humanity is through the imagination, and ... human imagination has not stood still over a further 2000 years of Christianity.”¹⁸² He continues later, “revelation was ... a matter of God taking seriously our historical situatedness, our dependence on our own particular environment and setting, rather than attempting to override it.”¹⁸³

I believe it is entirely reasonable to expect that God will be revealed through the experience of interacting with a piece of contemporary art. (I appreciate the irony of using the word ‘reasonable’ in that sentence.) The responses in the surveys clearly indicated transformative and formative experiences taking place. Liminal spaces were provided primarily by the creation of a connection between the past experiences of the viewer and a work. Contemporary video artist Bill Viola says:

I think it was Giotto probably ... I started looking at why his landscapes looked so phony, and, they looked like they were theatre sets to our eyes. I realised that what he was going after was not about rocks and trees and how they really looked. It’s about what is going on in here [pats hand on

¹⁸⁰ David Brown, *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸² Brown, *Tradition and Imagination: Revelation and Change*, 6.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 8.

chest/heart] That's the fidelity he was going for. I discovered some kind of reality in the unreality. So this kind of really high tech image all of a sudden becomes the portal, the opening, for the other world.¹⁸⁴

The value or depth of the movement that took place in viewers appeared not to be affected by the quality, style, or media of the art. In fact some of the pieces that I might have found offensive because of their 'Christian-kitsch' leanings, were the pieces that others sensed God speaking to them through. The technical quality of the art form was not something that any respondent commented on.

Recently Richard Moore, writing in Melbourne newspaper *The Age* said:

In this post-post-modern world we have moved on from the high renaissance definition of the arts. We are living in an era when the VCE English exam included a question that asked students to make a literary comparison between an SMS message and Shakespeare. "What is art?" gets down to a debate between the populists – those who believe that a Kylie Minogue concert qualifies – and the purists, who prefer their art against white walls or wrapped in tutus.¹⁸⁵

The wide range of quality and media, as well as the contexts in which they were placed, seem to have removed the argument about 'what constitutes art', from having any impact on viewers, at least at a conscious level.

The concept of liminality proved to be very useful for hypothesising whether or not *Stations of the Cross* is a useful tool in spiritual formation. Good liturgy can induce recurring liminal moments within its structure. God can be encountered in the gaps provided by ritual, in an almost planned way. Liminal times always "hold latent power for future transformation."¹⁸⁶ In a similar way *Stations of the Cross 2003* provided - by its remediation of a traditional form - a unique disorienting place, for a fixed time, that provided a liminal experience of *communitas*: pilgrimage and liturgy produced liminality.

The connection between the viewers' past experience and the *Stations* experience was greatly enhanced, and eased, by the use of remediation. Remediation in all its forms, and at all levels, from the environment to the individual stations throughout the installation.

I have no doubt that the impact of fourteen pieces of art hanging on white walls in a gallery space would have been significantly less than that achieved by the remediated installation that was *Stations 2003*. I am also confident that the context provided by the hypermediated environment was sufficiently strong and conveyed the core message of Easter story with sufficient clarity, that it didn't matter how tenuous the link was between an individual piece of art and the Christian story: participants made the connections within themselves. The

¹⁸⁴ Bill Viola in conversation with Peter Sellars, Getty Center, Los Angeles, February 2003. Mark Kidel, *Bill Viola: The Eye of the Heart. A Portrait of an Artist* (United Kingdom: BBC, 2003), DVD. Chapter 7, (53.40 minutes in.)

¹⁸⁵ Thursday January 19, 2006, "Green Guide," 8.

¹⁸⁶ Carson, *Transforming Worship*, 60.

relatively open-ended, non-prescriptive nature of the installation setting supported this. No specific response was being sought. Any response could potentially open up a liminal space into which God might speak.¹⁸⁷ Spiritual formation and transformation could take place.

¹⁸⁷ Nichols, "Worship as Anti-Structure: The Contribution of Victor Turner," argues that liminality is "the condition for hearing and receiving the gospel." 408.

