

## ***Viewing Sacred Art***

Jesus is the most famous and recognizable person of all time according to Google. Second place currently appears to go to Queen Elizabeth II, who has been Queen of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand since 1952.

What is interesting between first place Jesus and second place Queen Elizabeth is that we actually know what Elizabeth looks like—but no one today knows what Jesus looked like!

Therefore, artists who paint Jesus have a gigantic task on their hands – calling forth in us by their work some sense of the sacred that causes us to see something of the presence and character Jesus in their work.

In his book *The Mission of Art*, Alex Grey drops these thoughts into our minds and hearts which leave us to investigate the many faces of Jesus in whatever way we have available to enter into transcendent space and connect with Spirit as we visit with these sacred images:

Conventional art is an expression of the self or world as it is now. Transcendental art expresses something that you are not yet but that you can become. . . . That's why you feel better after producing it or viewing it. Transformative art expresses something beyond where you are. It demands that you recognize your higher nature and alter your life accordingly.

Art is the transmission of states of being and stages of consciousness.

Art is nutrition for the soul. The soul cannot survive on junk food.

Art can be a channel of God's creative light. Art becomes a bridge to the spiritual in everyday life. As Jesus said, "If you have a lamp you don't hide it under a basket." Art of all kinds is a lamp of the soul.

Perhaps that is why art can more strongly convey the nature of the mystical state. Art is not limited by reason. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but a sacred picture is beyond words. The worshiper uses art to see through the rough image made by hand to the transcendental subject that is the archetypal source of the image.

Looking at art: We may first appreciate the colors and patterns. When we learn the title, we may see further meaning. If we know something about the artist insights can increase. Knowing the historical, political, and social context in which the work was created can give deeper meaning. Symbolism can help with an even greater understanding.

We bring our own level of consciousness to viewing art – as well as all things. Look at the Mona Lisa. An insurance assessor may look at it and see millions of dollars. An art conservator may see hundreds of tiny cracks. A tourist may just want to see something famous and want a picture made while standing next to it. A security specialist will admire the protective encasement. An art historian may see a High Renaissance portrait. The museum director may see a crowd. A sensitive viewer may see a transcendent timeless beauty. These perspectives are all true.

Religion and art that emphasize ecstasy and mystical experience will always fulfill profound human needs, bringing people back to the source of infinite love and ultimate reality.

We look at art differently than other things. We look for what it says to us.

May these images invite, awaken, and stir you to a new level of spiritual consciousness.

Paul Smith 2017  
original collector and curator of this collection