

Part Four

The Love of God in the Shape of a Cross

Christ of St. John of the Cross

Salvador Dalí in 1951

Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow

This painting is based on a drawing by the 16th-century Spanish friar John of the Cross. The composition of Christ is also based on a triangle and circle (the triangle is formed by Christ's arms; the circle is formed by Christ's head). The triangle, since it has three sides, can be seen as a reference to the Trinity.

Although it is a depiction of the crucifixion, it is devoid of nails, blood, and a crown of thorns, because, according to Dalí, he was convinced by a dream that these features would mar his depiction of Christ.

Dalí explained the painting's inspiration: "In 1950, I had a 'cosmic dream' in which I saw this image in color and which in my dream represented the 'nucleus of the atom.' This nucleus later took on a metaphysical sense; I considered it 'the very unity of the universe,' the Christ!"

The center of the universe is divine love. In Part Five, here, we explore God's love in the shape of a cross.



The Cross Barzoni

The cross of Jesus shows God's love for us in and as Jesus. It demonstrates God's suffering with us in our many forms of suffering.

The cross is not about God punishing Jesus for our sins.

The cross is a symbol of how much God has loved us in the life, death, and living presence of Jesus now. Jesus spoke up for the oppressed of his world and our world. To follow Jesus and take up our cross is to do the same, no matter what the cost.

And finally, the cross shows the inner drama of surrender and dying to our self, losing our life so that we can save our life.

Jesus demonstrated that dying to our small "warm-up" self allows our True divine self to flow out to the world in self-giving healing love.

Calvary Octavio Ocampo

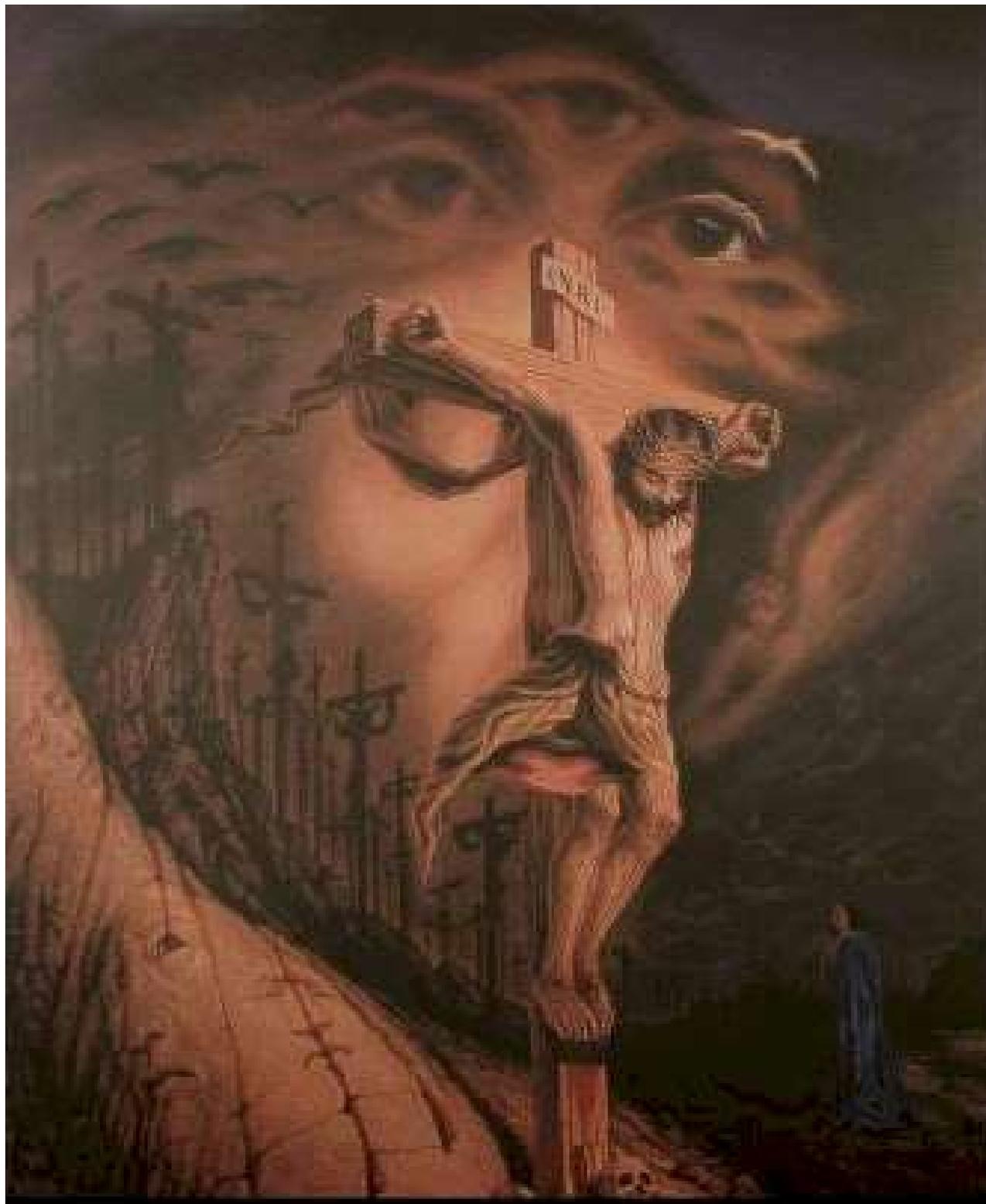
Ocampo, born in Mexico in 1943, works primarily in the metamorphic style – using a technique of superimposing realistic details within the images that he creates.

The longer one looks at Ocampo's work, the more that is revealed. The middle left side of the painting depicts the sacrifices made by Christian martyrs. The ravens on the upper left represent the cares, sorrows, and sins of this world.

God is symbolized by the three eyes in upper center. The right most eye represents the Holy Spirit, it is encircled with doves symbolizing its peace and love.

The cloth of his robe is a representation of the traditional story of a cloth pressed to Christ's face by Veronica. It shows her face crying in anguish. Christ's face is heavy with sorrow as he makes his incredible surrender to the cross.

The artist appears in the work (lower right), representing St. John as well as all of humanity.





The Foolishness of Christ Crucified Pauline Blandina O. P.

"We preach Christ crucified,
a stumbling block to Jews and
foolishness to Gentiles." 1 Cor. 1: 18-25

Dominican sister Blandina uses symbols extensively.
Like the riderless horse in President Kennedy's
funeral procession, the riderless unicycle rests on the
cross because Jesus fulfilled his mission. "It is
finished."

The sunflowers turn to Jesus, the Light.

In the US a man wears a white boutonniere for a
deceased mother and wears a red boutonniere for a
living mother. ". . .under the cross stood his
mother."

And God Saw Kent Drake

A compelling African-American art print by Kent L. Drake that shows Jesus being crucified from the perspective of God above and beyond.

Jesus' radical critique of the social, political and religious systems of domination, money, and power led to his crucifixion.

The cross also stands as a critique for those very systems today.





Crucifixion

Pablo Picasso

In 1930

Picasso (1881 – 1973) was one of the most influential visual artists of the 20th century. He said, “There is no greater theme than the Crucifixion exactly because it’s been done for more than a thousand years, millions of times.”

It is a surreal retelling of the Calvary story, with cross, nails, lance, weeping women and garments being divided by dice-throwers.

Cubism abolishes the distinction between full face and profile. In cubist artworks, objects are broken up, analyzed, and re-assembled in an abstracted form — instead of depicting objects from one viewpoint, the artist depicts the subject from a multitude of viewpoints to represent the subject in a greater context. Often the surfaces intersect at seemingly random angles presenting no coherent sense of depth. The background and object planes interpenetrate one another to create the ambiguous shallow space characteristic of cubism.

The black almond shaped area in the central figure's abdomen would seem to symbolize a gaping wound, suggestive of the wound in Christ's side, which is always present in traditional Crucifixions. Out of the wound there appears to be an enormous flow of blood represented by the vertical black column of ink between the central and right hand figures. Picasso made the analogy between his blood and the ink in his drawings on more than one occasion.

Rising out of the figure's shoulder is a Tau Cross, which is associated with the Mithraic cult and alchemy. Behind the female on the right there are some crossed pen lines indicating another Cross. These two Crosses reinforce the idea that the two women in the drawing are also undergoing crucifixion. Either side of the ladder upon which the central figure appears crucified are the shadowy forms of two dark angels, which are again traditional Renaissance crucifixion motifs.

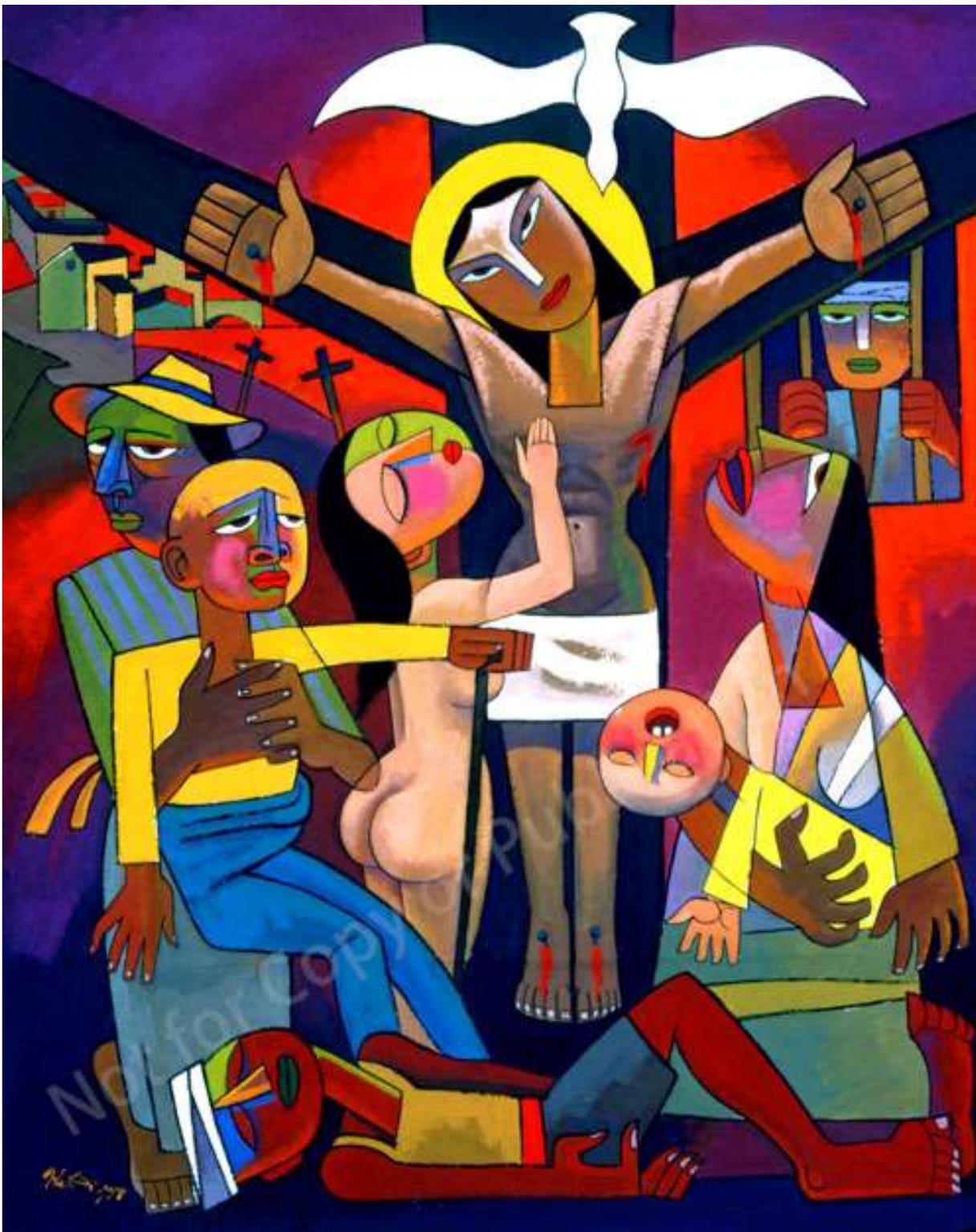
Alex Grey writes, “Picasso changed art forever as he opened the way for more radical artistic investigations and infused art with a tireless experimentalism. Yet Picasso’s continuously surprising inventions occur mostly on a mental level, rarely seeming to emanate from heart and soul. He seemed capable of inflicting and understanding pain in others, but strangely lacking in his work is the dimension of personal suffering, of human vulnerability, and spiritual torment that artist like Michelangelo, Rembrandt, van Gogh, Kahlo, and Pollock taught us with. Picassos’ production is awe inspiring, and we must be forever grateful to him for our artistic freedom, but his worldview lacked the transcendental.

Such works were always remarkably devoid of religious conviction. His interest in the crucifixion was an interest in anguish. Picasso’s only answer to the problem of suffering was beauty.”

Crucifixion He Qi

He Qi's art is a fusion of many traditions. In his works, one can find traces of medieval and Renaissance art, as well as the traditional Chinese crafts of paper cutting and weaving and hints of surrealism.

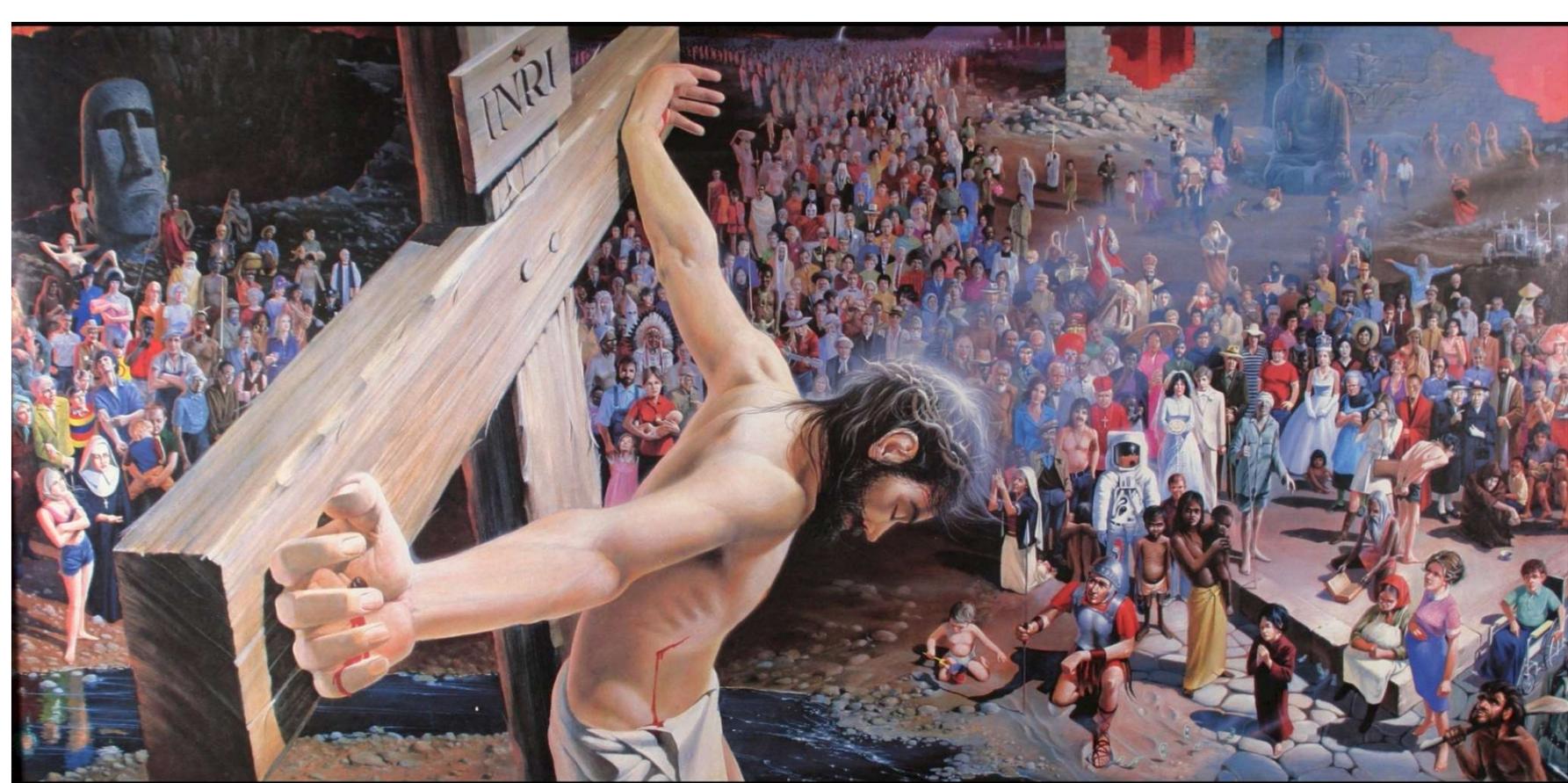
Biblical events, themes, and images permeate most of Dr. He Qi's paintings. His art brings a freshness of vision to old familiar stories and a reminder that God's promises are both enduring and universal.



**For God So
Loved the
World
William
Wallace**

Jesus said,
“When I am
lifted up from
the earth, I will
draw all people
to myself.”
John 12:32

Begun in 1976
and completed
after three
years of work,
this painting
seems to put



all the people of the earth into the great throng before Jesus lifted up on the cross.

The universal scope of “draw *ALL* people to myself” coincides with the many New Testament passages that proclaim that all means that all are included in God’s love. Jesus appears in many forms, named and unnamed, to different people.

Notice the river, as Jesus said, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. John 7:37-38

All creation is ultimately drawn to the cosmic, sacrificing, Love displayed by Jesus, from the Cro-Magnon man to the drug addict, the Klansman next to the African American, from the massive stone carving on Easter Island to the Lunar Landing machine, from the pick-pocket to those at the Wailing Wall.

Some are close and some far away, all at various places on the journey. But whatever the circumstances, all are all already reconciled to God as the writer of Colossians in the New Testament declares: “Through Christ God was pleased to reconcile to God’s Self all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Col. 1:20). We are all in the process of becoming aware of God’s reconciling love.

Crucifixion of Christ Becki Jayne Harrelson in 1993



An important function of art in society is to open our minds and help us see how rigid we can be in our perceptions. Harrelson's *Crucifixion of Christ*, commonly called the "faggot Jesus," is about Jesus embodying God's radically inclusive love for all people.

It is not a statement that Jesus was gay. Rather, gay people can relate to the hurt and humiliation that Jesus experienced on the cross. Artists have created countless versions of Jesus Christ, each adapted for a particular audience and era. There is black Jesus, Asian Jesus, female "Christa" -- and now gay Jesus to heal the damage done in Christ's name. Gay Christian images are arising now because the conventional Jesus is no longer adequate. Jesus' story is for everyone, but lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people often feel left out because some use Christian rhetoric to justify hate and discrimination.

Nobody knows for sure whether the historical

Jesus was attracted to other men. Being human, Jesus had sexual feelings. God lives in every individual of every different variation of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Jesus of scripture broke gender rules and gender roles. He befriended prostitutes, lepers and other outcasts. He challenged traditional family values at almost every turn, ignoring his blood relatives in favor of those who became his "brothers and sisters" by loving God and neighbor. Jesus himself was charged with blasphemy. He taught love and justice and was killed for it. Gay Jesus images are not a reaction. They are a revelation.

As Picasso said, Art is a lie that tells the truth. The lie is that the sign above Jesus on the cross read "Faggot." The truth is that we still keep crucifying the LGBT community.

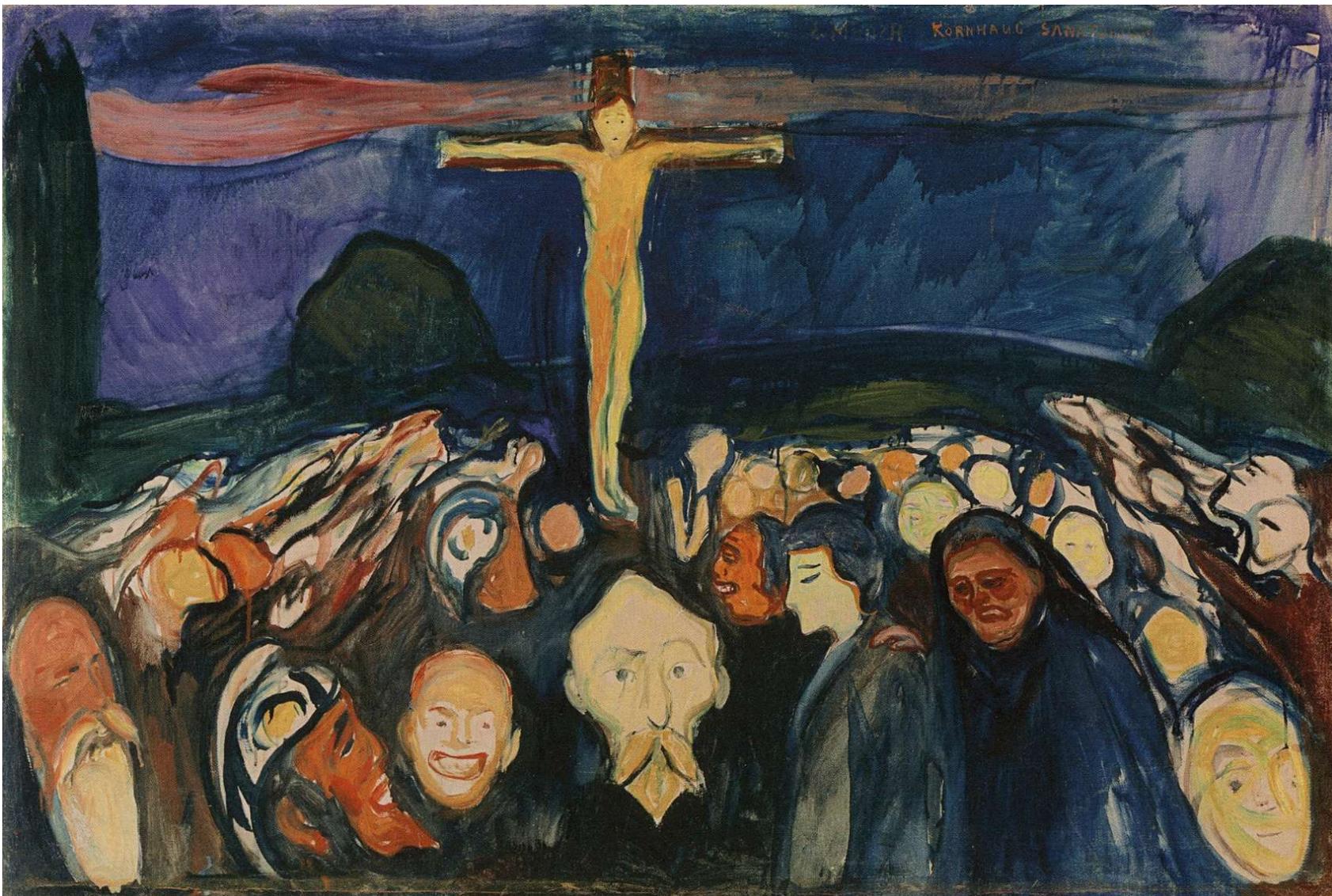
Golgotha
Edvard Munch
in 1900
Munch Museum,
Oslo, Norway

Munch (1863 – 1944) was a Norwegian artist best known for his extremely personal brand of Symbolism, which helped lay the foundations for and proved a lasting influence on the later Expressionist school of art.



His most famous work is The Scream.

Munch was intensely interested in spirituality and summarized his faith in a note, dated June 8 1934: “My declaration of faith: I bow down before something which, if you want, one might call God -- the teaching of Christ seems to me the finest there is, and Christ himself is very close to godlike -- if one can use that expression.”

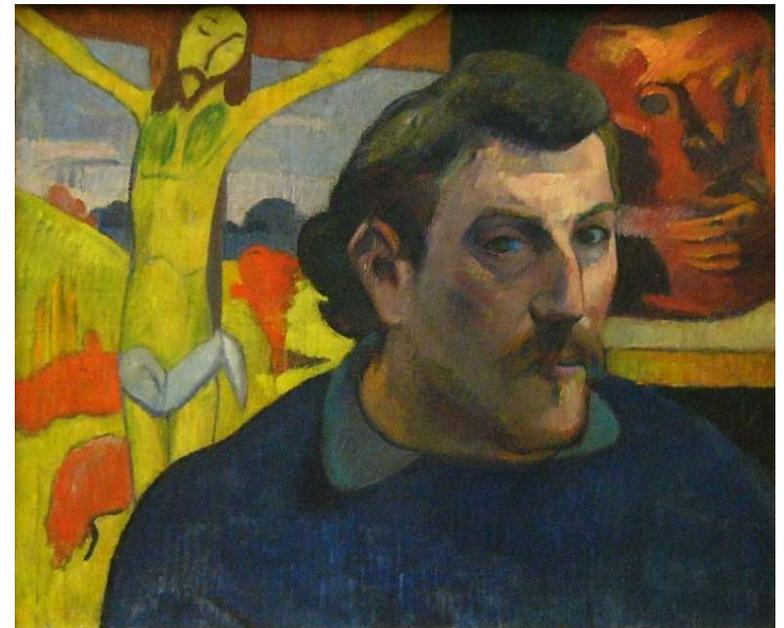
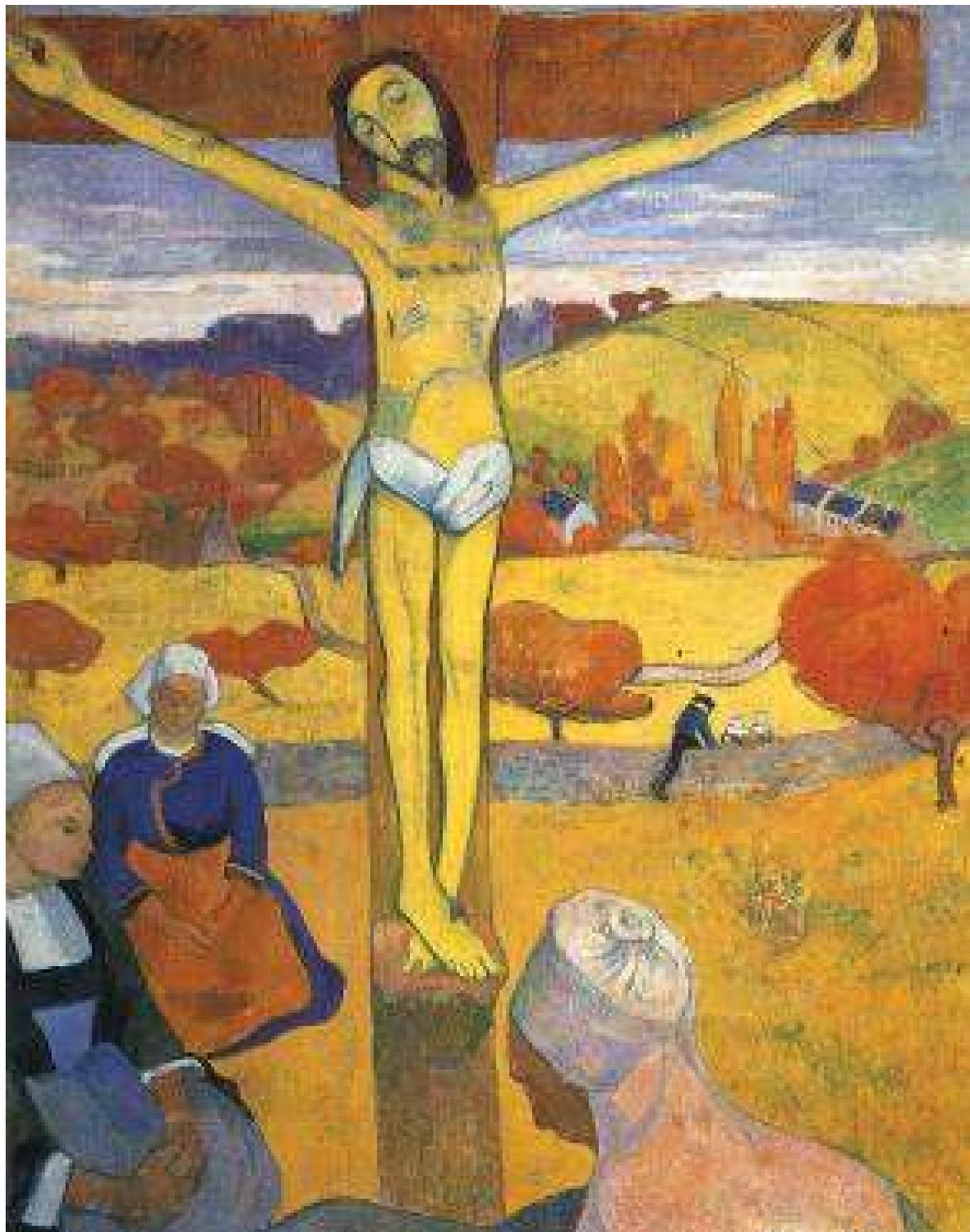


The Yellow Christ
Paul Gauguin in 1889

Albright–Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York

French post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin, regarded as one of the greatest artist in modern history, was an important figure in the Symbolist art movement of the early 1900s. His use of bold colors, exaggerated body proportions and stark contrasts in his paintings set him apart from his contemporaries, helping to pave the way for the Primitivism art movement.

Raised Catholic, as an adult he became a convert to Theosophy which united elements of many different major world religions (particularly Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism) along with many esoteric religious traditions of the era, including Spiritualism.



Self portrait of Gauguin with the Yellow Christ

**White Crucifixion
Marc Chagall
in 1938
Art Institute of Chicago**

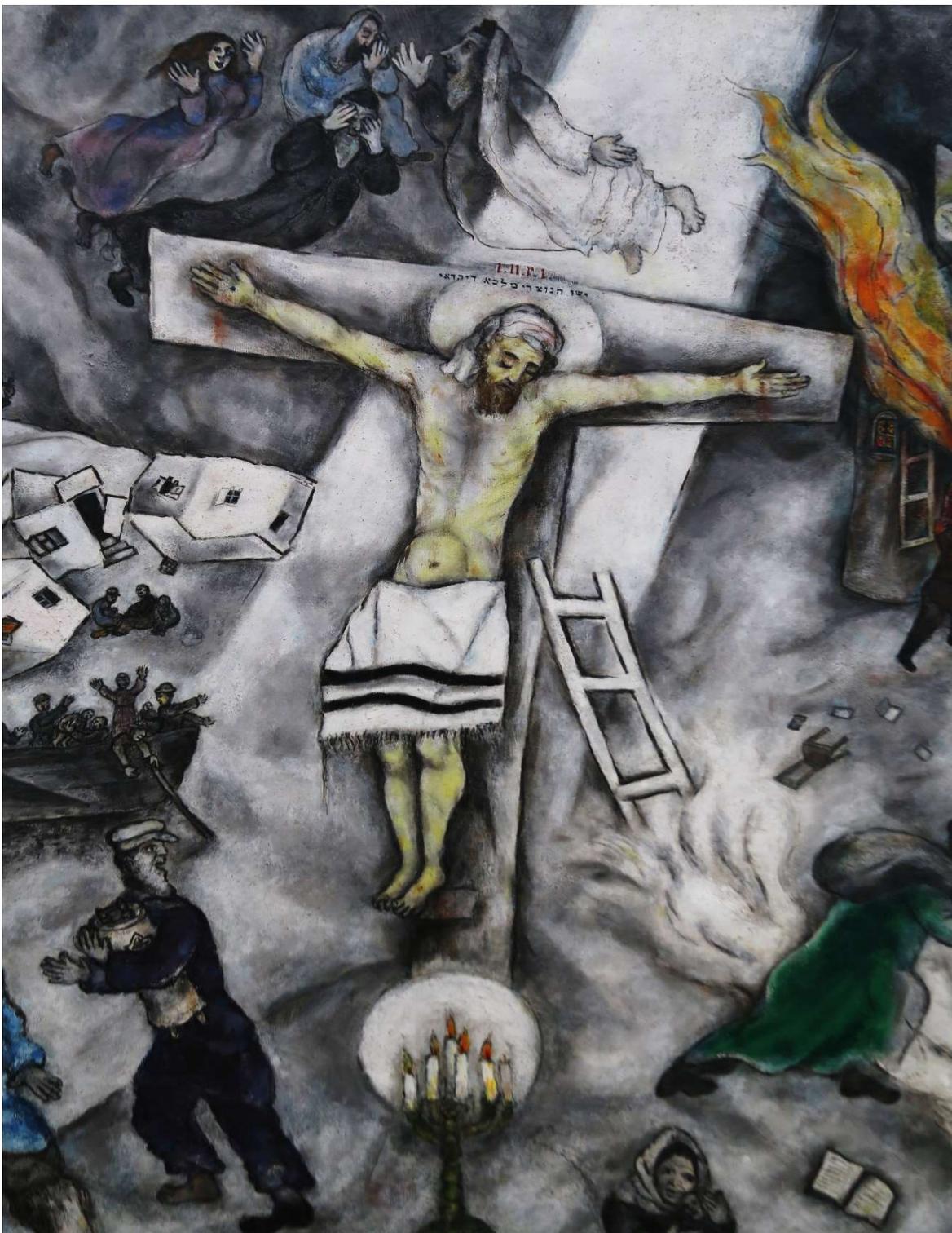
Marc Chagall (1887 –1985), a Jewish Russian-French artist is considered one of the most successful artists of the twentieth century.

For Chagall, the cross of Jesus shows the painful predicament of all Jews, harried, branded, and violently victimized. Violent conflicts are depicted such as the setting on fire of synagogues. In the center of the picture Jesus is displayed, crucified and symbolized as being Jewish adorned in a prayer shawl.

Below, front and center, a sense of the whole scene as a horrific modern altarpiece is created by a candelabrum—not a menorah but a six-canded candelabrum in which one of the candles has been quenched.

Many, and not just pious Jews, have found the White Crucifixion a disturbing work, with the explicit use of classic Jewish images and the vivid presence of modern-day horrors.

Pope Francis has stated that this is one of his favorite paintings. For it to be singled out for admiration by a reigning pontiff is remarkable.

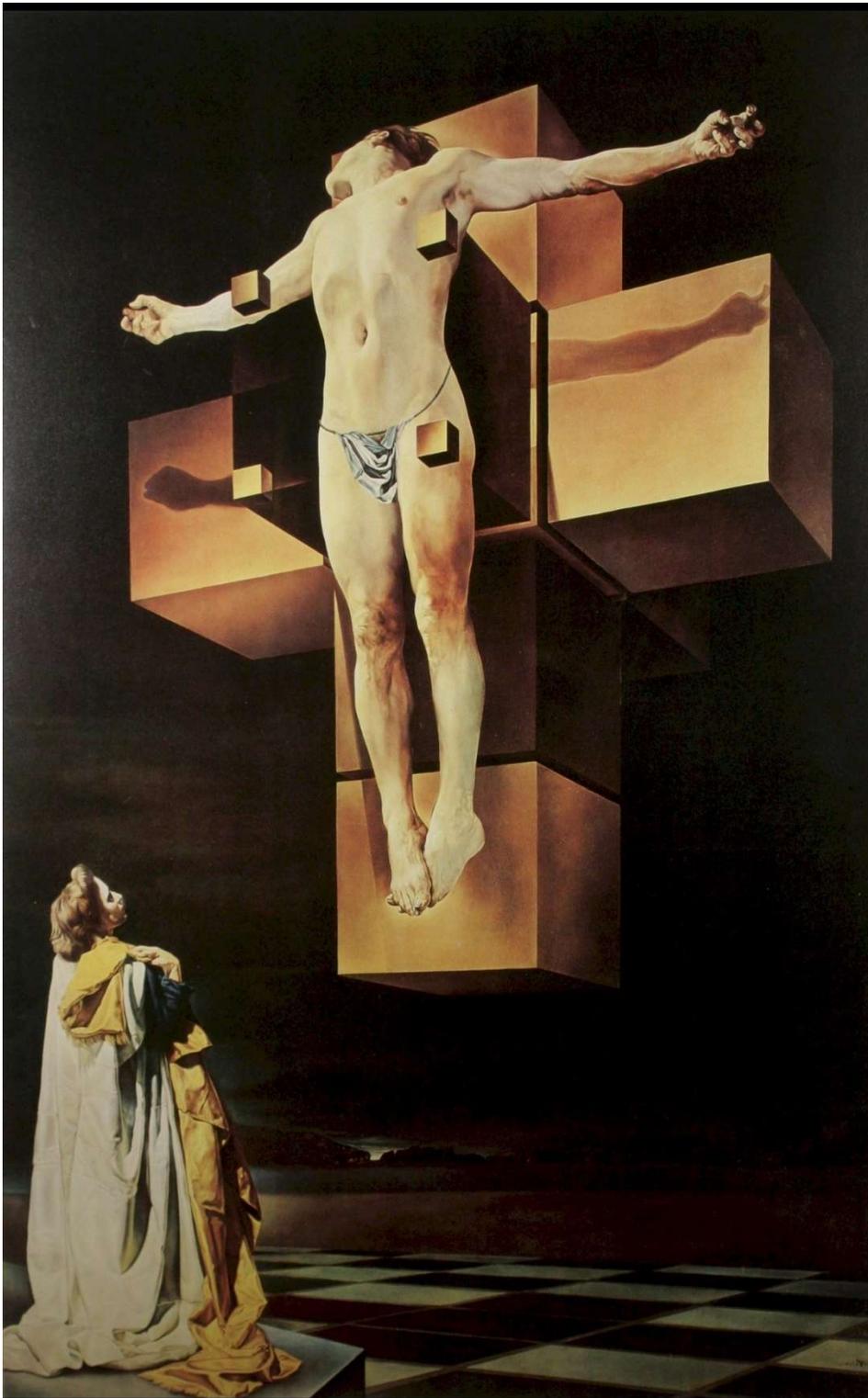


Corpus Hybercubus Salvador Dali in 1954

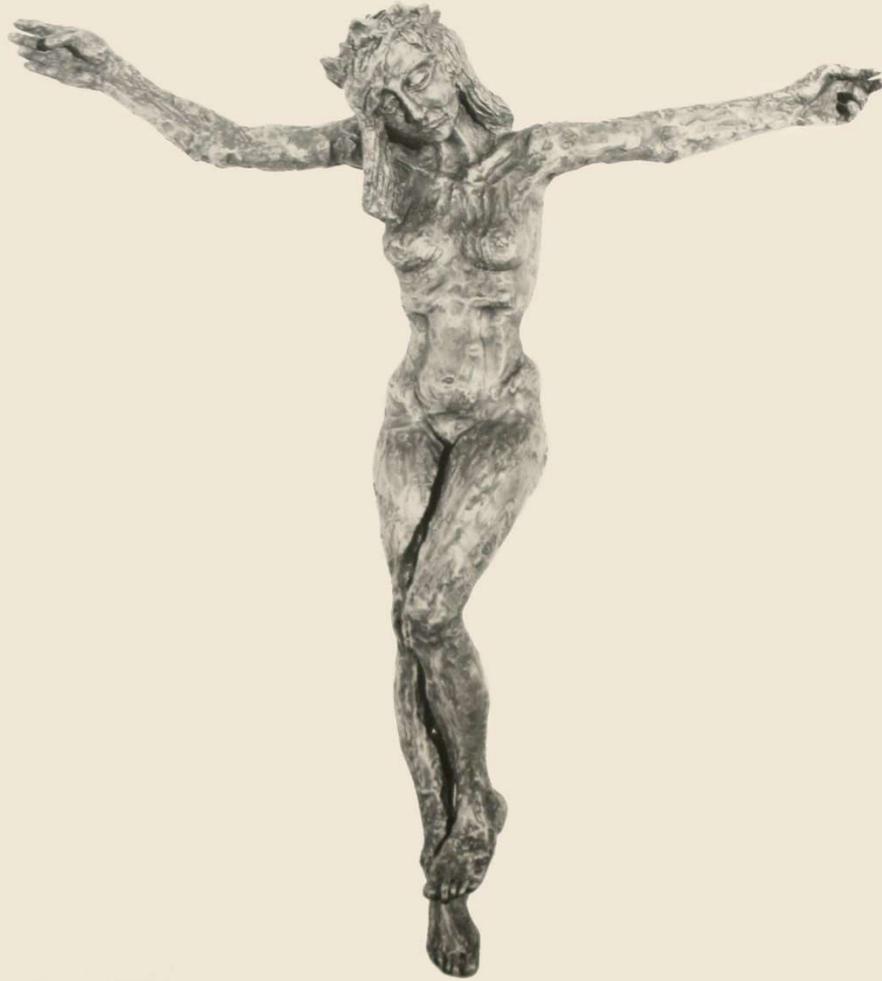
This surrealist portrayal of the crucifixion of Jesus depicts him on the polyhedron net of a tesseract (hypercube). It is one of his best-known paintings from the later period of Dali's career.

In his 1951 essay "Mystical Manifesto," Dali introduced an art theory he called "nuclear mysticism" that combined Dalí's interests in Catholicism, mathematics, science, and Catalan culture in an effort to reestablish classical values and techniques, which he extensively utilized in Corpus Hypercubus.

Dalí's believed that the seemingly separate and incompatible concepts of science and religion can in fact coexist. Upon completing Corpus Hypercubus, Dalí described his work as "metaphysical, transcendent cubism"



**Christa
Edwina Sandys
in 1975**



CHRISTA

Edwina Sandys

When this large bronze statue was on exhibition called "Crucifixion of the Feminine," Deborah Sokolove comments on what the visitors saw: "Some saw ugliness, heresy and blasphemy. Some visitors to the exhibition called Christa an abomination, at once a challenge to the immutable truth that Jesus was a man and a pornographic invitation towards the further abuse of women.

Others called it bad art, a cheap trick, its chunky surface masking an unwillingness to deal carefully with anatomy, its too-obvious reference to two thousand years of Christian art an unacceptable visual shorthand in service to a polemic point.

Still others found in it great beauty, truth, and even comfort as they considered a vision of Christ that said that Jesus' self-giving was not about his gender, but rather his humanity.

For these viewers, the Christa, along with the rest of the show, seemed to say that wherever women are being abused, there Christ is still being crucified.

For those who recognized the truth of its proclamation, the Christa's very ugliness was a kind of beauty, a revelation of divine compassion.

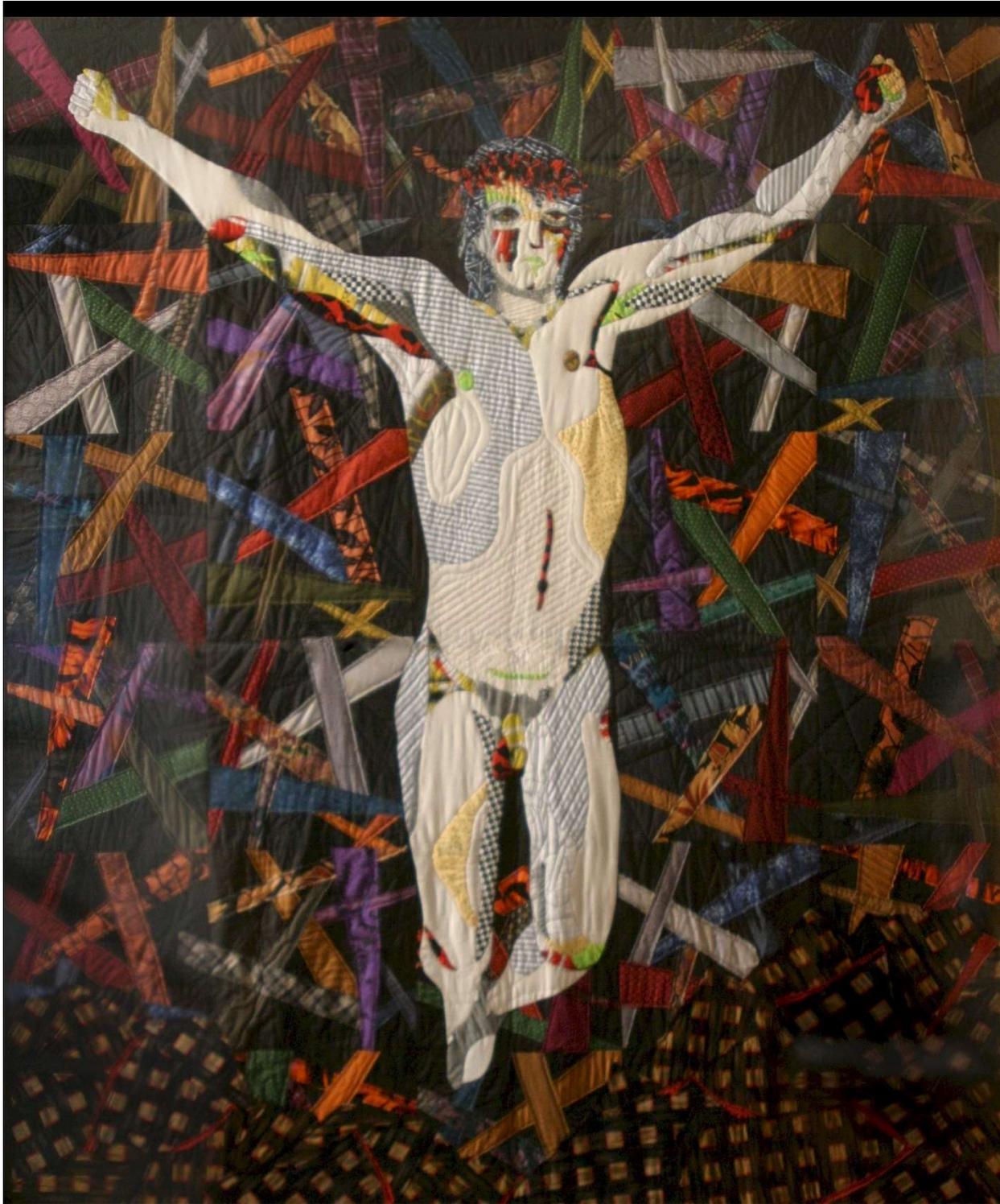
Cristo . . . Misericordia!

Dante

Christ . . . Mercy is signed by an artist named Dante. This does not seem to be the famous Dante of the Divine Comedy. The artist remains unidentified any further.

The shape of God's love is the shape of the cross of Jesus who was crucified because, on behalf of God, he spoke out for the oppressed of the world. God's love is mercy, not judgement, love not condemnation, inclusion, not exclusion.





Eli, Eli

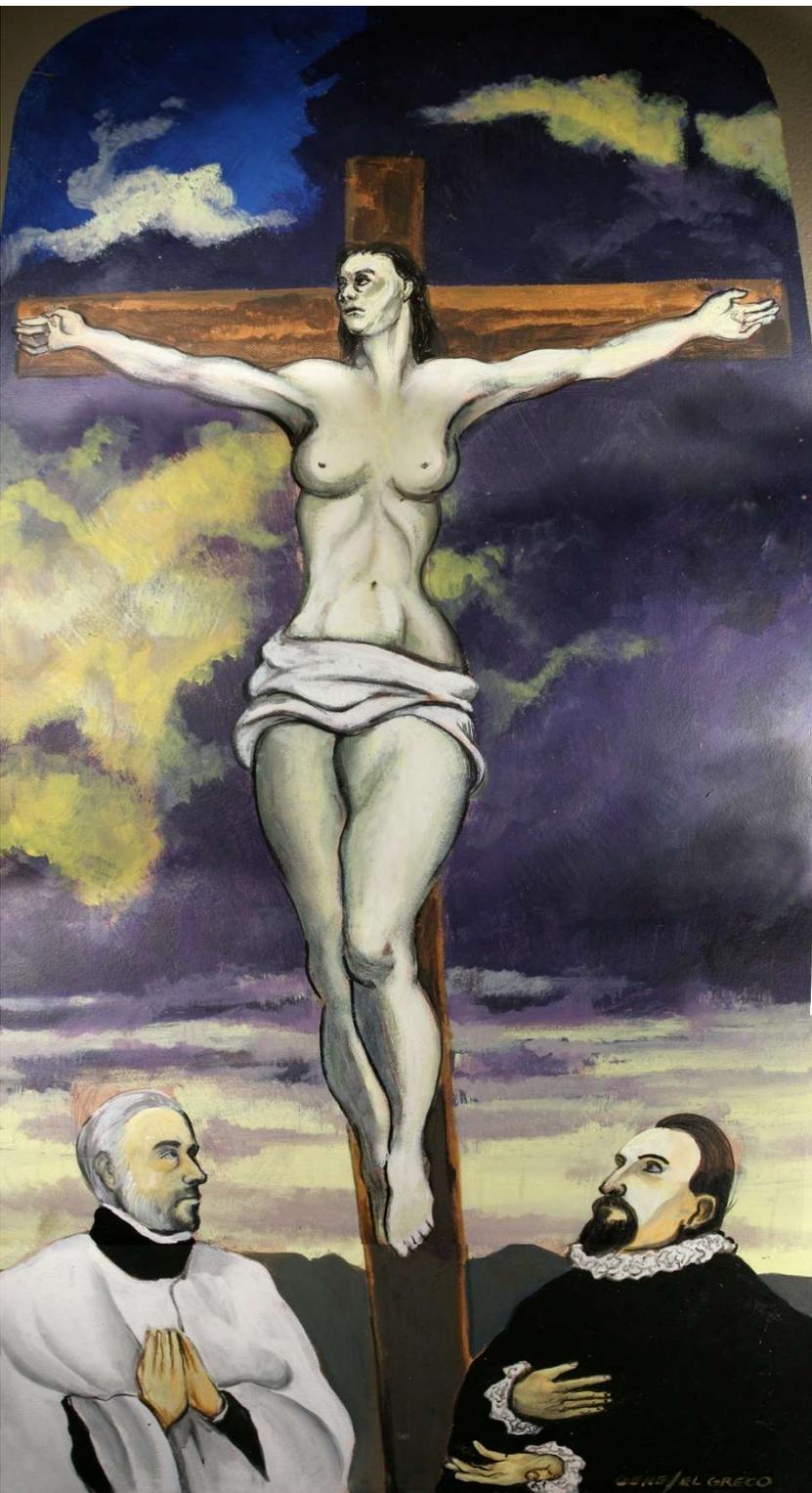
Quilt by Janet Patek in 1995

Patek, a Broadway Church member, takes this title from, "About three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?," that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46).

The figure of Jesus is nude for two compelling reasons. The first reason is historical accuracy. All prisoners crucified at this time in Rome were naked. When an occasional early artist would paint a nude Jesus on the cross, an uptight bishop or cardinal would order a loin cloth painted over the body. We have few nude portrayals from past centuries.

The second reason is theological. The vulnerability of Jesus at his death is communicated dramatically by the cultural shaming involving his naked body in public view.

After El Greco Anonymous



This original painting was created especially for the Faces of Jesus Gallery. The artist has replaced the male Christ figure of El Greco's famous Christ on the Cross Adored by Two Donors with a female Christ figure. There, strikingly, the two donor priests now become obvious abusers of the female Jesus as they are part of a church dominated for centuries by men. Jesus on the cross identifies with all the persecuted of the world.

Women are the largest group on the face of the earth who have been, and today are consistently persecuted and denied opportunity to be all that they are meant to be. Ironically, it is often the leaders of many religions who support this oppression.



Crucifixion Floriano Bodin

Bodin (1933 - 2005) is an Italian artist know for his painting and sculpture. This is a photograph of his graphic sculpture of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus' sufering for speaking and acting on behalf of the oppressed of the world was real.

Jesus on the Moon
Ted Jeccalik

In this fantasy image, Jesus and his divine love for us is literally everywhere all at the same time, in whatever form we need.

Certainly that includes all of creation, even the moon.



Nuclear Crucifixion Alext Grey in 1980

Grey is an American visionary artist, author, teacher, and practices Vajrayana, a complex and multifaceted system of Buddhist thought and practice which has evolved over several centuries. Grey's work spans a variety of forms including performance art, process art, installation art, sculpture, visionary art, and painting.

Grey spent five years at Harvard Medical School working in the Anatomy department studying the body and preparing cadavers for dissection. He also worked at Harvard's department of Mind/Body Medicine with Dr. Herbert Benson and Dr. Joan Borysenko, conducting scientific experiments to investigate subtle healing energies.

Holland Cotter, art critic for the New York Times wrote in 2002, "Alex Grey's art, with its New Age symbolism and medical-illustration

finesse, might be described as psychedelic realism, a kind of clinical approach to cosmic consciousness."

For Grey, the process of artistic creation holds the potential of transcending the limitations of the mind and more fully expressing the divine spirit. He also believes that art can induce within the viewer an elevated state wherein spiritual states of being are attained.



Christ of Gala
Salvador Dali
1904 – 1989

(This is the left component of a stereoscopic work in two sections. Viewed from seven feet away, both sections produce a 3D effect.)

Dali is a Spanish Christian surrealist artist. He studied Spanish mystics for whom art, science and religion were one.

The cross at the outer level reveals the cost, at times, of doing the right thing. Of being on the prophetic edge. Of loving, acting with compassion, finding our passion and courageously living out our purpose of life.

At the inner mystical level the cross is the inner drama of dying to self. Our Dark Night of the soul is where we die to our own ego, our false self so that the True Self may emerge.



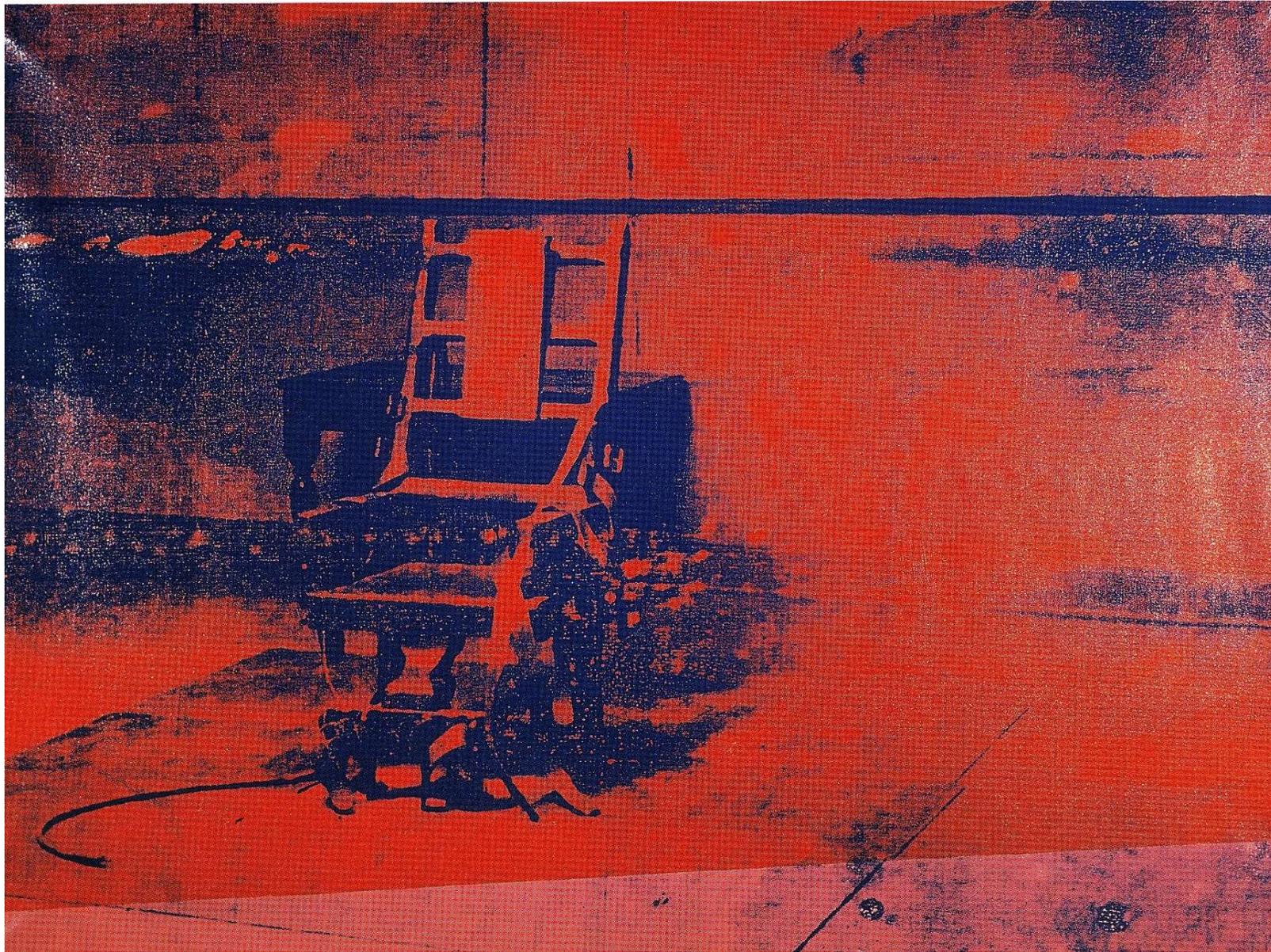


Cross
Andy Warhol in 1981-2
The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

Jane Daggett Dillenberger, in *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* says, "Warhol's first large series was called Cross. Here the spiritual complexity of the artist begins to take shape. The cross floats in a background of velvety black.

And, lest we think we can get away with viewing it only as art, the cross, in the original painting, is large enough to bear an adult human body.

Warhol forces the viewer to deal with the crucifixion and the suffering of the world, but the gently levitating cross invites us into strange joy."

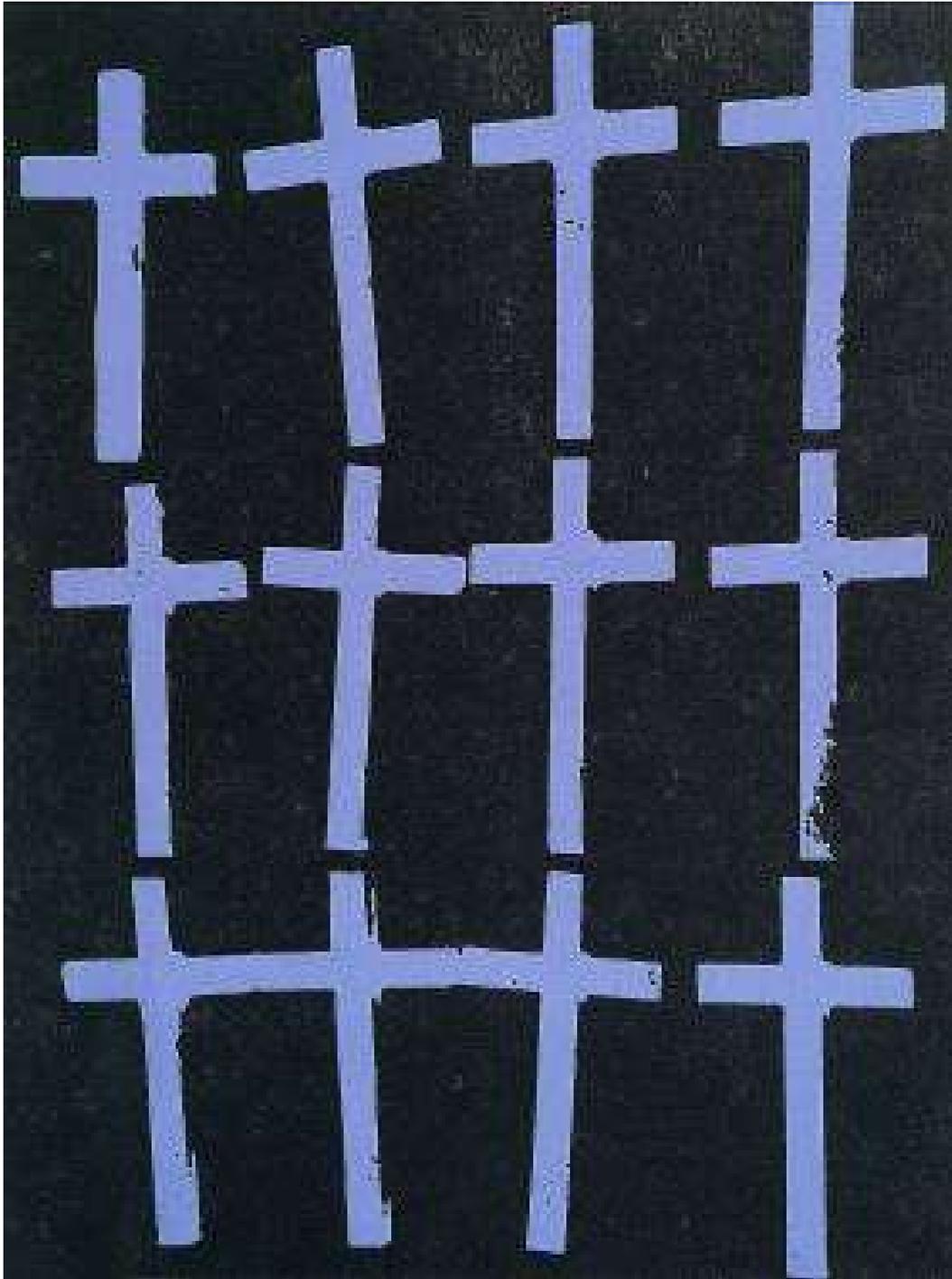


**Big Electric Chair
Andy Warhol in
1967-8
Centre George
Pompidou
Arcdhive, Paris,
France**

Warhol did a series of these electric chair images, all based on a photograph thought to be of the execution chamber in Sing Sing.

An electric chair for executions is a more realistic image in today's culture than a cross. Crucifixion in Jesus' day was full of shame and public humiliation. We have cleaned it up and made it a piece of jewelry.

Jesus knew what it was like to be his passionate self, and then be humiliated, misunderstood, shamed, and punished, even killed for it. As have women, blacks, gays, transgendered, and others who are different from those in power in our past and current history.



Crosses

Andy Warhol in 1981-82

“Everyone will have 15 minutes of fame.” This expression was inspired by Andy Warhol's words "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." The “15 minutes of fame” is short-lived media publicity or celebrity of an individual or phenomenon.

Andy Warhol's 15 minutes of fame lasted 25 years. The yellow version of this same painting sold for over two million dollars at Christies in 2005. He produced the largest collection of religious art by any American painter.

Here he applies his famous repetitions to an object which was with him all of his life in a more profound way - the cross of Christ. The cross figured large in his Byzantine Orthodox Church and he always kept a large crucifix by his bed.

The repeated Cross can also remind us of the repeated internal drama of every person on the spiritual journey who daily takes up their cross, leaving ego behind and dying to the false self and awakening to the True Self.



The Old Rugged Cross Ray Batchelor

Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends” John 15:12-13.

The cross is not a picture of God punishing Jesus for our sins, although that imagery was a choice for some in early Christianity to explain the crucifixion to a people whose Temple practices centered on sacrificial offerings to God.

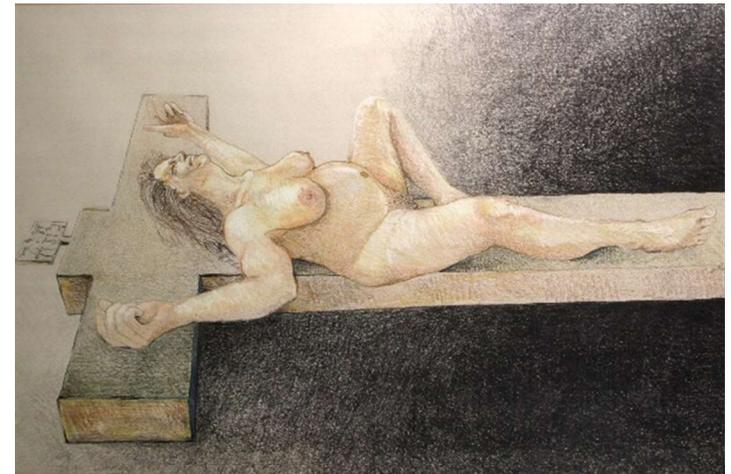
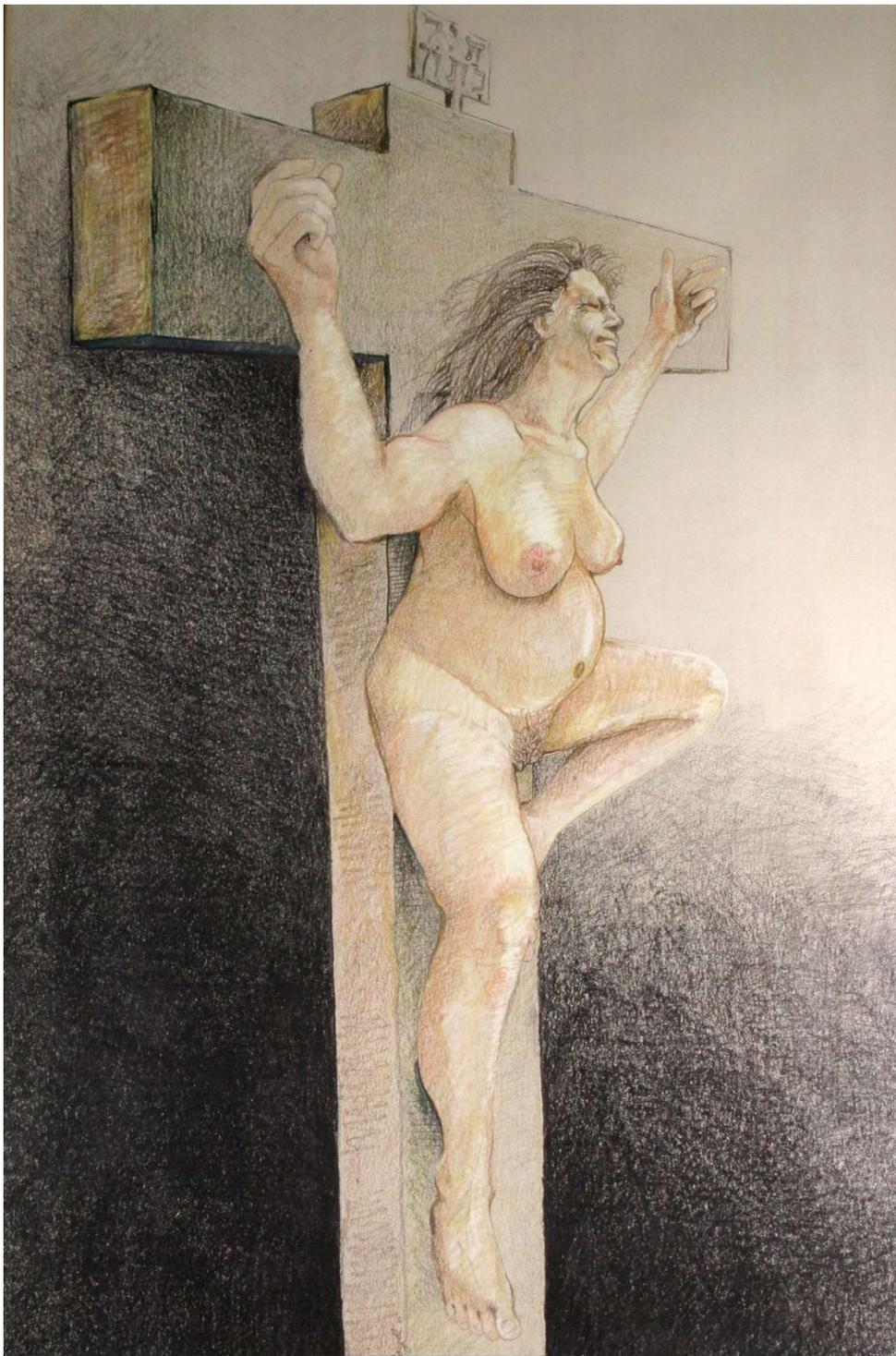
Rather, the primary image of the cross in the Bible was that Jesus laid down his life for his friends. He refused to be silent and spoke truth to power about oppression in any form, including social, economic, sexual, and religious.

It is God’s love taking the side of the oppressed of the world in the shape of a cross.

**Virtuous Giving
Michael Floyd
in 1990**

Floyd was a former member of Broadway Church, graduate of Midwestern Seminary, and art teacher in Denver.

People tend to either love or hate this image of Jesus seen in female form. When viewed horizontally we see a woman on a birthing table ready to give birth.



Meister Eckhart (1260 – 1328), the great Christian mystic, wrote, “What does God do all day long? God gives birth. From all eternity, God lies on a maternity bed giving birth.”



What Jesus Saw From the Cross
James Tissot in 1886-94
Brooklyn Museum, New York City

French painter and graphic artist Tissot, after the death of his mistress in 1882, returned to France where he dedicated himself to religious paintings. He took two journeys to the Israel to help prepare him.

This work is unusual for its portrayal of the site, the women witnesses, and bystanders from the perspective of Jesus on the cross, rather than featuring him as the center of the work.

Jesus is not shown although his feet can be seen at the bottom of the picture.

Have you ever felt like everyone was looking at you in pity, horror, and shame? Jesus did — in the extreme.



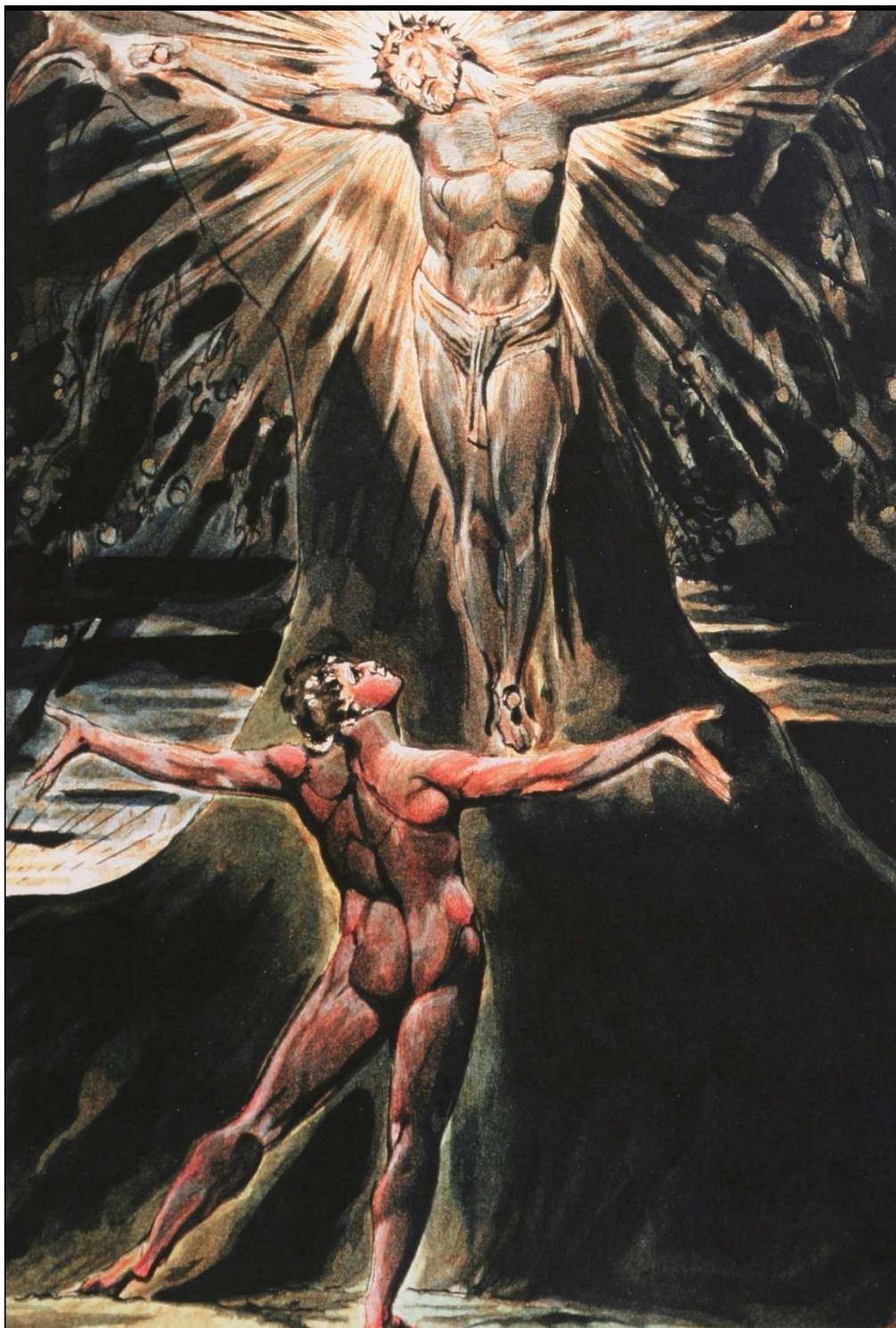
**The Crucifixion
of Christ**
Max Klinger
1890
***Museum der
bildenden
Künste, Leipzig,
Germany***

Klinger was a German Symbolist painter, sculptor, and printmaker. This is a striking image of the crucifixion because of its realism in at least three ways.

First, the cross in this painting is seven feet high, which is what Roman crosses usually measured. Traditional paintings show the cross much higher.

Secondly, ancient sources mention the *sedile*, a small seat attached to the front of the cross, about halfway down.

Thirdly, Roman prisoners were crucified without any clothing. Among the Jews, nakedness, particularly nakedness in public, was considered extremely shameful. In the 6th century, Bishop Gregory of Tours complained about Christ's unseemly nudity in certain representations of the crucifixion. When Klinger's crucifixion was first displayed in 1895 in Munich, the figure had to be draped with a cloth from the waist down.



**Albion before Christ Crucified
on the Tree of the Knowledge
of Good and Evil
William Blake in 1804**

Jerusalem, subtitled *The Emanation of the Giant Albion*, was the last, longest and greatest in scope of the prophetic books written and illustrated by the English poet, visionary, artist, and engraver William Blake. Blake's affection for the Bible was accompanied by hostility for the established Church, and his beliefs were modified by a fascination with mysticism.

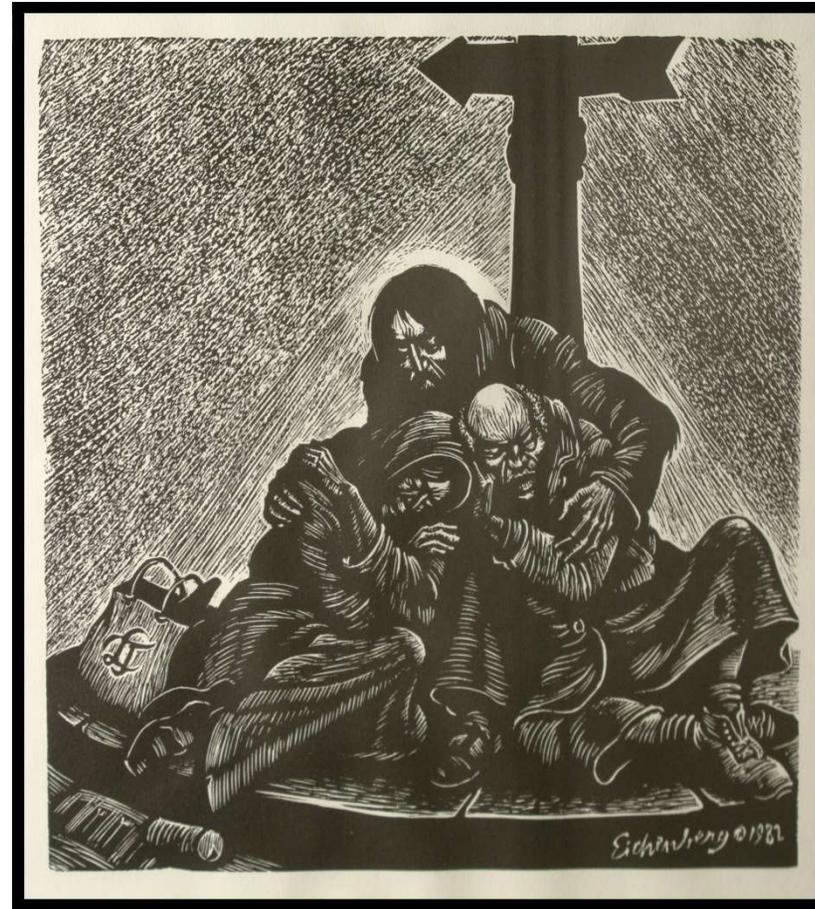
This Plate 76 is from the poem which was produced between 1804 and 1820.

Jerusalem tells the mystical story of the fall of Albion, Blake's embodiment of humankind, Britain, or the western world as a whole. The poetic narrative takes the form of a "drama of the psyche," couched in the dense symbolism of Blake's self-constructed mythology. Albion's fall results in (and also appears to be caused by) the division of his persona into four distinct aspects: imagination, reason, passion, and perception.

At the end of the poem, the death and resurrection of Jesus allows Jerusalem, the Emanation of Albion himself (humankind), to reunite his various aspects into a single entity once more.



Pieta
Fritz Eichenberg



Christ of the Homeless
Fritz Eichenberg 1982

Fritz Eichenberg liked to point out that his German last name meant “oak mountain,” as if this, somehow, explained his extraordinary mastery of the medium of wood engraving.

He was a visual artist whose work was inextricably bound up with words in hundreds of illustrations for books and periodicals. A shared love for Dostoyevsky drew Eichenberg, a German Jewish convert to Quakerism, into a unique creative partnership with Roman Catholic Social Activist Dorothy Day, a meeting of kindred minds, uniting image-making and social conscience in ways, which have immeasurably enriched and democratized contemporary sacred art.

During a forty-year period, beginning in 1949, Eichenberg contributed over 100 illustrations to Day’s banner publication, *The Catholic Worker*, more than fulfilling her hopes that the spirit of the newspaper’s editorial content could be communicated through accompanying images to Day’s friends and supporters who had trouble reading the texts. Eichenberg revealed to us that God is in everyone

The Dead Christ
Andrea Mantegna around 1480
Pinacoteca di Brera of Milan, Italy

Mantegna, an Italian Renaissance artist (1431 – 1506), was well-known for his dramatic perspective as in this painting. We see an almost monstrous spectacle: a heavy corpse, seemingly swollen with two feet with holes in them depicted by the precision of an anatomist. The face of Jesus, like the other faces, is seamed by wrinkles. The damp folds of the shroud emphasize the folds in the tight skin, which is like torn parchment around the dry wounds. All these lines are echoed in the wild waves of the hair.

On the left Mary is weeping, John is praying, and Mary of Magdala is sorrowful. On the right there is a small flask of ointment and an opening towards a dark room: both signs of the imminent burial.

The realism and tragedy of the scene are enhanced by the violent perspective,

which foreshortens and dramatizes the recumbent figure, stressing the anatomical details: in particular, Jesus' thorax. The holes in Jesus' hands and feet, as well as the faces of the two mourners, are portrayed without any concession to idealism or rhetoric. The sharply drawn drapery which covers the corpse contributes to the dramatic effect.

The composition places the central focus of the image on Jesus' genitals — an emphasis often found in figures of Jesus, especially as an infant, in this period, which is related to a theological emphasis on the humanity of Jesus by art historian Leo Steinberg (1920 – 2011) and others.

