

“The Role of Art in the Church”

The word “art” comes from a Latin word, “*ars*,” that means “skill” or “craft” or “craftsmanship.” So here is the way I would define art:

Art is the expression of a skill (whether it be a skill in literature, music, sculpture, dance, drawing/painting or photography) that results in something that is not just utilitarian or pragmatic but moves us more deeply into truth, beauty, wonder or awe.

That is a long (maybe overly complicated) definition, but basically art is the expression of a skill that’s goal is more than utilitarian. It attempts to highlight or celebrate truth / beauty / wonder / awe.

And what makes art Christian, is: **First, God is an artist.** He is The Creator Artist! He created and His creation reveals something about Him. It reveals His glory!

In other words, He didn’t just make the heavens (and the earth) to protect us from solar rays (and the seeming nothingness of outer space). God’s creation is Not just utilitarian — It is beautiful! It is filled with wonder/awe! It says something about His truth/glory!

The book of Job speaks to this. As you read the last chapters of Job, God is pointing to His artistry all over creation. God is speaking to Job about his life from nature. So my first way of getting at a Christian view of art is that God Himself is The Ultimate artist.

Second, I would say the Bible writers are artists. About three-fourths of the Bible is crafted in some way linguistically that is poetic or striking or unusual. This evidences some skill that is intended Not merely to communicate a raw fact, but to produce a certain kind of effect in us spiritually.

There are acrostics and parallels and metaphors in the Bible. And the writers gave artful attention to how they shaped their words. And we know that they did this under the inspiration of God.

Based on the first two points alone, we can say that “Christians have deeper and better foundations for art than most artists making art today.”

But I will give you a third point: **Paul says, “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God!”** (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Certainly, that must mean to take thought in everything you do, making an effort to craft it in such a way that it has an effect that opens eyes to see the glory of God!

This means that there is a way to create art... to take a photo... that is more than just utilitarian. The greater goal is to reveal something true/beautiful/wonderful about creation, and therefore something true/beautiful/wonderful about the Creator!

The end goal of the Christian photographer is to glorify God! To glorify God means to bring honor and greater respect to God’s name among men. Every other goal must be brought into subjection to this supreme objective.

Paul is only echoing what Jesus Himself said, *“Let your light so shine that men may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven.”*

In Jesus’ words, we see we are to take our lives... including our art/photography... and craft them in such a way so that when people look at them, they see something beyond a represented part of creation. They see something of The Creator!

God is the ultimate Creator Artist! And we are created in His image to reflect/display His glory! In this regard, as Christian artists, you are truth bearers, though your message is displayed through images of creation, your task is always to reflect something true/beautiful/wonderful about the Creator!

So my closing encouragement to you is to keep doing what you are doing! Keep making art... keep taking photos... being mindful that you are revealing with every frame something about God... you are worshipping Him as the Creator and reflecting the Glory of His truth and beauty!

Thank you, again, for the invitation to speak! Thank you for your gracious attention. I wish you every blessing as you continue to serve God through your craft of photography.

Grace & Peace to you, brothers and sisters in Christ!