

BOOK EXCERPT

ADAPTED FROM THE INTRODUCTION

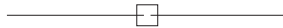


AUTHOR
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My decision to pursue the visual arts made sense. After all, I had “eyes to see,” considerable facility with a variety of media and a fertile imagination. But offsetting these talents were serious misgivings about the legitimacy of art as a vocational endeavor. The primary source of this doubt was the conservative Protestant community to which I belonged.

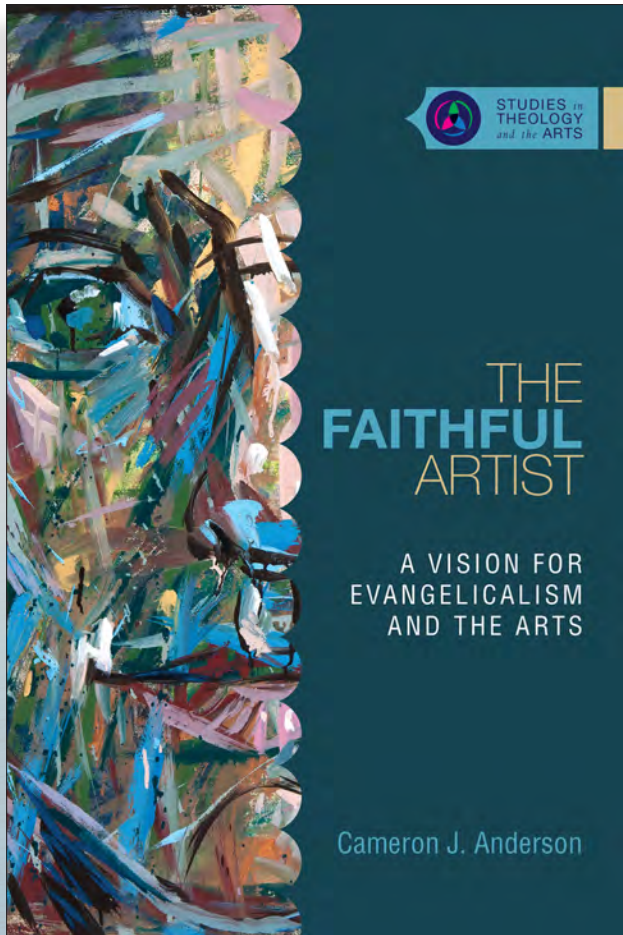
I remain grateful for this upbringing. Nonetheless, in the course of my own formation a number of evangelical attitudes and practices have left me uneasy, sometimes even angry or ashamed. I note my intimate and ongoing affiliation with American evangelicalism to highlight this fact: the postwar evangelical subculture to which I belonged, in combination with the art world that I sought to enter, presented nearly insurmountable barriers to my vocational pursuit of the visual arts.

I write fully persuaded that art, in its most exalted form, can be used by God to transform women and men to extend his common grace to the world and to lead the church to worship. I believe with equal conviction that the content and character of contemporary art could gain the gravitas that it seeks if the artists who produce it were able to discover or recover the deep things of God. Throughout history and in everything from monumental Gothic cathedrals to diminutive prayer chapels, from vividly colored Fra Angelico frescoes to sepia-toned Rembrandt etchings, this pair of possibilities *has* been realized in stunning ways. From time to time, instances of transcendence also surface in the contemporary secular arena.



Properly conceived, a vision for the visual arts wherein serious art and serious faith are woven into whole cloth is a glorious and contemporary possibility. But for this goal to be realized, the obstacles, conundrums and heartbreak that have kept too many Christians from embracing a biblically and theologically robust understanding of the visual arts must be not only identified but also overcome.





INTERMEDIATE >>>

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Drawing on his experiences as both a Christian and a practicing artist, Cameron J. Anderson explores the historical tension between faith and art.

The tension between Christianity and the arts is often real. But it also offers a false dichotomy. Many Christian artists think that they must choose between their faith and their artistic calling.

Tracing the relationship between evangelicalism and modern art in postwar America—two entities that often found themselves at odds with each other—Anderson raises several issues that confront artists. With skill, sensitivity and insight, he considers questions such as the role of our bodies and our senses in our experience of the arts, the relationship between text and image, the persistent dangers of idolatry, the possibility of pursuing God through an encounter with beauty, and more.

In this latest volume in IVP Academic's Studies in Theology and the Arts, Anderson's principal concern is how Christian artists can faithfully pursue their vocational calling in contemporary culture. Readers will find here not only an informed and thoughtful response, but also a vision that offers guidance and hope.



"Cam Anderson extends an intellectual welcome to readers who may feel that modern and contemporary art are an exclusive party, a private conversation for an artistic elite. . . . Anderson then clarifies for Christians why art still matters in the midst of tensions between traditional religious belief and modern aesthetic sensibility—issuing a compelling call for artists to rediscover their accountability and calling within the body of Christ, broken afresh for the life of the world."

—BRUCE HERMAN

Lothlórien Distinguished Chair in Fine Arts, Gordon College

"This illuminating book allows the double foci on faith and art to converge, introducing us to the worldview of the Ultimate Artist."

—LUCI SHAW

writer in residence, Regent College, author of *Thumbprint in the Clay*



CAMERON J. ANDERSON (MFA, Cranbrook Academy of Art) is an artist and the executive director of Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA). Prior to joining CIVA, he served on the staff of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for thirty years, most recently as the national director for graduate and faculty ministries. He lectures frequently on the arts, media, advertising and contemporary culture, and he coedited, with Sandra Bowden, *Faith and Vision: Twenty-Five Years of Christians in the Visual Arts*.