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Paintings, Poems
and Prayers for
HOLY WEEK
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FOR HOLY WEEK

It is the hope of the Management Committee of the Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC) that the ten images which follow, including one work by a Friend of the Collection, will enrich your devotions. Thanks are expressed to Bob Williams, MMAC Friends Newsletter Editor at the time, for putting the text together with the images to create these Visual Meditations.

PALM SUNDAY



SADAO WATANABE - **Christ enters Jerusalem** from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP), used with permission. www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

John 12:12-15

This is an example, from 1982, of Japanese ‘mingei’ – ‘art for the people’. Watanabe’s work can be found in various galleries worldwide.

Look carefully and you can spot, top left, a character who is almost certainly Zacchaeus – up his tree. The story is, of course, actually linked with Jericho where he was a tax collector. However, might we just entertain the thought that, having given his pledge about turning **his** life around, and having caught up with the news of what was about to take place there on Palm Sunday, Zacchaeus took it upon himself to make the difficult and sometimes dangerous journey, through the Judaeen Hills, up to Jerusalem. Together with so very many others he may well have felt that he just *had* to be there.

*‘The crowds in and around Jerusalem waited in expectation...
Jesus arrived, to everyone’s surprise, on a humble beast of burden. May we too learn
humility as we work to transform your world here on Earth’*

Loving Lord, hear our prayer.

MONDAY



GHISLAINE HOWARD - **The Washing of the Feet** from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission
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John 13:2-9, 12-15

Here we have a painting that is contemporary (2004) and clearly representational.

We see two figures, Jesus and Simon Peter, dominating the composition, reacting in their different ways to one of the most poignant and moving episodes recorded in the Gospels. The dress is simple, even workman-like. The two figures could be from any age and any country, perhaps emphasising that the story of the Passion is for all people, for all time.

'Lord, not only my feet – but ALSO my hands and my head'

Loving Lord, hear our prayer.

TUESDAY



MARK CAZALET - **Fool of God (Christ in the Garden)** from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission. www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

Luke 22:39-44

Mark is a painter who works on canvas or paper. He prefers to use his own home-made paper with its cockled surface, thus giving a rich, rather precious feel to the works. He is also a skilled exponent in working with etched glass, with examples to be found in numerous places of worship. His work is figurative but not naturalistic.

In this little oil on paper (1993) we have Jesus at prayer, leaning against a rock in a very spare landscape.

The title refers to the idea of 'Holy Fools', familiar from Russian literature and history as those who 'set God's will above worldly wisdom, even to the point of martyrdom'.

Note the inclusion, to the left, of the sleeping disciples. They are easily mistaken for part of the rather strident deep sea-green tree form.

*'We remember that Jesus wept and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. We too pray for those who stay awake at night for fear of what is to come. Send **your** Spirit of care, that we might be alert to your call on our lives...'*

Loving Lord, hear our prayer.

WEDNESDAY



PETER ROGERS - *The Mocking of Christ* from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission.
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Matthew 27:27-30

Note the manner in which Peter Rogers' figures here are painted with a heavy solidity.

Although the Crowning with Thorns and the Mocking of Christ are reported, in the Bible, as separate events, it is not unknown for some artists, historically, to combine the two incidents in a single painting – as here.

We have eight Roman soldiers, grouped around Jesus. The one on the left raises his arm as if to strike. We have one with his arms outstretched in a gesture of accusation and the two on the right 'bowing the knee' in mockery.

A POEM 'THE MOCKING OF CHRIST'

Two incidents are combined here
Or perhaps confused
The mocking of Christ
And the crowning with thorns
But it does not matter

Eight Roman soldiers
Are having fun
By baiting and insulting
A seated Christ
They are helmeted

And wear armour
Except one who reclines
On the floor
Of the governor's palace
As if preparing for sleep

I ask a Minister about him
Oh he is just fed up with it all
He answers
Who wouldn't be?
Mockery must be heavy work

Leaving the exhibition
At the Methodist Church
In Regent Street, Wrexham
I remember that the council
Has incorrectly translated

The street name into Welsh
Using a word that means
Governor and not Regent
A reminder that these days
There is always something
To be fed up with...

Composed by David Subacchi, having viewed this 1961 painting at the 2015 'Heaven and Earth' exhibition of the Methodist Modern Art Collection in Wrexham, North Wales.

Using Geoffrey Studdert Kennedy's evocative words, from *When Jesus came to Birmingham* as an invocation:

*“Still Jesus cried, ‘Forgive them, for they know not what they do,’
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched him through and through;
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall, and cried for Calvary...*

There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin...”

Suffering Lord, hear our prayer.

MAUNDY THURSDAY



SUSIE HAMILTON - **Ecce Homo** from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission.

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John 19:4-7

“Behold the Man”. The words uttered by Pontius Pilate when he presents a scourged Jesus Christ, bound and crowned with thorns, to a hostile crowd shortly before his Crucifixion.

This little painting very much leaves it open to the viewer’s personal interpretation to make of it what you will. Is the figure rising, or plummeting or even floating in water? Is it perhaps welcoming, or an expression of helplessness that we see?

Its title *Ecce Homo* (“Behold the Man”) confirms that the artist had in mind the moment Pilate presents Jesus to a hostile crowd, and says “*Here is the man, I have no case against him.*” Jesus standing alone and vulnerable, crowned with thorns and bound; a subject much visited in the history of Christian art.

Hamilton shows him here as a vague, almost ghostly figure with the arms exaggerated in length, emphasising their gesture, which might be blessing or accepting or despairing – or ALL of these.

A POEM 'ECCE HOMO'

He breaks through the darkness
This strange figure
Of spirit poured light,
Arms wide in despair.
He reaches out in his brokenness
Look, see, I am here.

He is the lost
The voiceless victim
This haunting after-glow
Of forgotten humanity.

Or something more
Outstretched arms as on a cross
Noble shoulders broad
To share our yoke
Are those arms held wide in welcome?
Acceptance?
Hope?
Is the light that flows translucent love?
And do those broken arms offer
An embrace of everlasting peace?

Reproduced here by kind permission of the author, Ruth Compton. Originally included in the printed edition of Response Poems (compiled by Glenda Gibson), one of a number of such works inspired by visitors to the 2019 'Wondering Soul' exhibition in Leicester.

'Behold the Man...'

Suffering Lord, hear our prayer.

GOOD FRIDAY



THEYRE LEE-ELLIOTT - **Crucified tree form – the Agony** from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission. www.methodist.org.uk/artcollection

Matthew 27:35-36, 38-39

You may be aware that, that in some quarters there is a tradition, dating from the 13th century, which maintains that the cross on which Jesus was crucified, was a living tree.

In this 1959 gouache painting the artist takes this 'living tree' concept one stage further. We see 'the cross, the tree and Christ's body fused into a single, suffering whole'*. The barbed wire adds even greater poignancy with an evocation of the sort of graphic scenes we associate with a WWI battlefield in Flanders where the ultimate sacrifice was in evidence in un-numbered thousands.

*text by Roger Wollen, as featured in *Seeing the Spiritual - a guide to the Methodist Modern Art Collection*, TMCP 2018.

A POEM 'CRUCIFIED TREE FORM – THE AGONY'

A tortured tree-like body
Hangs desolately
Brittle as charcoal
Against a smudged
Yellow background
Barbed wire adorns
Blackened limbs
That have ceased
To function.

The head is bowed
Deep into darkness
As if yearning
For release.

Some nails remain
Pinning one hand.
Remove them
And all will collapse
Into ash
Into dust
Into oblivion.

David Subacchi

'The Lamb of God... The bleeding Lamb of God...'

Suffering Lord, hear our prayer.

SATURDAY



GRAHAM SUTHERLAND - *The Deposition* from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission.
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John 19:38-42

Here we have a painting by one of the creative geniuses of the 20th century.

Sutherland, of course, is best known for his magnificent tapestry, *Christ in Majesty* in Coventry Cathedral. There is also a rather fine *Noli me Tangere* of his at Chichester Cathedral.

Sutherland had been prominent as a War Artist and painted this in 1947, soon after the horrors of Auschwitz were revealed to the world.

The stark and twisted rock-like corpse of Jesus, beneath his cross, comes across as profoundly disturbing.

And, indeed, it was only a matter of a few weeks ago, possibly prompted by the very moving media coverage of Holocaust Memorial Day, that one heard the remark that the blue and yellow stripes prominent here on the front of the tomb most surely echo those of the infamous pyjamas worn by the inmates of the concentration camps.

And can you perhaps pick out, in this image, the drapes and the cross together forming an anchor – an adopted symbol of hope for the future and a symbol of safety? “Will your anchor hold in the storms of life...?” in the words of that great Revivalist hymn.

A POEM 'THE DEPOSITION'

This corpse is skeletal like
Stretched, twisted
Ribs showing
Head back
Almost disconnected
Reminiscent
Of a holocaust victim

Those who hold Him
Head and foot
Are mostly out of view
They have no faces
The open tomb
Is unremarkable
There is nothing
More to be seen
But I feel their sense
Of urgency
Of wanting to
Get it over with
Shades of yellow, blue
And black dominate
With only the slightest
Smudges of crimson –
On the vacant cross
That stands grimly
In the background...

A reminder perhaps
That blood had been shed
And that more was to follow.

David Subacchi

Bringing to mind the horrors that this painting of the Deposition seeks to echo, we reflect also on International Holocaust Remembrance Day which we commemorate each year on 27 January.

'Broken and blessed..... Hope for all through the pain of the cross...'

Suffering Lord, hear our prayer... NEVER AGAIN.

EASTER SUNDAY



CAROLINE WATERLOW - *Sol Invictus/The Unconquered Son*.

www.carolinewaterlow.co.uk

Caroline is an artist and Friend of the Methodist Modern Art Collection.

She has exhibited her work alongside those from the Art Collection. Her Via Crucis Stations series have, in recent years, been shown during Lent in a number of English cathedrals and parish churches. She writes: “In the last of my Via Crucis Stations (XIV, *In the Tomb*), a collage dating from 2019, a round gold disk is covered by a large black square. It is also called *The Station of Gestation*, all seems lost but a seed of hope lies within.

Sol Invictus, the unconquered sun, is the initial inspiration behind this picture. It is an ancient Roman celebration of the sun, commemorated on 25 December. In creating this collage, I chose to work with this concept, as it seemed to me that the sun is something so much bigger.

All-encompassing, from which all life is sustained, even if hidden by clouds, it is still there. All over the world, people have aspired to bring the spiritual into their lives, as they recognise a greater force than their daily mortal lives. I chose to work with this concept, as the presence of God permeates all our lives, no matter what our belief or religious leanings are. Using the symbol of the sun for the *Resurrection* station, I felt I linked it to that important time of the year when the sun rises in the sky again, and we celebrate the birth of Jesus into the world. And with his resurrection, he has burst out of the mortal flesh he took on, and shown his true nature, the Unconquered Son.”

A POEM 'EVERYBODY NEEDS BEAUTY'

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread,
Places to play and pray in,
Where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike.

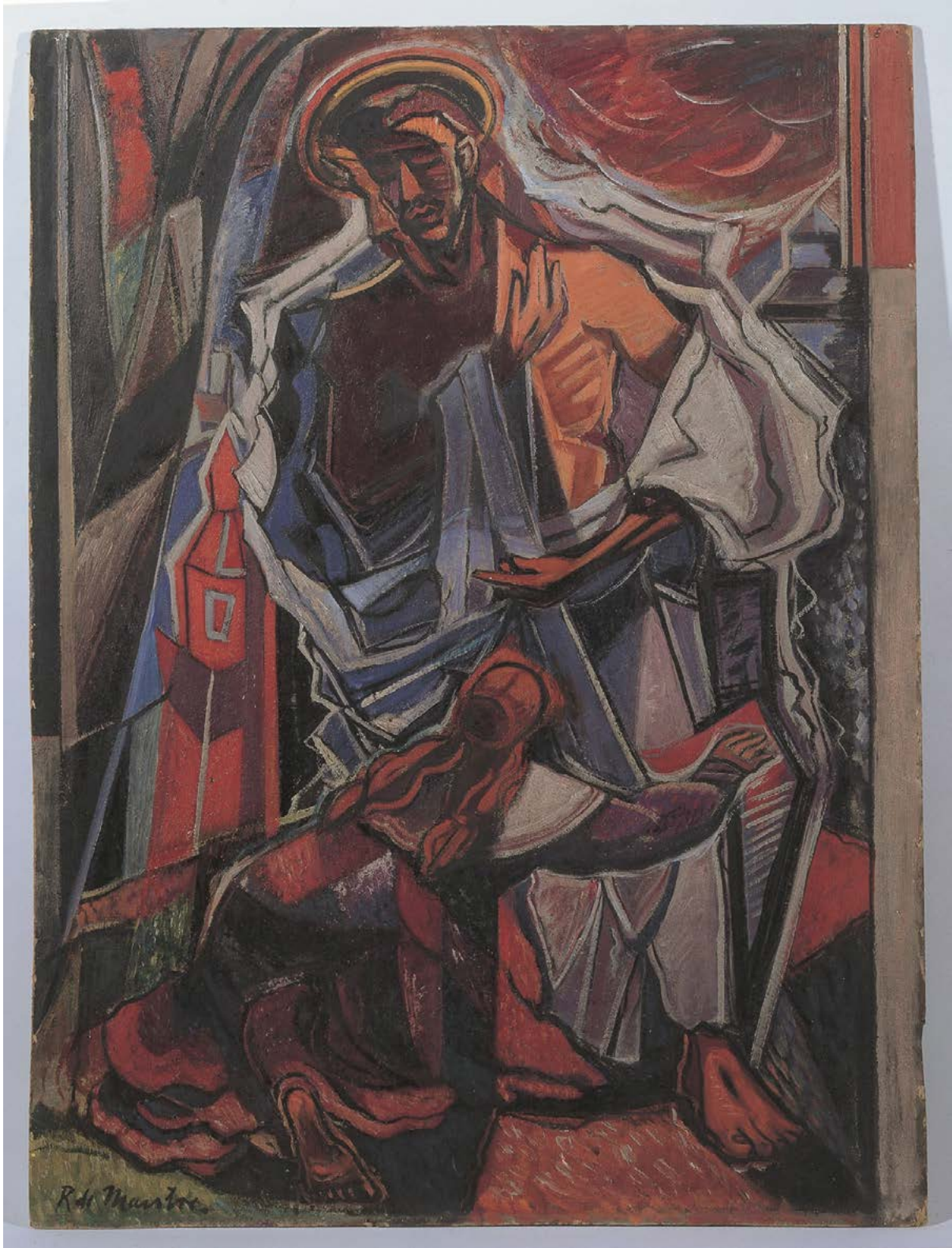
This grand show is eternal.
It is always sunrise somewhere;
The dew is never all dried at once;
A shower is forever falling;
Vapour is ever rising;
Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming,
On sea and continents and islands,
Each in its turn,
As the round Earth rolls.

These are the words of explorer, writer and pioneering conservationist John Muir (1848-1914). May they bring a special significance to this Easter Sunday.

A Bible verse we may wish to reflect upon is Malachi 4:2, and from Amazing Grace:

*"When we've been there 10,000 years,
Bright shining as the SUN...
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun." (John Newton, 1725-1807)*

EASTER MONDAY



ROY de MAISTRE - **Noli me tangere** from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission.
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John 20:11, 14-18

The figure of Jesus, facing us, towers over the more diminutive figure of Mary Magdalene who has her back towards us. It is early in the morning, the sky red with sunrise. The warm red-browns of the Mediterranean landscape and, indeed, Mary herself contrast with the cool blues, white and greys of both Jesus and the rocky garden in which this coming together is taking place. A distraught and tearful Mary is desperate to enquire of this person, whom she takes to be one of the gardeners, as to exactly where Christ's body might have been taken. Then there is the seminal moment, depicted here, when Jesus simply says "*Mary!*" The response, to a voice that she knows all too well, is instantaneous: "*Rabboni – my Master.*" She had thus had the privilege of being the first of many to meet with the Risen Lord.

A POEM 'NOLI ME TANGERE'

There is something strange
About this picture
Or it is my imagination
Noli me tangere

Touch me not, says Christ
To the kneeling Magdalen
For I have not yet
Ascended to the father

He towers above her
Advises the catalogue
And close up
This is perfectly clear

But if I take several steps
Back from the painting
And look again
I see another Mary

Dark haired with arms
Embracing the Saviour
Still kneeling
But straighter backed

And more in scale
A more confident figure
I point this out to others
They look for themselves

But remain indifferent
Each time I look
My certainty grows
Look at it yourself

Who knows what
You will see
Who knows how
It will touch you.

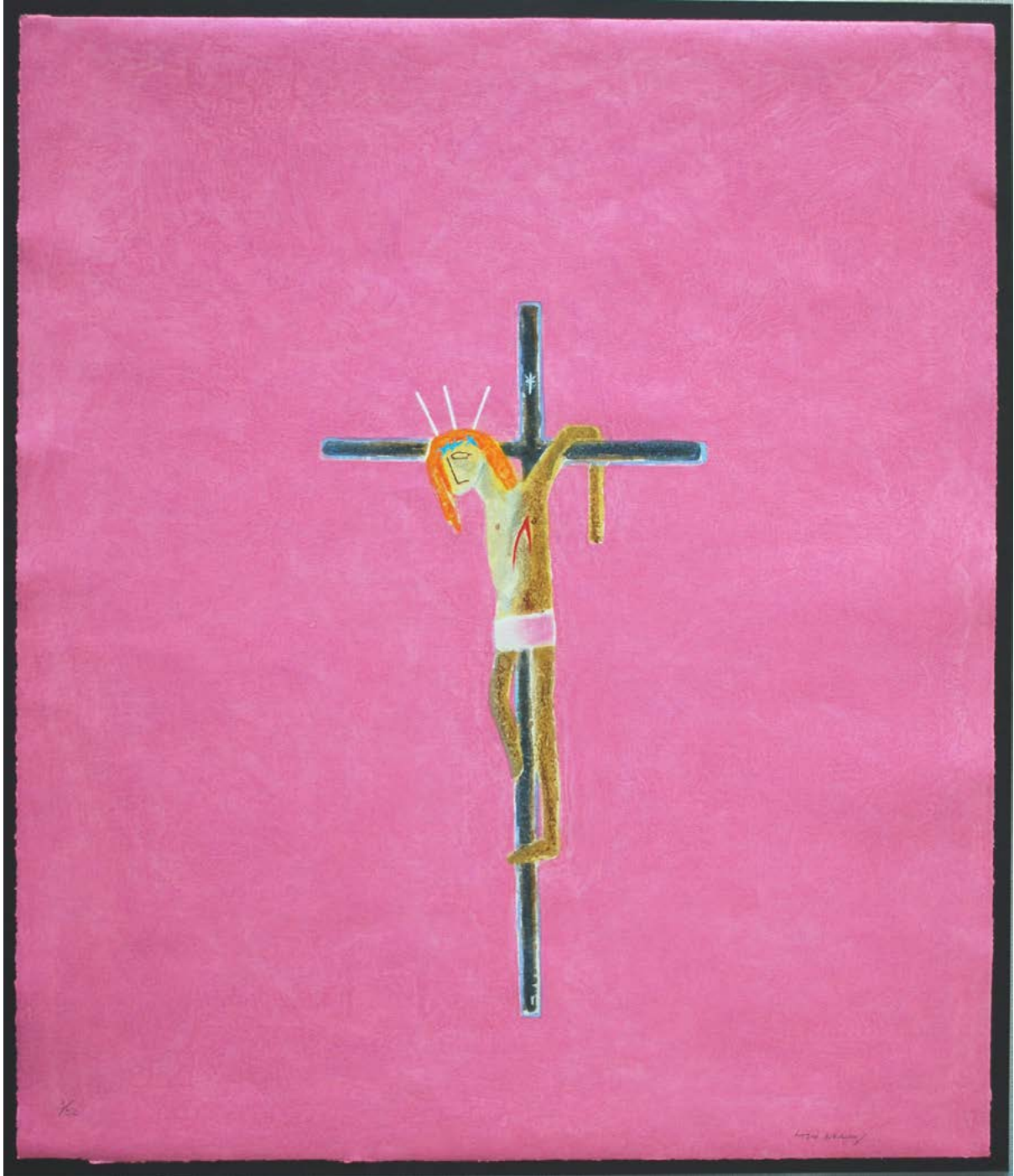
David Subacchi

(We are indebted to David who has readily given his consent for the use of his poems that reflect on specific works within the Methodist Modern Art Collection).

Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples. 'I have seen the Lord'.

We rejoice in the enduring message of those words of great comfort – “Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son”.

TUESDAY



CRAIGIE AITCHISON - **The Pink Crucifixion** from the Methodist Modern Art Collection, © TMCP, used with permission.
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Matthew 27:35-36

So, to conclude our reflections on the Passion Story...

Some of you may be familiar with the late Sister Wendy Beckett's interesting little book, *The Art of Lent* (first published by SPCK in 2017). Within its pages she selects and expounds upon no fewer than three of Craigie Aitchison paintings.

This artist's distinctly non-representational approach to painting initially puzzled art critics and ordinary viewers alike and perhaps contributed to the long wait before his work was actually accepted into sacred spaces. Truro Cathedral was the first to install a set of four in 1997.

This seemingly simple image, dated 2004, leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the artist's intention of emphasising Christ's solitary triumph over death, with little else in the background of glowing pink to distract from the radiant colour of the central figure.

It seems that Aitchison's apparent obsession with the Crucifixion was in fact a reaction to a comment made by a tutor of his, at the Slade, in the early 1950s: "This is far too serious a subject for you". His response to this withering rebuke was a determination to make it very much his core subject for the rest of his working life as an artist.

A knowledgeable observer of Craigie Aitchison's work has aptly summarised his Crucifixion paintings and prints as "containing no anger or violence, only solace and at times, melancholy".

A POEM 'THE PINK CRUCIFIXION'

Pink: How shocking!
How outrageous!
How daring!
How bold!

Bright, shocking, in your face, pink.
The pink of teenagers making a statement, standing out from the crowd.
The breast cancer campaigner.
The pink of the Dulux advert: The young man goes to the best party! -
The Pink Crucifixion: People stop and stare. They talk.....

The picture challenges and shocks.
It's daring and innovative;
Challenges to think outside the box.
It's off the wall, in your face!
Perhaps not too far removed from Jesus...
Perhaps the picture reminds us of when we were first challenged by the Cross?

The Cross – a brutal place.
The work of Jesus on the Cross:
A symbol of hope and new beginnings.
We are a risen Easter people.
We come in faith to the Cross.
We move forward beyond the Cross.
We place our faith in events we did not witness.
We give thanks for the first witnesses to tell their story;
For those who still give the message of “Good News” through their creative work.
We are reminded that we are washed, cleansed, forgiven, restored, redeemed and
healed at the Cross.
Perhaps pink represents the vibrancy of Jesus...
A Jesus whom we serve, journey with, and give witness to?

Happy Easter.
He is Risen. Alleluia

Composed in 2014, by Glenys Jones, a local preacher and member at Castle St Methodist Church, Abergavenny.

*When the woes of life o’ertake me
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the Cross forsake me
Lo! It glows with peace and joy.*

We bring to mind that green hill, far away, that has such a tale to tell us.

Suffering Lord, hear our prayer.

Thank you for sharing these reflections over the period of Holy Week and a little beyond. May the wonderful archive of the Methodist Modern Art Collection be both a comfort and inspiration to each and every one of us in the coming days. God bless you all.

We leave you with the words of 14th century mystic Mevlana Jelalu’ddin Rumi...

“Come, come whoever you are
Wanderer. Worshipper, lover of leaving
It doesn’t matter
Ours is not a caravan of despair.
Come, even if you have broken your vow a thousand times.
Come, come yet again, come.”

Acknowledgments

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