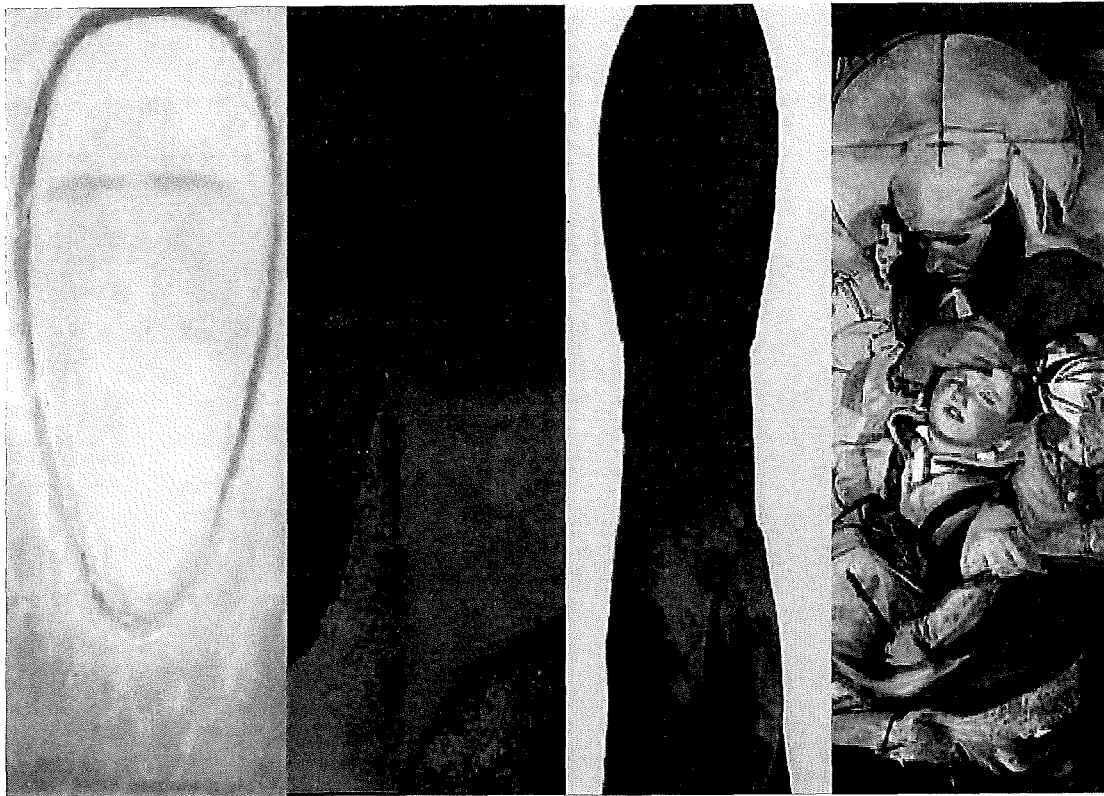
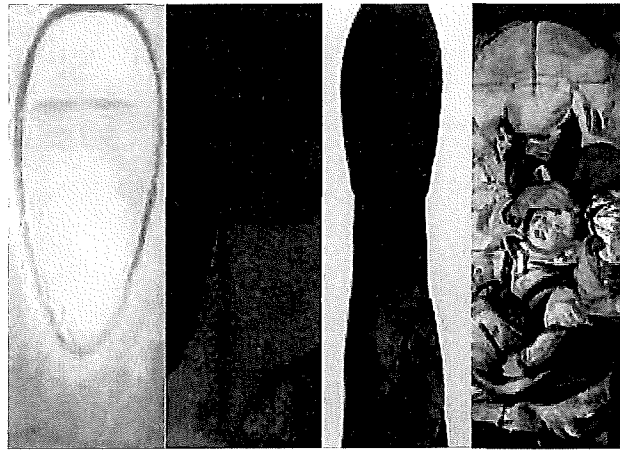


The Regis Collection



*Selected works from the
Regis College Art Collection*





Introduction

by Peter Larisey SJ

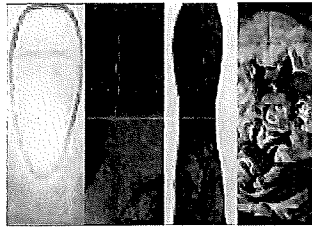
I would like to describe some of the changing religious culture that was the matrix of the Regis College Art Collection. This small group of paintings, sculptures, stained glass and prints, is one example of an attempt at negotiating the cultural gap between the Church and the modern world. For our purposes, let's agree that the "Modern World" begins with the French Revolution and for us, the primary meaning of Church is the tradition burdened Roman Catholic Church.

Regis College moved in 1976 from its suburban, lawn and tree surrounded site in what was then known as Willowdale, to downtown Toronto. This change of address was but the surface of important inner experiences, individual and communal. Behind and under and leading these surface moves were – and are – changes of our vision of ourselves, of who we are in relationship to God, to the world and to the Church. And especially to our Ignatian tradition.

Through scholarly analysis of Ignatius' original texts and fresh historical and cultural studies of his life and times, we were getting beyond the old clichés about Ignatius being a soldier and the Jesuits being an army. This ideology – very popular in the nineteenth century – was still very much operative in certain quarters of the Society and its public. Discovering in the 1960s the depths of Ignatius' mysticism and his vulnerability and his freedom, operated a liberation in us and created an openness to vision and to change. The Holy Spirit was preparing us for a deeper appreciation of that teaching of St. Ignatius that we should be able to find God in all things. In Service, in the great traditions of art and theology, yes. But also in the contemporary world, in Modern and contemporary cultures. For us this was a comprehensive awakening. We did not have the later vocabulary of our theologian Fr. Bernard Lonergan to name what was happening to us at the time, but we can now say that we were beginning the intellectual, moral and religious conversions that are, thank God, still ongoing.

In 1963 and again in 1966, at our Willowdale Campus on northern Bayview Avenue, Regis College sponsored two national ecumenical and inter-faith exhibitions called "Canadian Religious Art Today." The earliest works in our collection come from them. There was something special about these exhibitions: the artists submitted works that they themselves considered religious. Thus we discovered that though these artists may never go to a church or synagogue, they were religious in their own ways. We could say that we were finding God in Canadian Artists.

Since those beginnings, the collection has grown through gifts. The latest piece to enter our collection is *Jesus the Homeless* by sculptor Timothy Schmalz.



Thinking About the Artist: A Path to Understanding

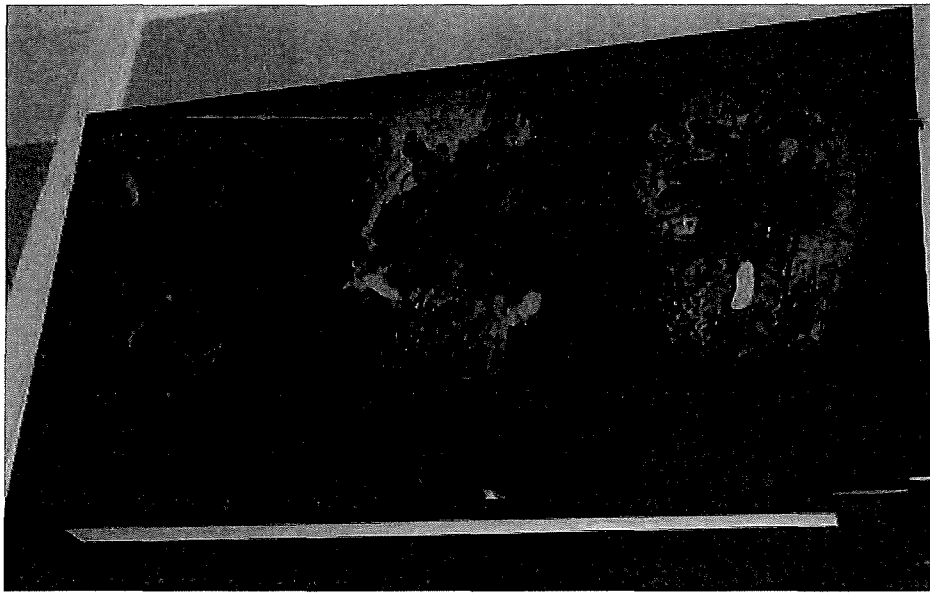
by Claude Meurehg

Art can be approached historically, of course, but also philosophically by asking questions such as, "what kind of knowledge can be gained through art?" or the more fundamental question, "what is art?" If one attempts to answer the first question, one will eventually come across the tension created by the age-old debate between rational knowledge and empirical knowledge. This attempt will also lead to the proposed solutions to this tension, which have fallen somewhere in the middle. For example, the knowledge derived from art being the insight achieved from contemplation rather than the truth attained through rational analysis, or the knowledge derived from practical experience - a perceived understanding of what art or even reality ought to be.

If one chooses to seek an answer to the second question instead, one will likely encounter the difficulties posed by attempting to define art as a general concept, a pursuit that requires the identification of the essential qualities that must necessarily be present in all works of art for them to be considered as art. However, since the early twentieth century these necessary essential qualities have become more and more difficult to pinpoint, because in the art world one can literally find any kind of object. The philosophical tension here oscillates between the attempts to find these essential qualities and the attempts to prove the impossibility to do so, given that some artworks may have similarities with other artworks, yet not with the greater majority. Some solutions to this conflict propose that the essential quality of works of art is to be found in their relationship with the art institutions, which implies that for an object to be considered as art it must be presented in the context of any of the institutions that make up the art world.

There are, as well, other alternatives to approach art beyond the art historical method and the philosophical lines of inquiry described above. An approach I would like to suggest - and one that may be well suited for engaging the Regis College Collection - focuses on the encounter with a work of art setting aside the considerations described above. It concentrates on one artwork at a time. It acknowledges its uniqueness and draws the attention to what the object elicits in me - the viewer. It suggests to imagine what would I have to do to produce that work: buy the materials, arrange a place to work on it, apply the colours or transform the materials. It attempts to imagine the bodily and intellectual efforts that I would have to make to produce such work, imagining myself actually performing these activities. This approach suggests reflecting on the sense and possible purpose of such gestures and trying to deduce the feelings or state of mind that must have prevailed at the time in order to produce such results. The approach seeks to develop empathy, the imagination, and to enhance individual perception by attempting to embody the perception of the artist - a most profound form of existential communication.

The Regis College Collection offers the opportunity to reflect on art as the individual and unique work of a person, the artist, and to go through the proposed exercise. The Collection offers the added benefit of the art historical framework and an understanding of the context in which these works were collected - the spiritual life.



Ritual Blue

Jack Shadbolt RCA

(Canadian, born in Essex, England. 1909-1998)

Acrylic on paper bonded originally to wood (now aluminum), 1965

Jack Shadbolt created this work at the request of Regis College. He had been asked to paint a work for our second Canadian Religious Art Today exhibition, a work that he himself considered to be religious. His *Ritual Blue* reminds this viewer of Bernini's 1652 sculpture, *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa*. Bernini uses sexual ecstasy as an image of the mystical experience Theresa had described in her writing. Similarly, Shadbolt pictures, in a more abstract way, the development of an erotic experience from an early stage on the left, through a middle panel of slightly more manifest order toward the fulfillment in the final, more clearly focussed phase on the right. For Shadbolt, the erotic ecstasy was used as an image of spiritual or religious ecstasy. Such an approach brings sex into the sacred where Jack thought it belonged. And it invites us, to use an Ignatian vocabulary, to find God in all things.

I first met Jack Shadbolt in 1973 and had later correspondence with him. His rejoicing in colour in many paintings – some of them huge – struck me as an aspect of celebrating sensuality that was both rich and innocent. I had similar thoughts about his personality. When asked to donate the work to Regis, his eager generosity fit very well with my earlier perceptions.

Peter Larisey SJ



Madonna and Child / Kurdish Refugees

Joan Dymianiw

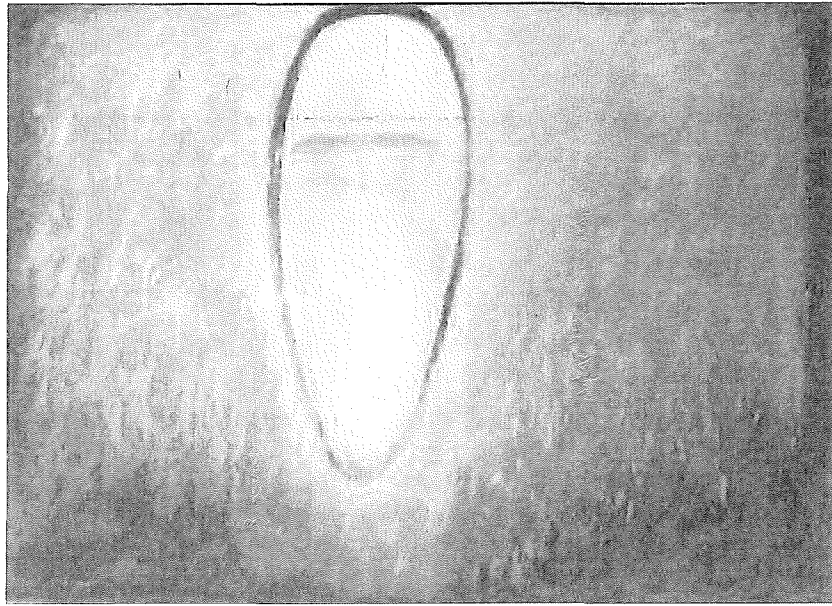
(Canadian, 1961)

Oil on Canvas, 1991

Joan Dymianiw was born in Edmonton, Alberta. After graduating in Visual Art from the University of Alberta, she came to Toronto to accept a scholarship to York University's Master of Fine Arts program, graduating in 1995 with a thesis entitled: "Mind the Gap".

Regis College had an exhibition of her work in 1993. Our painting, *Madonna and Child / Kurdish Refugees* was done in 1991. Joan Dymianiw in this work shows herself to be conscious of deep cultural memories of her Orthodox background, but also as an artist of her own time and milieu. Like her other works of this period, *Madonna and Child / Kurdish Refugees* shows her to be pained by then contemporary social issues. She was outraged at the ongoing destruction of life, especially as it affected children. Here, she has appropriated imagery from both old and then-recent sources: A small image of a traditional Byzantine icon and a photograph of a desperate Kurdish mother from a news magazine are transformed into the monumental *Madonna and Child / Kurdish Refugees*. There are three-sections in this work. On the right, the suffering Kurdish mother and child. In the centre is the empty space separating them from religion symbolized by the Icon of Mary and Jesus. Is there an anger in the work? Is the artist protesting the irrelevance of religion to their suffering? Perhaps this explains the white brush-strokes moving toward obliterating the icon. It is also expressed by the empty space between them. Thus the work challenges a theological community like Regis.

Peter Larisey SJ



Abstraction A
Lawren Stewart Harris RCA OSA
(Canadian 1885 - 1970)
Oil on Canvas, c. 1968-1969

Probably the best known artist in our collection, this work, *Abstraction A*, represents a big departure from his well known urban and wilderness landscapes. These works preoccupied him for the 26 years from his return from his art training in Berlin in 1908 until 1934. That's when he began to paint abstractions, and he (almost) never looked back.

Harris had been born into a strict form of protestantism, had several relatives and family members who were clergymen, and had become aware of Christian vocabulary and images of God. These he challenged in his early 20s, and soon became – and remained to the end of his life – a Theosophist. Their teachings had an influence on both Harris' landscapes and abstractions.

His abstractions have only recently begun to be valued. However, paintings from the very last years of his life, like our *Abstraction A*, are still under appreciated.

Throughout his landscape and earlier abstract periods, Harris had never pictured the sun itself. Lots of sun-rays, perhaps, many images of desire for light, even of straining for light. But in this last period of his works, he has moved from picturing the eros of, to the agape of, light, from desire to enjoyment, fulfilment. His last paintings show at times sun-like forms emitting light. What is special about our painting is that the source of light is a face. This contradicts his earlier firmly held opinion that one should never use anthropomorphisms when thinking or talking about God. I speculate that images from his earlier Christian experience and vocabulary came to his consciousness unbidden and in this painting were allowed to emerge unchallenged. Perhaps, as he approached death, he was having "intimations" (earlier, one of his favourite words) about God.

Peter Larisey SJ

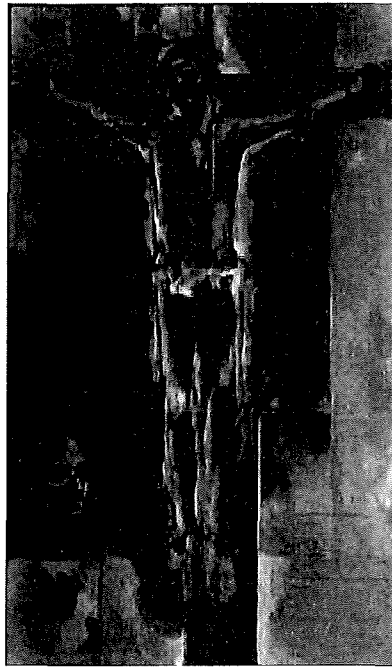


At 2 Hawthorn Gardens
Henri Boyer de la Giroday
Canadian, 1930 - 1992.
Oil on Canvas, 1966 - 1967

He was born in 1930 in Vancouver, Canada and died in 1992 while mountain climbing in northern Italy. Already a trained artist, he joined the Jesuits in 1956 and continued the usual studies program until in 1961 when he went to Italy to study art at the Academy in Florence. He began his study of theology at Regis College in 1964. He gradually discerned that his vocation was not within the Jesuit order, and left our college and the Jesuits in 1967. He returned to Italy, and since the early 1970s had been living and working near Verona with his wife Jandl and his daughter Sophie.

While still in the Society and in Toronto, Henri painted this urban landscape: *At 2 Hawthorne Gardens*. His later urban landscapes – the only ones I've seen were of Italian sites – were at times mystical, as if a city were being absorbed into light.

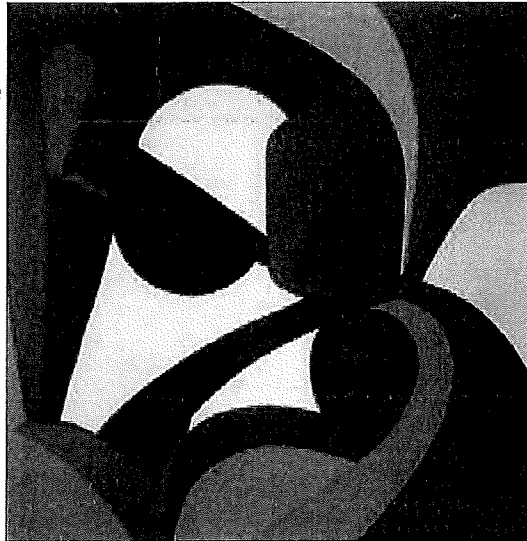
Peter Larisey SJ



Christ on the Cross
Henri Boyer de la Giroday
Canadian, 1930 - 1992.
Oil In canvas, c. 1969.

Henri's meditation on the Crucifixion was painted in around 1969. It reminds this viewer of the deep roots Henri had in Ignatian spirituality. Christ's crucified body glows. On the lower left, Henri has included a painted version of St. Ignatius's head, based on the death mask, which is full of life and a reminder of at least two things: the Ignatian tradition is still alive in our world, and it continues to make sense only in relationship to Christ Crucified. The text on the lower right of the painting is a poem / prayer of Jean Vanier which begins with lines from a prayer of St. Ignatius. It links Vanier and Ignatius yes, and affirms that Christ on the Cross is still at work in our time. This work's almost spaceless background is, perhaps, an echo of the spacelessness of Byzantine icons. Thanks to the anatomy of Christ's body and his head, it is a painting that could only have been done in Modern times.

Peter Larisey SJ



Infant at the Window

Michael Stoeber

(Canadian, 1958 -)

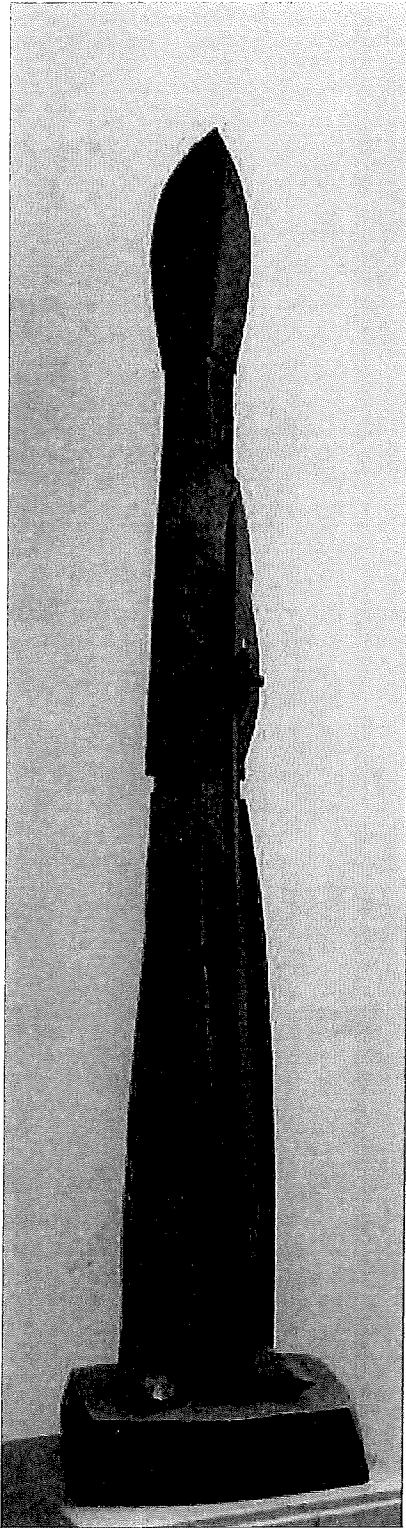
Acrylic on Canvas, (2009)

Michael Stoeber is Director of the Master of Theological Studies Program and Professor, Spirituality at Regis College.

My method of painting for my recent hard-edge abstractions is a type of process painting, where I introduce spontaneous colours, lines, and forms abstracted from real-world objects or from my imagination. Once I establish the pictorial basis, I seek to resolve the tension or complexity of the colours, tones, and shapes by continuously reworking the picture. Concepts enter into the painting only later in the process, once I see what is forming. This work is a by-product of my long-standing interest in spirituality and art therapy: the process allows subconscious energies, feelings, and ideas to surface for me in creative and spiritually integrative ways.

My recent work has constellated around themes in spirituality: "Yoga and Prayer" explores some of the dynamics of these spiritual practices; "Reflections of the Feminine" highlights impressions of feminine qualities and energies; "Sacred Animals" explores the mystery and healing magic of animal figures and other elements of nature; and "Infants and Children" is a series that images the mysterious wonder and playfulness of youth. This painting, "Infant at the Window", is one from this series.

Michael Stoeber



The Bishop

Yosef Drenters RCA

Born 1929, Poppel, Belgium;

Died 1983 Guelph, Ontario

Wood and scrap metal, 1962

The Bishop was exhibited in Regis College's first Canadian Religious Art Today exhibition in 1963, and was acquired by the College via a trade for a painting by Oscar Magnan SJ, a student of Regis and one of the directors of the exhibition. The image created from the scrap metal and the wood is of a Bishop who is solemn, yet of the earth, upright and dignified, and humble. In short, a bishop in harmony with the changes being contemplated and enacted at the second Vatican Council which opened in the year the sculpture was created.

Peter Larisey SJ



The Rescuer
Patricia Fulford RCA

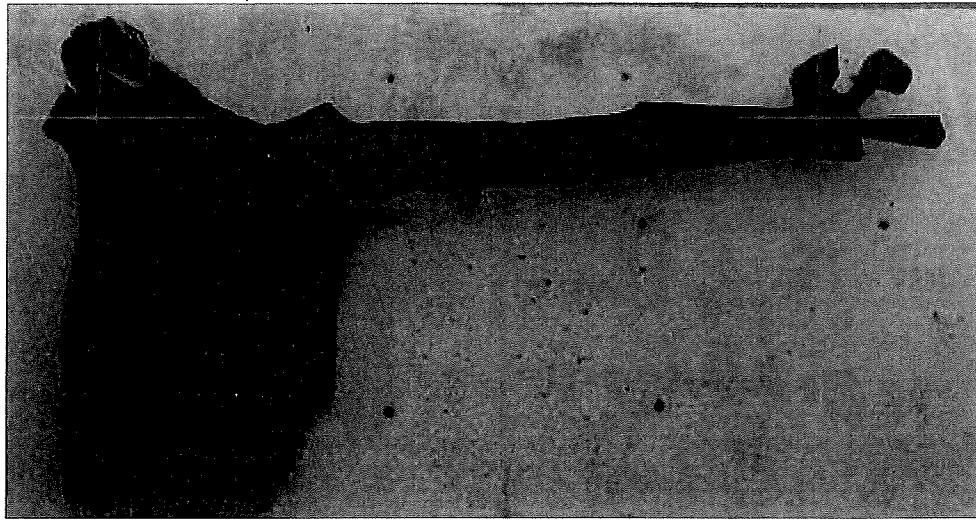
(Canadian, 1935 -)

Ciment-fondu and fibreglass, 1966

Patricia participated in both our Canadian Religious Art Today exhibitions. This work was in our second exhibition, which was opened in April, 1966. It represents a period in her sculpting career when she was moving from more academic and naturalistic forms toward abstraction. Her route was through the geometrization of natural forms. Her later, more abstract works were closer to pure geometry, with colours reduced to black and white.

Canada lost Patricia: she lived for a while in a kibbutz in Israel with her husband Ray Spiers, and they converted to Judaism and acquired new names: Reuven and Naomi Spiers. The last I heard, they lived on Saltspring Island in British Columbia. Judging by what is available on the internet, Naomi is still very interested in biblical subjects and has returned to a more naturalistic style.

Peter Larisey SJ



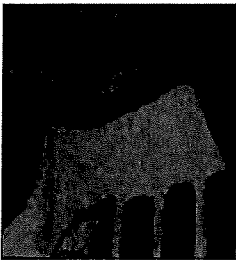
Song of the Burned Cities

Krystyna Sadowska RCA

Born: Lublin, Poland 1912; Died: Toronto, Canada 1990

Welded Steel, 1966

Krystyna was one of the most sensitive people I have ever met. The second world war had a devastating and lasting effect on her life. In 1944 in Warsaw, both her sisters were killed. She did experience times of happiness – expressed perhaps in the combination of forms and lively colours in our painting, *Abstraction of 1962*, at present in our Classroom B. But sadness was a frequent theme. Her flight from



Abstraction of 1962

her native Poland to escape first the Russians and then the Nazis forced her and her husband Konrad to flee to Hungary, then to France, then to Algiers ahead of the advancing Nazis, and then to war ravaged England. After the war, they returned to Brazil, where they had met before the war. From there, they came to Canada, to the village of Indian Harbour, Nova Scotia and finally, in 1953, to Toronto. She and Konrad taught at the Ontario College of Art until 1960, when Konrad died.

As an introduction to *Song of the Burned Cities*, I would like to read her poem, "Last Journey," which she gave to me in the 1970s or early 1980s.

Song of the Burned Cities is Krystyna's own title for this work. The well known Christian image of Christ crucified is combined with steel, one of the major and typical materials shaping our culture. But Krystyna enters into the strength and vulnerability of steel with a welder's tools and an artist's feelings. She has created a lasting image of suffering: Christ's suffering and the destroyed cities are burned black, to ashes. There are many aspects to this suffering. Her personal theology, expressed in her title, related this image to the suffering and destruction of World War II, of which she had such tragic and very personal experience.

Peter Larisey SJ



Jesus the Homeless

Timothy Schmalz

(Born 1969, Elmira, Ontario, Canada)

Bronze, 2012

I have known Timothy Schmalz since he was 18. He was already at work here in Toronto, mastering the skills needed to sculpt in clay and prepare his works for casting. He was also at work on his first commission, a sculpture of St. Theresa of Avila for the parish church in his home town. I realized immediately how strong a piece it was. He was able to create an image of a very human, even bulky woman who was experiencing one of her mystical visions. Both aspects were there in the work. There was already a deep spiritual vision at work in Tim. And he was already committed to being a sculptor of Christian art. Over the years he has achieved great success in this vocation. No piece is more successful than our Jesus the Homeless, at the front door of our college.

Its inspiration came to Tim while he was in Toronto installing one of his commissions. He saw a man sleeping on the sidewalk and immediately thought of Jesus. The result of his inspiration and hard work is an image that reveals the depth of knowledge of human anatomy. Here, Jesus body under the thick covering is hungry and vulnerable. As we contemplate it memories of reading of Mathew 25 come to mind. One of the effects of this work is to motivate us to do something serious to help homeless people directly, perhaps, but also to change the structures that prevent the poor from finding affordable housing. *Jesus the Homeless* is another challenge to a theological community like Regis College.

Peter Larisey SJ
