

# Whatever Is Lovely

THE ROLE OF BEAUTY IN THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY



An Art Exhibit Accompanying the  
31st Annual Theological Symposium

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis  
Sept. 21-22, 2021

*Sight is an absolutely spiritual phenomenon ... and the "Let there be light," is as much, when you understand it, the ordering of intelligence, as the ordering of vision. It is the appointment of change of what had been else only a mechanical effluence from things unseen to things unseeing; — from stars that did not shine to earth that could not perceive; — the change, I say, of that blind vibration into the glory of the sun and moon for human eyes; so rendering possible also the communication out of the unfathomable truth, of that portion of truth which is good for us, and animating to us, and is set to rule over the day and night of our joy and sorrow.*

—John Ruskin, *The Eagle's Nest*, Lecture VI, §99 (1872)

John Ruskin, who was both the preeminent art critic of the Victorian age and a robust proponent of Christian values, viewed all artwork first through the lens of its moral and religious character. As suggested by this excerpt from one of his published lectures, his criticism is predicated upon the assumption that vision is our primary mode of understanding the world. Vision is God's gift to us, that we may perceive the wonders of the universe. If the first act of creation was to distinguish light and dark, that is because sight is necessary in order to perceive the rest. For Ruskin, the contemplation of art represents the most refined exercise of our most important spiritual faculty.

And yet throughout his writings on art runs a persistent tension regarding the moral dimension of aesthetics. Especially in his later years, Ruskin clearly worried that perhaps we might better use our perceptive intelligence in appreciation of the work of the divine Creator, rather than contemplating human simulacra of God's masterpiece. He frequently exhorts his audience to observe clouds, mountains or other wonders of nature; to cut out the

middleman, so to speak, and consider the beautiful forms of the natural world. After all, if aesthetic contemplation is the most refined form of vision, why not direct it toward the most exalted subject possible?

While that question certainly troubled Ruskin, we might humbly suggest that there is time enough in the day to contemplate a cloud and to study a painting. As a compromise between the two alternatives, we might think of the works on display here not as standing in for our apperception of the wonders of the world around us, but as invitations to see the world momentarily through the eyes of the artist. Sharing in someone else's vision can provide insight into our own ways of seeing the world, and thus broaden our discussion of beauty in its most profound sense.

Concordia Seminary's art collection, from which the works in this exhibit are selected, has grown over the years thanks to various sources. Some works have been purchased or commissioned by the Seminary for specific purposes, but most have been accepted as donations — from students, alumni, faculty and the artists themselves. Thus, while it has not been curated in the manner of a true museum, the resulting collection has developed in a way that organically reflects the commitments and interests of the institution and its community. These works provide an opportunity not just to reflect upon religious themes, but to see them through distinct and varied lenses: Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish; American, European and Asian; and figurative, abstract, traditional and modern styles. We hope that you will enjoy the range of perspective and that it will enrich your discussions of the role of beauty in theology and ministry.



**Dr. Bruce Durazzi**  
Special Collections Librarian  
Kristine Kay Hasse Memorial Library

Accompanying video can be viewed at [https://scholar.csl.edu/theo/2021/on\\_demand/20/](https://scholar.csl.edu/theo/2021/on_demand/20/).

## Robert Johanningmeier

(1946- ), American

*The Transfiguration of Christ*, 2011

26" × 42"

Oil on panel

Gift of the artist

*And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.*  
(Matt. 17:1-3 ESV)

Artist Robert Johanningmeier is a native St. Louisan who has spent most of his life in Carlsbad, New Mexico. Now retired from a long career in painting, he has donated many works to Lutheran institutions. While his avowed purpose in painting is to elevate Christian ideals, few of his works include overtly Christian images. He has specialized instead on still life and nature painting.

This piece, however, takes a biblical theme: the transfiguration of Jesus described in the Gospel of Matthew. The composition forms a distinct triangle between the group of disciples on the ground, the group on the hilltop and the radiant light from above. Note the way Jesus' brilliant white robes interact with the divine light.





**Robert Johanningmeier**

(1946- ), American

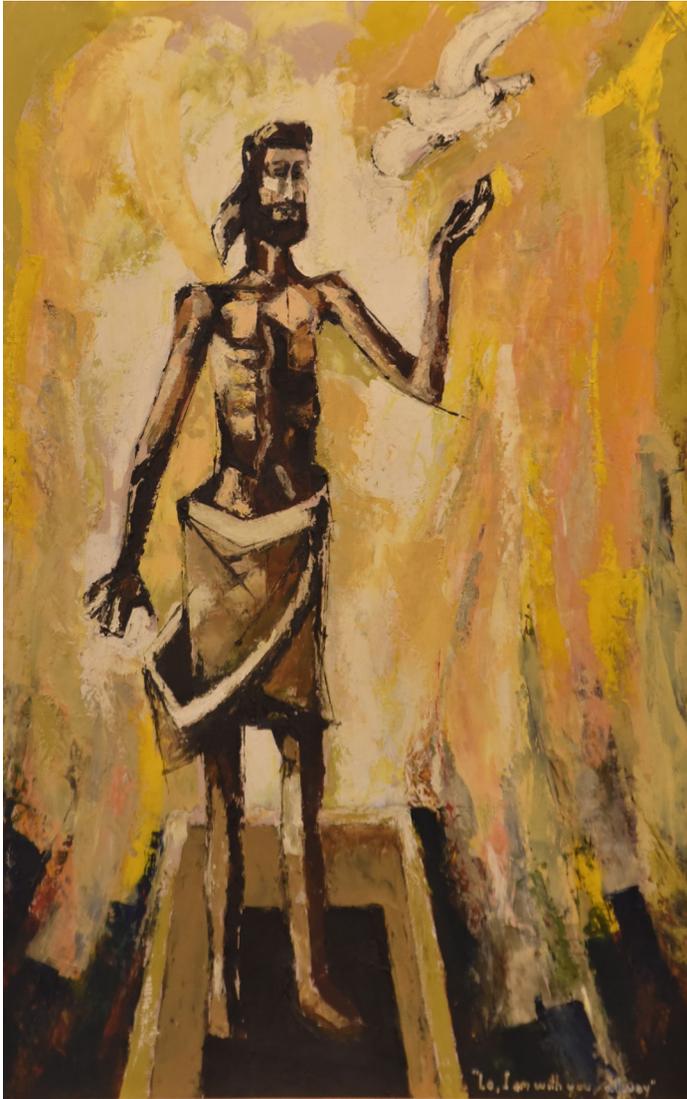
*Candle Flame in Amber*, 2010

11" x 14"

Oil on panel

Gift of the artist

This painting is more typical of the works in Johanningmeier's catalog. His still lifes have a wonderful way of capturing light with their reflection and diffusion, almost creating the illusion of a real light source behind the canvas. Works like this suggest a certain intimacy, often using small ornamental objects in a subdued setting that contrasts with the light source. Note here, as in the *Transfiguration*, the three-part composition of the candle, the glass and the fruit. This triune composition is typical of his work, displaying intentional trinitarian logic.



**Richard Caemmerer Jr.**

(1934-2016), American

*Lo, I am With You Always*, 1982

30" x 19"

Oil on masonite

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

(Matt. 28:19-20 KJV)

Born in St. Louis, Richard Caemmerer devoted much of his creative life to painting Christian themes. After a long career as professor of art at Valparaiso University, Caemmerer moved to central Washington state. There in 1980, he and his wife founded the Grunewald Guild, an artists' retreat center dedicated to exploring the relationships between art, faith and community.

This painting depicts Jesus emerging from a coffin or burial vault, with a white dove flying overhead. It employs a limited palette, mostly browns and yellows, and emphasizes the glowing light emanating from the central figure. The inscription in the lower right quotes the final verse of the Gospel of Matthew, part of Jesus' final command to His disciples.



**Unknown**

Austrian

*The Birth of Christ*, ca. 1750

22" x 16"

Oil on wood

Gift of Drs. Ruediger and Isolde Thalman

Painted in Austria in the middle of the 18th century, this painting and the next owe an evident debt to their Renaissance models. In particular, the play of light on the flowing garments recalls the Italianate style of the 16th century. In addition to the similarities of style and format, these two pieces clearly base the figure of Mary upon the same model, and may originally have formed part of a modest altarpiece. This painting depicts a conventional Nativity, with Mary and Joseph praying over the baby Jesus. Within this limited space, the single cow resting in the lower right stands in for the variety of livestock often depicted in these scenes.



### **Unknown**

Austrian

*Blessed is the Child You Will Bear*, ca. 1750

22" x 16"

Oil on wood

Gift of Drs. Ruediger and Isolde Thalman

This conventional depiction of the Visitation (as described in Luke 1), with the older Elizabeth kneeling to bless Mary, is the format formally sanctioned by the Council of Trent. The plane of the image is dominated by the strong diagonal line from the mountain in the upper left, through Mary's left arm and down to the fold of Elizabeth's robe. While this prevalent line does not incorporate the two women's faces, it guides the viewer's eye across their abdomens, with implicit reference to their status as expectant mothers. Zacharias stands behind Elizabeth, holding a curiously anachronistic wide-brimmed hat.

## Sadao Watanabe

(1913–96), Japanese

*Jacob and the Angel*, 1978

20" × 30"

Stencil print on handmade rice paper



*And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."*

(Gen. 32:24–26 ESV)

Sadao Watanabe grew up in Tokyo and is one of a group of mid-20th-century artists who endeavored to reclaim and preserve traditional forms and techniques of Japanese folk art. He worked primarily with the stencil print, in which the outlines of an image were cut into a special stencil paper, multiple prints were made from the same stencil, and the resulting outline images were colored by hand. Thus, no two prints were identical, even those cut from the same stencil.

Although the stencil technique lends itself to blocky rectangular forms, Sadao Watanabe's composition here captures the vigor and tension of Jacob's all-night wrestling match. The figure of Jacob is upside down, neck bent as if he is landing on his head. The angel reaches out with one hand, perhaps in the gesture that dislocates Jacob's hip. Even the geometric patterns in the background serve to bound the figures within tight field of frantic activity.



### **Saunders Schultz**

(1927–2017), American

*Isaiah 6*, 1966

56" × 19" × 12"

Brazen wire, glass

*And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for." (Is. 6:5-7 ESV)*

Saunders Schultz, another native St. Louisan, was best known for large, public sculptures designed to interact with their specific architectural or natural surroundings. His work may be seen locally on the campus of Saint Louis University, at the Saint Louis Zoo and on the Council Tower apartment building. This piece, which is much more intimate in scope, was acquired for the Seminary as an apt reminder of the institution's mission and the task of the seminarian.

At first glance the sculpture may appear abstract, but a closer look reveals the angel, wings spread, extending the burning coal toward the face of Isaiah at the bottom. The many long arcs suggest motion — of wings in flight, of arms raised in prayer, or perhaps of the very spirit that flows through man and angel alike.



### **Hak-Soo Kim**

Korean

*Baby Jesus Who is Fleeing*, ca. 1971

17" x 25"

Water color on fabric

The impulse behind Hak-Soo Kim's work is like Watanabe's, except that his Christian themes are expressed through traditional Korean painting. This work is a charming re-imagination of the flight into Egypt in the manner of folk art. The holy family is shown as a compact group in the microcosm of the boat, facing each other as the oarsman steers the vessel. The relatively small boat in the large expanse of water suggests their vulnerability, especially as the waterway widens to the left, the boat's direction of travel.



## **Holly Schenk**

American

*Benediction*

24" x 24"

Acrylic on canvas

Gift of the artist

The artist's technique is pointillistic, with individual brush strokes appearing as small dots of color. These points, in turn, are arranged in curves, spirals and other geometric patterns. From these abstract patterns emerge the figure of the risen Christ with His arms extended in prayer. At the center, Jesus clearly appears as the source of light, and at the same time His halo and robes harmonize with the cloudy sky and the landscape. The strong horizontal and vertical lines of the cruciform figure are softened by the sinuous cascades of hills and clouds. Part of the beauty of this work is that it reads differently at each level: close up, atomized points of color; middle range, geometric patterns; at full scale, the figure in sympathy with the environment. From these layers of form and color emerge a wonderful unity in diversity.



## Unknown

Russian

*Icon of St. Seraphim, Wonderworker of Savorski*

18" x 14" x 3"

Enamel in chased silver

Gift of Mrs. Lydia and Rev. Paul L. Kluender

An icon such as this would have been made for display in a family home, both as an object of contemplation and as a sacred object, a channel for prayer to the saint himself. St. Seraphim of Sarov (1754–1833) was a renowned ascetic, whose reported miracles include both the privations he survived (such as eating nothing but grass for three years or spending 1,000 consecutive nights on a rock with his arms raised in prayer), and the cures and prophecies he bestowed upon the pilgrims who visited his hermitage.

Icons were traditionally painted on wood, and the mid-17th century saw the addition of a protective covering or riza, which protected the painting by covering everything except the face and hands of the figure. A more elaborate riza such as this one, adds rich ornamentation to the saint's halo. Even in this later example, which the painter presumably expected to be covered by a silver riza, there is still a complete painting underneath. Whereas a western European artist might use the contrasting material and planes to distinguish foreground and background, the Russian tradition isolates the saint's holiest attributes (halo, face and hands) from mere human-made objects, even his clothing.

## Unknown

Hungarian

*Antemin*, 1733

33" × 27"

Copper engraving on linen

Gift of Mrs. Lydia and Rev. Paul L. Kluender



Some Eastern Orthodox traditions require that the Eucharist be celebrated on an antimins (from Greek anti-mension, “in place of the table”). These are consecrated, rectangular cloths decorated with biblical scenes, and they serve the liturgical function of defining a specially sanctified area for the sacrament. As each antimins must be consecrated and signed by a bishop, it also serves an administrative function, indicating that the bishop has granted a local priest the authority to celebrate the sacraments. Theoretically, an ordinary piece of cloth could be blessed by a bishop to fill this function (especially since the antimins is not generally visible to the congregants), but the elaborate decoration serves to elevate the cloth and emphasize its importance in the ceremony.

This example of a Hungarian antimins is a copperplate engraving on linen. The central image is a version of the conventional Pietà, surrounded by angels within the tableau, which is surrounded by circular vignettes representing the four evangelists. According to the text on the border, it was consecrated by Bishop Nicholas Demitrius in Tamishvar, Hungary, on March 3, 1733. The technique of engraving was developed for printing on paper, its use here suggests that some number of these were to be consecrated at the same time. (A single item could more easily be painted, or even embroidered, rather than printed.) By tradition, each antimins has a martyr’s relic sewn in.



**Sadao Watanabe**

(1913–96), Japanese  
*Wise Men and Horses*, 1970  
23" x 29"

Stencil print on handmade rice paper

Watanabe's individual genius lay in the way he infused traditional Japanese forms with images representing his Christian faith. In a body of work that spanned nearly six decades and won him international acclaim, Watanabe produced biblical scenes almost exclusively. In this example, the traditional Japanese influence can be seen in the impassive faces of the three wise men and in the compactness of the grouping. Men and horses fill a rectangle, as if posing for a portrait or performing in a highly formalized piece of theater.



**Sadao Watanabe**

(1913–96), Japanese

*Jesus and His Twelve Disciples*, 1970

39" x 35"

Stencil print on handmade rice paper

In addition to the typically stoic faces, this work presents another static, almost architectural form. There is no pretense of naturalistic perspective, as the central figure of Jesus is so much larger than the others. Notwithstanding this formal reductionism, however, each of the 12 disciples has distinct facial features.



**Paula C. Benit Sethre**

American

*The Inheritors* (diptych), ca. 2000

60" × 48" (each panel)

Oil on canvas

The title would seem to refer to the Beatitudes, although it is not clear from the painting whether figures are indeed blessed by their inheritance. This work exhibits elements of expressionism, with suggestions of human forms amidst the abstract interplay of color and texture. A strong line stretches across the two panels, from the upper left and the lower right, although the viewer is hard pressed to say whether it suggests climbing or falling.

## Siegfried Reinhardt

(1925–84), American

*Untitled* (triptych), 1951

50" × 43"

Oil on panel (paintings); gouache on masonite with beeswax (background panel)



Siegfried Reinhardt grew up in St. Louis and served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, where he began to receive recognition for illustrations published in his ship's onboard newspaper. Notwithstanding a lack of formal training in art, Reinhardt enjoyed an illustrious career, including a faculty position at Washington University. His style incorporated elements of different mid-century stylistic trends — including expressionism, realism and surrealism — with an emphasis on human and spiritual themes.

This triptych is a fine example of Reinhardt's interplay of styles. In each panel the figure of Jesus is realistic (albeit somewhat mannered), down to the wrinkles on His knuckles and stray locks of hair. The surrounding field, however, is governed by geometric abstractions, and in the foreground are almost cartoonish representations of vegetation (wheat and grapevines on the left, a thorn bush on the right). A particularly interesting feature of this work is the way it reaches into spaces outside its frames. In the right panel, Jesus appears to be deep in prayer, hands clasped, eyes closed and head turned to the side as if considering something off to the left. In the center panel, He gazes into the distance, right hand raised as if blessing a multitude gathered behind the audience's point of view. On the left, the figure reaches out and looks directly at the viewer. To experience this piece is to be beckoned into and enveloped by its figurative world.



**Siegfried Reinhardt**

(1925-84), American

*Untitled* (Christian Standard), 1960/1961

10" x 6"

Pen and ink

The familiar standard stands out against some flowing abstract shapes, perhaps representing flames.



**Siegfried Reinhardt**

(1925–84), American

*Untitled* (Holy Spirit), 1960/1961

10" x 7"

Pen and ink

The Holy Spirit, depicted as a dove, soars upward.



**Siegfried Reinhardt**

(1925–84), American

*Untitled* (Christ the King), 1960

10" × 8"

Pen and ink

This drawing incorporates the conventional royal iconography of the risen Christ. The face of Jesus, however, is more childlike than in Reinhardt's other works.



**Siegfried Reinhardt**

(1925–84), American

*Untitled*, 1961

10" × 6"

Pen and ink

A somber contemplation of the more gruesome aspects of the Passion.



### Unknown

Russian

*Wooden egg with pyrography, pre-1920*

6" x 4"

Wood

Gift of Mrs. Lydia and Rev. Paul L. Kluender

The long Russian tradition of giving decorative eggs as Easter gifts saw a kind of explosion in the late 19th century, as members of the nobility exchanged ever more elaborate and precious eggs. This practice culminated in the lavishly bejeweled eggs fashioned by the House of Fabergé between 1885 and 1917. Although the most ornate specimens disappeared along with the nobility after the Revolution, the tradition of decorating eggs persists in folk art.

The scene on this egg is a view from Red Square in Moscow, including the spires of the Cathedral of St. Basil, with their onion-shaped domes, and the Tower of the Savior, which has a more Western silhouette. While this view depicts these Renaissance buildings as they appeared in the late 19th century, the scene is still recognizable today.



**Feodor Rueckert**

(1840-1917), German-Russian

*Triptych egg*, pre-1917

4" x 3"

Cloisonné enamel on silver

Gift of Mrs. Lydia and Rev. Paul L. Kluender



Silversmith, goldsmith and enameler Feodor (Friedrich) Rückert, an ethnic German born in Alsace, worked for most of his career in Moscow. He maintained his own workshop but was also a Fabergé work master, frequently commissioned by the celebrated jewelry firm. This piece, which bears Rückert's own mark, bears a beautifully enameled outer shell that unfolds to reveal a miniature triptych reminiscent of an altar panel.



### **Unknown**

Hungarian

*Bogatzky Cross*, pre-1869

4 1/2" x 2 1/2" x 1/2"

Gold, diamond, enamel

Gift of Mrs. Lydia and Rev. Paul L. Kluender

In addition to the exquisitely detailed enameling, this elaborate piece includes 15 rose-cut diamonds (five large and 10 small). It is inscribed on the back to Archbishop Theophany Bogatzky. As is often the case with crucifixes, there is a startling contrast between the elegance of the object and the goriness of the image.



**Unknown**

English

*Striped onyx cross*, 1800–1900

3" × 2" × 1/4"

Onyx

Gift of Mrs. Lydia and Rev. Paul L. Kluender

This simple cross was crafted to make the most of the natural beauty of its material. When the onyx is held up to the light, the brown streak is translucent. The smooth, rectilinear form of the cross contrasts with the gentle curves in the rock formation.



**Pavel Ovchinnikov**

(1830–88), Russian

*Icon of St. Savior Christ, 1883*

12" × 11" × 2"

Enamel on silver

Gift of Mrs. Lydia and Rev. Paul L. Kluender

Pavel Ovchinnikov was one of the most renowned silversmiths and enamellers of his generation. At the height of his career, he employed more than 100 artisans in his factory, and he was appointed to supply royal courts in Russia, Denmark and Italy. His sons took over the firm after his death and continued to do business under his name. This is a particularly fine example of the style with beautiful enamelling around the head and beads covering the garment.



# Concordia Seminary

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