

Art as Theology, Andreas Andreopoulos, Equinox Pub, 2006 (ISBN 978-1-84553-171-3), vii + 179 pp., pb \$29.95

This is an engaging and stimulating book that comes from a deep place of reading and reflection. Andreopoulos draws together research interests in patristics, iconography, and liturgical art to explore the way in which art is theology.

In a historical perspective, the author argues that art lost its sacred character in the late Middle Ages and also demonstrates that the connection between art and religion is a very complex one shaped by a number of influences.

The book builds on this discussion to demonstrate that contemporary art has a place in a growing religious awareness and practice. In a postmodern world, art may well be a means by which some of the deeper realities of religion might be accessed.

The volume is scholarly and demands of the reader a certain amount of attention and patience. Perhaps it is understandable but nonetheless unfortunate that the volume did not carry with it some illustrative material. The reader's perceptions would have been enlarged through engagement with the visual as well as the text. However, this should not detract from the possibilities that this theological reflection offers in viewing art not only as an emotional experience but also as one which can construct the soul in its wholeness. Let the author have the final word:

A study of the development of art is a study on the development of consciousness, if this concept should include the conscious and well as the unconscious part of the self. Art is always defined by a paradoxical dichotomy, the world and the earth, the sacred and the profane, the eye and the other. The evolution of art marks the evolution of the *coincidentiae oppositorum* as it is understood and experienced personally and collectively. Art draws from the known and the unknown (or the suspected) at the same time, and it translates the ineffable mystery in to direct experience, the same kind of inexplicable experience one has in front of a great work of art. (p. 157)

Perhaps our RRT could ask its publisher for some resourcing of the reproduction of pictures as an exploration in to the nature of religion for a future edition.

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