Calvary Adelaide Hospital Chapel artworks



Adelaide Hospital Hospitality Healing Stewardship Respect

Continuing the Mission of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary



Calvary Adelaide Hospital Chapel Leadlight Windows

Designers

Meliesa Judge Will Kuiper

Fabricators

Brenton Worrell Jan Worrell Debra Wrightson

Concept

The Windows form a triptych, reflecting the three images/themes that inspired Venerable Mary Potter as she discerned her personal calling, and God's desire for a new order in the Church devoted to care of the sick and the dying.

"I knew not one week what would follow the next and the wondrous plan gradually revealed itself. A new order to glorify God's Church, the model and spirit of which was Calvary. I knew no more – then the various features, one by one, gradually revealed. The Maternal Heart – "Honour the Heart of My Mother." The Precious Blood – "I have given you my Treasure, My Life." God's mercy. The Holy Spirit – "It is my will that you do this work." Autobiographical Notes, Mother Mary Potter (1847 – 1868)

Calvary Health Care Adelaide Director of Mission, Susan Holoubek, in conversation with artist, Meliesa Judge, explored images that would maintain fidelity to these three themes while resonating with a contemporary audience, with the widest possible inclusivity.

Jesus used metaphors and symbols from the daily life of the people of his time, to express his intimate understanding of the God he knew as a loving father. This leadlight design draws on images that are familiar to the people of our own place and time.

The Precious Blood

Historical depictions of the life-giving, divine essence or 'the precious blood' have included sacrificial lambs and mother pelicans feeding chicks from breast wounds. Some have shown women at the foot of the cross, collecting blood from Christ's pierced side in a chalice. The meaning and significance of such symbols can be inaccessible to many contemporary viewers.

We can, however, trace a scriptural correlate with the life-giving "blood and water" that flowed from the side of the crucified Christ, and the river of healing, life-giving waters that flow from the temple in Ezekial 47. Jesus declares himself the new temple in John 2:21, after identifying himself with Isaiah's life-giving spring in John 7:37, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink, for the Scripture says: Out of him shall flow rivers of living water."

Artist, Meliesa Judge's choice to depict this element as a river, catching the light in reds and golds, resonates with a renewed reverence for, and interdependence with, the natural world, a sensibility affirmed in Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical Laudato Si, which begins with a hymn of praise to God present in the whole of creation.

The Holy Spirit

The catechism of the Catholic Church declares that the Holy Spirit rules, sanctifies and animates creation. *"The Word of God and his Breath are at the origin of the being and life of every creature."*

The catechism also references the passage from Isaiah with which Jesus inaugurates the proclamation of the Good News:

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor. The Holy Spirit as bearer of grace, peace, hope and true freedom in Christ, has traditionally been depicted as a dove. Meliesa has chosen the image of a native South Australian bird, the glossy brown ibis, to represent this grace and freedom, and to honour the sacredness of our local environment. The fiery colours of the plumage reference the Holy Spirit's appearance as tongues of flame in the Acts of the Apostles; the blues recall the veils of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary.

The Maternal Heart

Mary Potter was deeply moved by meditating on the experience of Mary standing at the foot of the cross, powerless to relieve her son's suffering. She urged her Sisters to respond to their patients with a mother's tender care, recognising the person of Jesus in each one.

'Regarding the sister to whose charge the dying person has been given...she must be a mother to that soul...You are on Calvary now, watching and tending Our dear Lord in the person of your patient...' (Letter no. 10 to Mother Cecilia, Box No.3, 0022, G, Letter by Mary Potter to Mother Cecilia)

In designing the window that reflects this theme, Meliesa has chosen an image of maternal care that shows an infant cradled in a grandmother's lap, while a maternal figure reaches down tenderly to lift the child. The child rests a hand trustingly on the arm of each women. 15th century Florentine depictions of St Anne, Mary, Mother of Christ, and the infant Jesus, also captured two generations of holy women in compassionate and tender interaction with each other and with the Christ Child.

Calvary Adelaide Hospital Chapel Stations of the Cross

The Stations of the Cross are an important devotion in the Catholic Church. The 14 devotions or 'stations' focus on specific moments of Christ's final journey, (His *'via dolorosa'* or 'sorrowful way'), from condemnation under Pilate to his crucifixion and death. The Stations of the Cross are included in all Catholic chapels and churches. They were particularly significant to Venerable Mary Potter, whose meditation on the suffering of Christ and the last moments of His life, drew her to pray and care for the sick and the dying, and to establish a religious order with this specific mission and intent.

Artists

Adelaide artist, Meliesa Judge, has been running an independent sculpture studio and foundry for over 20 years, in partnership with her husband Will Kuiper. The two artists work closely together while allowing each other space for individual interpretation of an idea or theme.

Meliesa's sculptures are represented in many private collections around Australia, and in Italy, Germany, Ireland, England, and the USA. Meliesa is known for her sculptural interpretations of Mary Ward, Catherine McAuley and St Ignatius amongst other secular works. Meliesa created the original detailed sequence of concepts for the Stations of the Cross.

Will Kuiper is best known for his sculpture of AFL legend Malcolm Blight for Adelaide Oval. He is interested in the athleticism of the human body, expressed through his dynamic sports figures. His sculptures of birds, wolves and even giant spiders are popular in public parks around Adelaide. Will is responsible for the structural realisation of the complex sculptures and for many of the aesthetic decisions remaining true to concept. Kenny Monger is a specialist mould and model maker with a background in the British animation industry including the Wallace and Grommet films. Kenny assisted with mould making throughout the project and is responsible for the fabrication of the box-frames.

Context

Sculpture was understood to have immense power in the early Church, which was hungry to communicate with its congregation. Struggling with almost total illiteracy, and widespread superstition, sculpture provided a language that could communicate human emotion, tell stories, instruct, rebuke, intrigue and inspire. So effective was it, that Catholic Churches eventually were covered in carvings, inside and out, from the roof to the vault; they effectively became elaborate books of knowledge that could be read by the unschooled eye and still derive meaning. This singular medium of communication became recognizably and distinctively Catholic across Europe after the Reformation brought austerity to churches and sacred spaces.

We face a very different public today, highly literate but disconnected, overwhelmed by brief and fragmented information, moving too fast for contemplation, always distracted, addicted to the instant rewards of our digital age. Yet the human soul has not changed, it still lives the ancient slow roll of God's time in the pounding of our hearts through grief and hope, death and birth and ageing.

'A good artist by Christian standards is one who successfully animates the important moral and psychological truths which are in danger of losing their hold on us amid the distracted conditions of daily existence. Christian artists...find their ultimate purpose in calling forth appropriate ethical responses from us so that our eyes can train our hearts.' Alain de Botton, Religion for Atheists.

Intent

The Fourteen Stations of the Cross create a sacred narrative in the Catholic tradition for the Chapel of the Calvary Adelaide Hospital. The Stations are contemplative artworks with a contemporary interpretation, accessible to people of varied cultural and faith traditions.

Concept

Meliesa imagined the parallels between the events of Jesus' life, and experiences that must sometimes be navigated by our patients and their families.

The 14 Stations of the Cross are described through a focus on the hands of the protagonists, life-cast from the hands of real people. For the hands of Jesus, the artist drew on a model whose life experience encompasses both manual labour and care of the sick and the dying.

She has conceived each station as a tableau evocative of the traditional narrative, but which can also be read as a universal image of human suffering, struggle support, tenderness, yearning, abandonment, relinquishment or farewell.

The image of 'healing hands' has particular significance in health care, and in blessing rituals that the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary have shared with Calvary staff.

Materials and Mounting

The finished works are of cast bronze using the lost-wax process. The bronze is cast by the Artists in their Adelaide studio. The artists use best practice for bronze; recycled copper forms the basis of the bronze alloy. All major sculpting materials like clay and wax are recycled or repurposed after use.

Each of the bronze Stations is wall mounted in an Oak box frame, which creates a concentrated focal point; the images are read from the front, with glimpses of the content from the side. The Cross contained within each box frame uses Willow, which contrasts the texture of the Oak. The Willow is an unusual wood in that it darkens according to the light falling on it. This gives the impression of the Cross coming into and out of focus behind the narrative created by the hands.

Artist's Notes

"The concept came easily, like breathing. Breathe out, and then on the next breath, there it is, the outline of an idea. In some ways it had been with us for a long time. Fragments of past sculptures drift around our studio, hands and faces. Sometimes we rearrange them; two hands that were once part of a larger clay work, now resting together. The gesture becomes a phrase, a thought, a word; sign language.

The challenge was to bring the idea from concept through to resolution. I needed a measure of audacity to take up the powerful biblical narrative, anchored in its time and place, and then to strip it back to the simplest uncluttered sequence. I found clarity when I realised that each individual station articulates a single powerful emotion or human need. My first sketches have a word on each that accompanied the sculptures on their journey through the studios and informed all the subsequent aesthetic decisions as each work was moulded, honed in the wax, bronze cast and cut to fit the boxes. This is the first time that we have cast directly from life for a sculpture. I prefer to work in clay interpreting the form of my life models into the hand-modelled artefact before moulding and bronze casting. In this instance, however, the vivacity of real hands was essential to communicate the idea. The technical complexity of both the moulds and the bronzes was astonishingly challenging. This simple idea has demanded every level of the skills and ingenuity gained through our 25 years of sculpting, mould making and bronze casting.

I once had the opportunity to hold in my hand, a small bronze sculpture that was over 4,000 years old. It was an experience that affected me quite powerfully. If, as part of your reflection and contemplation on these Stations of the Cross, you are moved to touch them, you are most welcome." Meliesa Judge January 2020.

Acknowledgements

Fabricators:

Concept; Meliesa Judge.

Sculpture, moulds and structural design by Meliesa Judge and Will Kuiper.

Bronze cast by the artists at Liquid Metal studios.

Technical assistance Kevin Monger.

More information and images about the concept, the making and the casting of the Stations of the Cross please refer to http://www.liquidmetalstudios.com.au/Calvary.html

Donors:

Calvary North Adelaide Hospital and Hospice Auxiliary

Calvary Past Nurses Association

Text by Susan Holoubek and Meliesa Judge



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