

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion presents



Paul Roorda:
**RITES &
REMEDIES**

March 12 - May 24, 2013

The Dadian Gallery

Paul Roorda: Rites & Remedies

Artist Statement:

By transforming found objects and discarded Bibles into sculpture and mixed media collage I investigate changing belief systems, the construction of knowledge and the practice of ritual in religion, science and medicine. The world of faith is tempered by scientific reason and supposedly science-based medicine is steeped in ritual and belief. We seek tangible remedies for ailing souls just as we grasp at ritualistic cures for the body.

I've always been interested in the tension associated with the questioning of traditions. While it continues to thrive, for many people, traditional religion is something for scrutiny and often faith is abandoned in skepticism. But this is frequently accompanied by ambivalence. Using fire, gold leaf, ashes and elements of discarded Bibles, some of the work transforms traditional Christian art by creating ceremonial vessels, reliquaries and icons which reflect a post-devotional, neo-liturgical approach to the disposal of aged and damaged sacred texts. Other art starts with the Bible and incorporates ritualistic processes such as creating tiny scrolls, burning paper or preparing wine to create various remedies. The work in this exhibition suggests a deterioration of certainty, both physical and spiritual, as well as our desperate attempts to heal, and failing that, memorialize.

Biography:

Paul Roorda is a Canadian artist who transforms found materials to create two-dimensional art, sculpture, and outdoor site-specific installations that examine the relationship between religion, medicine, science, and environmentalism. He exhibits his work regularly in public art galleries as well as academic and religious institutions, both in Canada and internationally. In Canada, Paul Roorda has had numerous solo exhibitions, including shows at the Ottawa City Hall Art Gallery, the Institute for Christian Studies, and Wilfrid Laurier University. He will be exhibiting new work at the Doug Adams Gallery in Berkeley, California, in 2014.

Paul Roorda has received numerous grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council. He has also been awarded many prizes for his art in juried exhibitions and was a finalist for Australia's Blake Prize. His work is found in private and public collections including the Donovan Collection at the University of Toronto. Paul Roorda was the Artist in Residence for the City of Kitchener, Ontario, in 2007 and completed a residency at GlogauAIR in Berlin in 2012. He has also been the subject of an episode of "The Artist's Life", a popular artist profile series which aired on Bravo TV. His work can be seen at www.paulroorda.com.

Works in Exhibition

Penny Candy Vintage candy machine, Bible pages, gelatin capsules, 2012

Necessary Qualifications of a First Aider Blood, crushed stone, rust, gold leaf, beeswax and vintage book pages on paper, 2008

The Dead Christ and Four Bearers Blood, crushed stone, rust, gold leaf, beeswax and vintage book pages on paper, 2008

Death is not to be assumed Blood, crushed stone, rust, gold leaf, beeswax and vintage book pages on paper 2008

Reliquary Altered Bible and ashes, with antique lectern, 2012

Remembering the Book VIII Altered Bible, with ashes and egg yolk, 2012

Remembering the Book V Altered Bible, with ashes and egg yolk, 2012

Remembering the Book III Altered Bible, with ashes and egg yolk, 2012

Emergency Childbirth Blood, crushed stone, rust, gold leaf, beeswax and vintage book pages on paper, 2008

Antidote Bible pages, ashes and glass vials, 2006

Icon II Cut Bible pages, ashes and egg yolk, 2012

Icon I Cut Bible pages, 2012

Silent Word Burned bible pages, egg yolk, beeswax, gold leaf, 2011

Three Bearers Blood, crushed stone, rust, gold leaf, beeswax and vintage book pages on paper, 2008

Crown of Thorns and Capeline Bandage Blood, crushed stone, rust, gold leaf, beeswax and vintage book pages on paper, 2008

Crucified Christ with Bandages Blood, crushed stone, rust, gold leaf, beeswax and vintage book pages on paper, 2008

Once Daily Bible pages, gelatin capsules and antique bottles, 2005

A Miraculous Cure for the Deaf Hymnbook pages, gelatin capsules and antique bottle, 2006

Open Bible V (Stone Bookmark) Bible with embedded stone, 2007

Open Bible III (Ash Cross) Bible with nails, 2005

Open Bible IV (Nail Arch) Bible with nails, 2007

Small Miracle (Wine to Water) Vintage glass with wine distilled and purified into water, 2008

Seven (Heavenly/Deadly) Syringes with fermented dye extracted from Gideon Bibles, 2007

Once Daily (New Testament) Bible pages, gelatin capsules and antique bottles, 2005 (President's office)

Curator's Statement

Paul Roorda's sincerity is palpable in his work. True, his stated objective is to transform found materials to create art. True, he openly declares that his intention is to examine the relationship between religion, science and environmentalism. And while we are presented with works possessing witty titles and double entendres—in some cases startling, perhaps even alarming juxtapositions—we also come face to face with the raw potential of recycling, repurposing, even 'upcycling' the cast-offs of long vanished, anonymous users.

Another truth is revealed when we consider Roorda's handling of disposed, aged and damaged sacred texts: the care, concept, concern and sacramental action required in his visual alchemy. As he patiently deconstructs every worn Bible *one page at a time*, whether by burning or when meditatively rolling each tiny scroll of scripture and inserting it into its new gelatin capsule, we may, perhaps, come face-to-face with a new version of holiness, a precious Miracle Cure.

Here we see recasting, renewal, re-invention: Roorda's work has the capacity to lead disenchanted viewers to become intrepid seekers, paralleling the road many of us may travel on our faith journey. His creative elixirs harken back to the Renaissance, when pharmacists and artists belonged to the same guild. In the *Rites and Remedies* Paul Roorda has administered, he achieves his primary goal: to do no harm, but to create something fascinating, something challenging, but also something very, very beautiful.

Trudi Ludwig Johnson, Curator Dadian Gallery

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion is a program of Wesley Theological Seminary. The Center sponsors a variety of cultural events which explore the intersection of art and religion. All contributions are tax-deductible and gratefully accepted.

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HENRY LUCE III
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