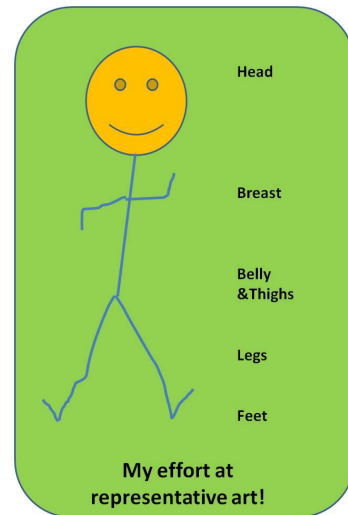


January 25th, 2010

Dear Friends

When it comes to visual art, I am one of those, 'what is it supposed to be?' interpreters with some disdain for the 'ooh – aah – isn't it surreal' variety, though I may be on the verge of repentance!

Lee Hall's play, *The Pitman Painters* is set in Northumberland and delivered in broadest incomprehensible 'Ant & Dec' accent. The narrative tracks the learning experience of six miners, who under the patronage of a Trade Union, decide to study art appreciation as a means of self-improvement during the 1930's. Beyond being very funny, I was left with the odd *lachrymal effusion*, since the circumstance was closer to my life's journey than I had imagined. Had my Dad not studied art in that same period, my family might never have escaped the poverty trap; Had the good Lord not directed our paths to another continent, I might still be a Geordie. Art has changed the direction of my life too!



The gist of the comedy revolved around conflicts that arise from interpreting art with regard to the intent of the artist ('*wat z e tryin to sey?*'), associations with reality ('*wat iz it man?*'), interpretation ('*aah think it sez summat*'), and the personal impression on the viewer ('*am rhyt choaked*'). Not to speak of the value placed on the work, the reputation of the artist and the context of its display. Curiously, these tensions are similar to those interpreting biblical inspiration!

Roger Scruton, in describing the purpose of arts education suggests that our exposure to these offerings help develop an emotional tool box responsive to situations that call us to answer the question, 'how should I feel'? Given our belief that emotion is unreliable, education in this regard is all the more important. Is it time for art studio evangelism?

On further reflection it occurred to me that our standard response to prophetic art is often limited to the representative variety, and that the full range of artistic interpretation might help us in our work

Daniel 2:45-47 (MsgB)
"The great God has let the king know what will happen in the years to come. This is an accurate telling of the dream, and the interpretation is also accurate."

[46] When Daniel finished, King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face in awe before Daniel. He ordered the offering of sacrifices and burning of incense in Daniel's honour. [47] He said to Daniel, "Your God is beyond question the God of all gods, the Master of all kings. And he solves all mysteries, I know, because you've solved this mystery."

beyond, "*Here is an image of a king, his head is made of Gold, this represents Neb and the Babylonian era, Dan was very clever interpreting this dream*", and so on.

Rarely do we evaluate our emotion in the face of this imagined sculpture. How do we really feel about paying homage to powerful men, how do we respond to the seduction of gold, how intimidated are we by the crowd, big time? What do I do when the hots become seven times hotter? What emotions mark the beast? Who is with me? Am I aware of an illusory presence like unto 'the son of God'?

Aah Dow – ant No-ah! How iz that then? It all depend on ow yon luk at it man.

It is said that people do not remember what you say, they remember how you made them feel!

For this reason we thank you again for your re-affirmed decision to be an agent of the comforter, bringing bright colour, hope and meaning in contrast to shades of sultry fear and despair. Judgement is called on the kingdom of steel and silicone.

Best regards

Victor