

# Using Art in Sunday Worship

Eileen Gurak

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Yale Divinity Library

New Haven, Connecticut



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## **Devotional Art**

The purpose of devotional art is to inspire and foster private or personal piety. Most of the pictures and statues familiar to us fall into this category. Works of devotional art are important to our spiritual life. Because of its personal nature, devotional art does not lend itself well to liturgy's communal character in the western church.

## **Educational Art**

The purpose of education art is to teach about the life of Christ and Church doctrine. Much of the art of the Middle Ages is educational art as well as devotional art. Though many of these art works were used in the liturgy, their purpose was to teach. The murals and stained glass windows were the Bible for the believer who could not read. Educational art continues to have an important place in our textbooks and classrooms. This is not considered liturgical art because it is not the purpose of liturgy to educate people. Liturgy is designed to help people experience the mystery of Christ present among his people.

## **Prophetic Art**

This art form makes a person uncomfortable. It points a finger at a situation that should be changed or should not be forgotten. Prophetic art is indispensable in challenging the believer but cannot be considered liturgical art. Though at times the worship environment may have a stark and upsetting feel similar to prophetic art, it must not draw attention to its individual message.

## **Liturgical Art**

Liturgical art is art at the service of the liturgy. It is not art for art's sake and doesn't call attention to itself. Liturgical art's purpose is to enhance and give dignity to the ritual and movement. This art helps to immerse the community into the Paschal Mystery, the dying and rising of Jesus. It creates an environment that helps everyone experience the liturgical season—be it the seriousness of Lent or the exuberance of Easter.

Liturgical art appeals to the senses! We taste it, we smell it, we see it, we feel it, we hear it. Liturgical art takes the everyday things of life—bread, wine, eating, drinking, table, water, bathing, oil, book, candle, light, darkness, clothing, and people—and transforms them to speak of the profound. Liturgical art lives in the tension between a sense of mystery and awe and objects/actions that are commonplace. An object/action should not be so commonplace that the sense of awe is missing, nor should its awesomeness be so strong that its everyday nature is lost.