

# AN EXCITING BIBLICAL *Renaissance* FOR ART

—interview with Dr Christine Gunn-Danforth



Dr Christine Gunn-Danforth

**D**r Christine Gunn-Danforth is the Arts Director for Cape Town 2010: The Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelisation, to take place 16-25 October. This Congress will draw 4 500 evangelical leaders and influencers from 200 nations - leaders in the Church and in the professions - to seek God's wisdom as we look at strategy for world evangelisation over the coming decade. We interviewed her with regards to this congress and the role that art plays in the Christian context.

## HOW DO THE ARTS AND THE GOSPEL GO TOGETHER?

The Lord Jesus used storytelling as a powerful medium. He painted word pictures for

the crowds - the lilies of the field, the sower, the woman who lost a coin. Christians in the Arts can learn much from His methods of communication.

Our work can reflect and resonate to people our personal belief in the Creator God. I was appointed to the Congress team to help us embrace the Arts as part of the Church's mission.

## TELL US ABOUT THE NEW ARTS AUCTION INITIATIVE IN MAY?

We are holding a silent auction in Cape Town to celebrate the Arts in the Global Church. We have commissioned a group of world-renowned artists in many different genres - painting, ceramics and beading for example - to create pieces for sale. They will be displayed on the 'Current Issue' page of the JOY! Magazine website [www.joymag.com](http://www.joymag.com). If you would like to make a bid, this is where to do it. The auction will open on Saturday 22 May.

## WHY PROFILE AFRICAN ART?

All around the world, African peoples are associated with the Arts. Our handcrafts, our music and singing, our stories. Perhaps it is our oral cultures which have given Africans such a love for stories. So



that's where this began. Let me step sideways for a moment, to explain what we could call a 'Lausanne Movement value'. John Stott, the British pastor-theologian who is Honorary Chairman of The Lausanne Movement, and who built its infrastructure, once described the movement rather beautifully as 'an exchange of gifts.'

Christ gave gifts to His Church to share, and each national church brings the gifts it has received to share with others. Africa is host continent for this major event in the life of the global Church, and this is one of the gifts we want to bring to the table.



Ancient Mosaic of Jesus Christ found in the Basilica of San Marco in Venice, Italy

### SO IT'S AN AFRICAN GIFT FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH?

Yes, that's right. I would love to think we will see a Renaissance of story arts in evangelism around the world. We have used Art and Craft to tell Africa's story over many centuries – from hieroglyphics in Egypt to ceramics in South Africa. These tell stories of people and they create symbols which instantly communicate a message.

We use symbols today perhaps more than ever. Logos and branding are forms of art. Think of the golden arches of McDonalds and the Nike swoosh. Sym-

bols speak with immediacy, and resonate values.

of lambs, pearls, bread, wine, doves – each holding a wealth of meaning. The

**Christians in the Arts can learn much from Jesus' methods of story-telling communication. Our work can reflect and resonate to people our personal belief in God.**

### TAKE US BACK AGAIN TO THE BIBLE'S USE OF STORY...

Jesus and the Ancient Old Testament writers spoke and wrote to a predominantly oral culture. Images were used widely to explain truth. Think of the use

writers of Scripture established through stories, a Biblical framework of symbols. The Kingdom of God was explained and often transcribed in pictures – on the catacombs, and in the homes of the early Christians celebrating their faith. »

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The Kiss of Judas, a Fresco painting by Giotto di Bondone

I am convinced  
that neither  
**DEATH**  
nor **LIFE**,  
neither  
angels nor demons,  
neither  
the present  
nor the future,  
nor any powers,  
neither height  
nor depth  
nor  
**ANYTHING**  
else in  
all creation,  
will be able to  
separate us from  
the  
love of  
that is in God  
Christ Jesus our  
**L O R D .**



This Wedgwood Anti-Slave Cameo made by Josiah Wedgwood was adopted as an underground symbol of the abolition of slavery during the 1700's. It is an example of how cultural artifacts are used as powerful symbols and prophetic tools to communicate injustice

This was frequently done using a storyboard of pictures of the prophet Jonah, the shepherd, the ICTHUS fish symbol, and the dove as the symbol of reconciliation and peace. These were used long before the cross became the central Christian symbol.

## HOW WILL THE CONGRESS SHOWCASE ART AS STORYTELLING?

The commissioned pieces to be auctioned will each have a story to tell. After the auction they will be on display by appointment at the Ellermen House gal-

lery. We trust these pieces will inspire the Church globally through their creative form.

We will also have a film festival. There are highly gifted Christians in film. We want to share some of the wonderful stories of how this medium has been used to bring home the message of the Gospel. We can all name major releases which have communicated the truth of the Gos-

branding, media and technology all give new wings to these means of declaring God's character and His message.

## WHERE DID YOUR LOVE FOR STORY ORIGINATE?

As a young girl I loved Jesus and I loved stories; and like most children I loved to listen to stories of Jesus. The stories in my 'Children's Bible Storybook' were il-

**Jesus and the Ancient Old Testament writers spoke and wrote to a predominantly oral culture. Images were used widely to explain truth and symbols used extensively.**

pel like 'Chariots of Fire' and 'The Passion of the Christ', but there are also deeply inspiring stories of modest films carried around in vans and shown on small projectors to audiences in rural communities across Africa and Asia.

At the Congress we want to share in the gifts God has given in all forms of art – including painting, craft and the performing arts. We'll also be looking at how

illustrated with paintings from Biblical days. While my mom or dad read the story, I was looking at these paintings. So from when I was very young, the Bible came alive in images from the ancient world, and connected seamlessly with my life.

## HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO YOUR WORK IN TV AND FILM?

JESUS



A ceramic piece by Zebulon Msele of Ardmore Ceramic Art (a South-African company)



A religious painting by South African Christian artist, Portchie



The Creation of Adam is a section of Michelangelo's fresco Sistine Chapel ceiling painted circa 1511

Before coming to serve on the Lausanne Congress team as Arts Director, I spent 14 years looking at the connection between Biblical stories and Hollywood stories. I found the ancient little book of Jonah a key. Here was good storytelling - artistically written, with hyperbole, images, humour and irony. (I am talking here about the writer's means of relating history - I am not suggesting it was only a story.)

This same craft was being mimicked in Hollywood. I talked about it with friends in Hollywood; with the Director of the Writers Guild of America; and with fel-

low script developers who are Christians. Symbolic frameworks and artistic rendering occur in abundance in the ancient writings of the Bible. They have set a pattern for us to embrace, I call this pattern of story-telling art 'JONAHRE'. (Jonah Offers New Artistic Hope Reforming Entertainment/Evangelism).

**YOU HAVE SPENT MANY YEARS IN THE USA. TELL US ABOUT YOUR SOUTH AFRICAN ROOTS**

I grew up in South Africa, speaking mainly Afrikaans. My mom is Afrikaans-speaking

and my father is English-speaking. My family moved to New York when I was ten years old, where I learned American English for two years before I returned to complete my schooling in South Africa. I now live in Chicago with my American husband and children.

Jesus is the One in whom everything holds together. He unites the diversities of cultures through the transformation of our hearts. In Him we can truly live in unity. This unity in Him is multi-coloured and very rich, drawing together all peoples, including Jew and Gentile, Hutu and Tutsi, »

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Above Left and Far Right: Catacomb images of the earliest Christian art dating 250AD



'Jonah and the Whale' by Bonnie Ntshalintshali of Ardmore Ceramic Art



'The Annunciation' by Petros Gumbi of Ardmore Ceramic Art

black, white and coloured. It is this vision of reconciliation in Christ and specifically of reconciliation to God through Christ (2 Cor 5:19) which drives my passion. Telling this story through the arts is what we want to see explode around the world.

### DO YOU THINK THE STORYTELLING ARTS CAN BE SPIRIT-FILLED?

If we critique injustice in the world through our art, we can communicate that critique prophetically. Paintings can also inspire

now. But let me give you just one glimpse: I spoke with Porchie shortly before this interview, an African artist whose painting will show how we should give to the Lord with joy, with open and generous hearts. His painting depicts a boy on a bicycle, carrying a chicken.

It is easy to give out of abundance but not easy giving out of need. This is a poor boy. He has perhaps three chickens; and with so few, he knows each of them by name. Giving one of these chickens is

**It is with great anticipation that we profile the arts pieces being commissioned for the auction as they will showcase a Biblical Renaissance from Africa.**

their viewers to a new vision. Through our prophetic imagination, art can communicate with Spirit-filled effectiveness; it can still bear witness to Biblical Truth in life and culture in a compelling way. This is the mission of 'JONAHRE' art and film.

### WHO WILL CREATE THE PIECES FOR THE AUCTION?

We are very honoured to have a piece from Ardmore, an African ceramic collectible sold internationally by Christy's and Sotheby's. We will unveil the other artists over the next few weeks on the JOY! Magazine website and the 'JONAHRE' website, and don't want to give too much away

costly, truly a gift from the heart. Porchie's painting is a metaphor of how we each must give. Through declaring the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of this boy (for a generous spirit is a Grace, a gift from God), Porchie is bringing a story to bless the wider Church. I encourage readers to look at our website to see other painters who are giving their work for the auction.

### WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH THE PROCEEDS RAISED?

The funds raised through the art auction will be divided between supporting a social concern (e.g. nature conservation, HIV, needy women and children



# The King's School

Robin Hills

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## Principal/CEO

Applicants are required to go to [www.schoolprincipal.co.za](http://www.schoolprincipal.co.za) and complete the online application with all required information.

Applications will close on **31 May 2010**

The King's School Robinhills is a co-educational Christian school for 750 learners from pre-primary to matric in the Johannesburg area. The school has a reputation for offering quality Christian education with high academic standards and an emphasis on the development of the whole child. More information about the school is available at [www.thekingsschool.co.za](http://www.thekingsschool.co.za)



in Africa) and furthering arts initiatives through the global Church. It is with great anticipation that these arts pieces are being commissioned for showcasing a Biblical Renaissance from Africa. These art pieces representing storytelling from Africa from some of the best South African artists will be unveiled in the next Biblical Renaissance JOY! articles and we invite all readers to participate in the auction online in the next three months.

### WHEN AND WHERE WILL IT BE HELD?

With the funds raised, 50% of each piece raised will benefit compassion ministries of global concern and the remainder 50% of the funding will benefit the Renaissance of storytelling arts in the Global Church. The auction bidding will start on May 22. Please go to [www.joymag.co.za](http://www.joymag.co.za) or [www.jonahre.com](http://www.jonahre.com) to learn more. The patrons of such storytelling arts pieces will be using these pieces to bring expression to the Biblical Truth in picture forms and be eligible to be invited as guests to Ellerman House and Contemporary Gallery to see the pieces in person.

The celebratory function will be held to complete the auction bidding as a silent auction held at the spectacular Ellerman House and Contemporary Gallery in Cape Town where the pieces will be on display as graciously sponsored by owner and arts patron, Mr Paul Harris. ■



DR CHRISTINE GUNN-DANFORTH is the author of 'Transforming Culture' pictured right. For more info regarding the auction see: [www.jonahre.com](http://www.jonahre.com) or email [ariseauction@gmail.com](mailto:ariseauction@gmail.com)



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# BIBLICAL *Renaissance* ART FROM AFRICA

—by Dr Christine Gunn-Danforth



It's been said that the Renaissance "...could not have become a real movement involving a whole society until that society had a positive need to learn about the classical past." Today in the 21st Century, we are closer to First Century oral culture than at any time before. World wide, the media age has made us prefer to learn through story like the earliest church who portrayed their faith in Bible picture storyboards on the walls of the catacombs in 250AD.

This is how the testimony of the Christian faith was first communicated picturing the Bible stories. The Arise Auction has commissioned art pieces as commemorative pieces from world renowned artists to inspire a new Biblical Renaissance from

Africa. The pieces will bring a message through Biblical storytelling art for the global Church and for society from Africa. Two such artists commissioned include Stellenbosch based painter and sculptor, Portchie and American painter, Hyatt Moore.

### Is Portchie your birth name?

No. Actually it dates back to high school where as soon as it became known that I came from a family of vegetable growers and merchants, I was nick-named 'Portuguese' later shortened to Portchie.

### Did you intend a career in art?

I drew pictures from early on but never thought of it as a profession. I first worked



The Church and clock (1800 x 585). Christian themes often feature in Portchie's art

Hyatt Moore adding the finishing touches to 'Her Eyes on The Cross'. You will notice the cross in her pupils. This piece is being auctioned at the Arise Auction.



in business as a transport economist and then transitioned into art at age 27. Now I travel extensively and gather universal story themes and paint with images that celebrate life.

**The white-steepled church is a characteristic image in many of your paintings. How far back does your connection with the church go?**

I was raised in the church but it was only when I was 16 that my faith became part of me. In university I went on missions trips to build churches in the Transkei that I now often depict in my paintings. The painting of people bringing their chickens to the church is my reflection on giving from the heart. Each day I reflect on its message as it speaks about how we must bring our gift to the church. It is more



Above: Portchie's latest piece, to be auctioned at the Arise Auction. Above left: a bronze sculpture by Portchie

**Your commissioned auction painting features a fence made up of crosses. What is the significance of this addition?**

The fence is made up of poles with crosses that envelop the boy and the gift he is bringing. As I painted this soon after Easter, this addi-

**“At certain times I find myself in different roles in the painting – I am the person in the church; I am the giver and at times the receiver of the gift.” - Portchie**

tion resonates with the reason for the boy's gift - the significance of the Cross that has out given us all and from which flows our gratitude in giving sacrificially.

than bringing finances which is often a Western perception of giving. It is rather the gift that costs you personally. I think of the Biblical story of the widow giving her last coin to the Temple and the sacrifice of Jesus, the Son as the greatest gift God gave us. The image of the boy giving one of his three chickens is impactful because he likely knows them each by name.

**Is your art a form of story telling?**

Painting is a story without words – you create your own words »



Self portrait - Portchie



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and because of that everyone adds their words until the story becomes their own. I find myself at different times in different roles in the painting – at times I am the person sitting in the church at other times I am the giver and also at times the receiver of the gift.

## Hyatt, You're an internationally recognised artist, how did you start out?

I began painting in 1998 when, waiting at a stop light, I saw a painting and thought to myself "I can do that." I was still with Wycliffe Bible Translators USA, a 32 year-career with five years as president.

He became a composite of all the colours on the brush as I walked to and fro completing the painting. This in itself has a message of incredible meaning that adds to this painting's story which I often share with audiences at speaking engagements.

## What inspires you to paint?

I paint many things but I love painting people as God's highest creation. My paintings of ethnic people introduce the viewer to another world that they might not otherwise know or appreciate. Many are those with whom I had contact with while serving with Wycliffe. Among my latest are some monumental faces beginning with 'Her



Hyatt Moore  
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## Is painting a form of storytelling with a message?

Actually, it's the moment that a painting captures. The larger story might be something immediately obvious or need explaining. Most viewers see these paintings as people of interest and possibly beauty and dignity. Christians will see that and more - as individuals representing people of high value and for whom God also cares. At least I'm grateful when the paintings convey that message.

**"I love painting people as God's highest creation. My paintings of ethnic people introduce the viewer to another world that they might not otherwise know." - Hyatt Moore**

## Tell us about your unique rendition of Da Vinci's Last Supper - 'The Last Supper with Twelve Tribes'.

This was a painting I did as a mural for a backdrop at a booth displaying art for my wife. It was as I walked back and forth between painting the twelve tribal people that I added the colour to Jesus' face and

Eyes on the Cross'. It's a 6ft by 8ft oil painting depicting a young girl from Cameroon with her eyes fixed on the Cross as visible in her pupils.

This piece (featured on the opening page before) is being auctioned at the Arise Auction and is one that I feel has significant depth. Paintings are like poetry, with meaning at multiple levels.

## We invite the JOY! readers and Christian businesses to participate in the auction process and to find out more about the art pieces...

The art in this article are available for bidding and will benefit compassion ministries in Africa and Arts initiatives in the global Church. Portchie is also printing 50 signed canvas prints of the original available to readers for purchase at R2 500 ex postage. To learn more please go to [www.jonahre.com](http://www.jonahre.com).

The Last Supper with Twelve Tribes: Hyatt Moore

