

Towards an Understanding of the Spontaneous Prophetic Artist in the Pentecostal Church

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Abstract

Art is an enduring witness, and prophetic art is the visual form of prophecy. This article considers the role of the Holy Spirit in creative prophetic inspiration in Pentecostal liturgical and ecclesial settings. While theologians have addressed the changes of attitude toward the role of the arts in service to the Church, it has been with an emphasis on articulating the viewers' experience of art rather than the artmakers. By beginning to explore a distinctively Pentecostal pneumatological approach to divinely inspired unpremeditated and unrehearsed visual artmaking, this article contributes to Pentecostal aesthetics by articulating the emerging identity of the prophetic artist in Pentecostalism. Prophetic artists are predominately women. Women are pioneering visual arts as an integrated part of the great commission. Presented through an autoethnographical framework, this study draws on auto-hermeneutics, systematic self-observation, and interpretative phenomenological analysis to describe and interpret the phenomenon of spontaneous prophetic art in the Pentecostal worship sanctuary. By communicating the lived experience of the prophetic artist as an authentic in-context narrative, this article sets comparisons for further research study and serves as an accessible way of deepening the reader's understanding of spontaneous prophetic art experiences, bearing witness to the role of the Holy Spirit in arts ministries.

Introduction: Art is an enduring witness

Since the third century, Christians have produced pictorial depictions of their own sacred stories.¹ Sunquist writes that "The body of Christ has two basic purposes for its existence: worship and witness."² King argues that the arts contextualise worship and witness as a powerful resource provided by God.³ This article begins by highlighting key moments in the development of prophetic art, a relatively new expression of Christian art. Although no attempt will be made here to provide exhaustive historical analyses or to identify the array of Christian artistic expressions throughout the ages, this section will demonstrably affirm that Christian art is an enduring witness to the Gospel. There is a primordial intimacy between art

¹ Robin M. Jensen, "2014 NAPS Presidential Address: Compiling Narratives: The Visual Strategies of Early Christian Visual Art," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23, no. 1 (Spring, 2015): 1-26

² Scott W. Sunquist, *Understanding Christian Mission: Participation in Suffering and Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013) 281.

³ Roberta R. King, *Global Arts and Christian Witness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019)

and religion that has prevailed since Scripture records God first calling upon Bezalel and empowering him to do ‘all manner of artistic works’ for the temple.⁴ It is significant that an artist is the first person recorded as being filled with the Spirit of God.

Christian art, according to Efird and Gustafsson, rather than telling the viewer about God, gives the viewer an experience of God; a dialogic engagement with God where the artwork yields its meanings.⁵ Christian art seeks to transform the viewers’ perceptions and inspire a love for God, by granting knowledge of God and inviting relationship. Christian artwork is fully realised in the experience of the believer and while an unbeliever cannot have the identical experience, Efird and Gustafsson argue that Christian art seeks to break down an unbeliever’s barriers of rejection. The two-dimensional representation shifts from natural to spiritual.⁶ Christian art attempts to fully realise the shift from something where God is presented to where God is present.⁷ In exploring the experiential knowledge of the artist, for the purpose of identifying a contribution to the development of a distinctive Pentecostal artistic expression, this article focusses on the spontaneous prophetic artist and the role of the Holy Spirit in creative prophetic inspiration *in-situ* in Pentecostal worship.

1. Prophetic art as the visual form of prophecy

Prophetic art may be defined as the visual form of prophecy. In their attempt to find language to express what they do, prophetic artists use popular definitions such as, ‘Prophetic art carries a message from the heart of God.’ ‘Prophetic art is art created with God.’ ‘Prophetic art is a gift of blessing that encourages, strengthens, or comforts.’ In 2015 I travelled throughout Australia and interviewed twenty prophetic artists and each one had a connected but comparatively different definition. Some of these artists had been painting in their church worship services for more than ten years prior to Christendom neologising the ‘prophetic art’ label. The word ‘prophecy’ in the context of this label is defined as divinely inspired words to edify, exhort, and comfort an individual or the congregation.⁸ Prophetic exhortation is more than human encouragement, exhortation is a ministry of the Spirit that emboldens a believer with the wisdom and love of God, it is divine encouragement for people to imagine a new way of living.⁹ Wigglesworth phrases it as God “could take our words, and so fill them with divine power that we would speak only as the Spirit leads in prophetic utterances”.¹⁰ Prophetic words impart life.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical quotations use the *New King James Version*. Exodus 31:1-5 (NKJV) “And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills, to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts.”

⁵ David Efird, and Daniel Gustafsson, “Experiencing Christian Art,” *Religious Studies* 51, No. 3, 2015: 435-6.

⁶ Efird and Gustafsson, 436

⁷ Efird and Gustafsson, 438

⁸ 1 Corinthians 14:3.

⁹ J. Mark Hobson, “Fire in the Pulpit: Envisioning and Encouraging Prophetic Preaching,” (DMin thesis, Aquinas Institute of Theology, 2012), 15.

¹⁰ Smith Wigglesworth, “The Fullness of Spirit”, *Triumphs of Faith* (1929), 199.

Moore draws a simple definition from the Hebrew term for prophet, stating that above all, the prophet is a messenger.¹¹ However he argues that the prophetic word (*davar*) and vision (*khozeh*) are substantially more than a message communicated, and God's divine passion is implanted, infused, and formed in the prophet who expresses God in the highly emotive and symbolic language of the heart.¹² The artistic rhetoric and theatrical actions of the prophets of the Old Testament intended more than instruction to the mind, but rather the function was to transform the imagination and challenge the perception of the heart.¹³ Bammel argues Origen distinguishes between two kinds of prophecy, "a more general, divine, and greater kind imitating the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah" (1 Cor 12:8-10, 27-8), and a second kind according to which the prophets say, 'This is what you have in your heart' (1 Cor 14:24-5), meaning it is not foretelling the future but proclaiming and interpreting the will of God.¹⁴

This article does not refer to prophecy from the office of the prophet as a leadership function of the church, although artists and art ministers may stand in the role as a 'spokesperson for God' and be chosen by God to transmit information from the supernatural realm from a respected leadership role.¹⁵ However, this prophetic functioning in the role of the office of prophet as a specific sociological function in the church community is not a prerequisite of the prophetic artist as defined in this study.¹⁶ Instead prophetic functioning in the context of the prophetic artist refers to the gift of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit to equip every Christian as belonging to the priesthood of believers.¹⁷ Pak argues that Luther established a clear connection between the gift of prophecy and the practices of interpreting Scripture, and argued that all Christian believers have direct access to God and were called to interpret, proclaim, and apply Scripture.¹⁸ "Luther argued on the basis of I Corinthians 14 that one can know where the true Church is when it exhibits true prophesying."¹⁹

While no unanimous definition of spontaneous prophetic art exists in the literature, I define it as divinely inspired unpremeditated and unrehearsed artmaking. Spontaneity may include the recall of a spark of inspiration prior to the moment of painting, as opposed to a prior premediated planning where the subject or composition of the work is rehearsed and

¹¹ Rickie D. Moore, "The Prophetic Vocation: An Old Testament Profile and Contemporary Points of Relevance," Presented at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 2004, 3.

¹² Moore, 6.

¹³ Moore, 7.

¹⁴ C. P. Bammel, "Origen's Definitions of Prophecy and Gnosis," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 40, no. 2, 1989: 491.

¹⁵ Ephesians 4:1.

¹⁶ Roger Cotton, "The relationship of the New Testament prophetic ministry to the Old Testament," Presented at the 28th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 1999.

¹⁷ 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Cor 12:12; Eph 4:12.

¹⁸ G. Sujin Pak, "Rethinking Prophecy: The Functions of Prophecy in the Writings of Argula von Grumbach and Martin Luther," *Reformation & Renaissance review*, Vol 14, Issue 2, 2012: 163.

¹⁹ Pak, 163.

practised. In the spontaneous moment, the artist may create solely from their memory of existing skills and experiences with their art materials, or they may create from an unknown place beyond their current ability fully inspired by the Holy Spirit. Further delineations are explored in the interpretative phenomenological analysis of what constitutes spontaneous prophetic art and worship art, and how it may be further defined as presence-based creating in the spirit of excellence, prophesying hope and healing, and bringing glory to God.

Spontaneous prophetic art may be produced intuitively in public religious arenas or cultural spaces within liturgical and ecclesial functions. Fee refers to understanding the manifestations of the Spirit, such as prophecy either in ongoing prophetic ministry or as one spontaneous moment, as clearly operating in the setting of Christian worship.²⁰ To be clear, the *charismata* of the prophetic artist is a prophetic gift to the church. The functions of edification, exhortation, and comfort are for the church to receive. Creative prophetic ministries are formed upon principles expressed in Paul's words to the Corinthians, and Thessalonians, "*Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good*".²¹ However, the visual prophetic element within an artwork also brings the same 'mysteries' as publicly speaking in tongues, in that often art must be interpreted, and its meaning discerned.²²

2. The role of the arts in service to the church

While theologians have addressed the changes of attitude toward the role of the arts in service to the Church, it has been with an emphasis on articulating the viewers' experience of art rather than the artmakers. The experiential knowledge of the spontaneous prophetic artist is rarely documented. To understand the practical application of pneumatocentric artistic inspiration, we must draw from texts that examine the theoretical approaches to prophetic artists' inspiration. In this context, texts were examined to find where theological reflections on art and aesthetics diverge from experiential knowledge, and where they converge.

The discussion of a Pentecostal approach to aesthetics begins hundreds of years before the advent of Pentecostalism. It begins in the tension of the historical rift between the Church and the Arts that occurred post-Reformation.²³ The Church moved from its position as the patron of the arts, to becoming increasingly suspicious of artists.²⁴ While Calvin and Luther held conflicting views regarding the Church and the arts, with Calvin allowing anything not expressly forbidden and Luther allowing nothing not expressly approved, they both distanced art from liturgy. The rich artistic heritage of liturgical art and music were no longer sources

²⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 113.

²¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22.

²² Fee, 116, 118.

²³ Stephen Félix-Jäger, *Pentecostal Aesthetics: Theological Reflections in a Pentecostal Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 13.

²⁴ Robert J. Dwyer, "The Artist and the Church," *Worship*, vol. 32, no. 3, Feb. 1958: 123, 126.

for spiritual authority.²⁵ The distinctly anti-Catholic nature of the Protestant church resulted in suppression of any ceremonial expression of the arts as an aid to worship and anything in excess of the written word and sermon.²⁶

The reformed church, following Zwingli and Calvin, excluded images in paintings and sculpture from the churches on the grounds of idolatry, despite accepting that artistic skill was a God-given gift and permitting artisans to use their gifts in private life.²⁷ By separating art allowed in Church and art allowed in common life, the seeds were sown for division in the arts labelled as secular and sacred. Pentecostal thought had its roots in the negative Protestant suspicion that art and religious images derived from the sinful human imagination were idolatrous and could “teach nothing about Christian truth”.²⁸ Threads of this negativity persist in the ratio of Christian visual artists compared to Christian singers and musicians accepted into mainstream culture, while contemporary artists are significantly shaped by secular philosophies.²⁹

Revolutionary for its time at the dawn of the printing press, the series of woodcuts depicting scenes from the Book of Revelation, entitled *Apocalypse*, by artist Albrecht Dürer, established the hermeneutical responsibility of the artist.³⁰ These illustrations formed then, and continue to form now, a paratext by which the reader bases understanding of the text and established artists as exegetes of Biblical text.³¹ Low’s discussion of Dürer’s visual exegesis is significant as it establishes that art provides meaning for the reader as it conjures visual images in the reader’s mind. The artist is more than an illustrator; the artist is an active contributor in representing Biblical texts in context with theology and cultural understanding.³² Quoting Dubuisson, Low asserts that art defends a “whole set of aesthetic, individual, moral and spiritual values”.³³ O’Kane goes further to state that cultural, social, and religious contexts influence not only the artist and the viewer, but also future viewers throughout history. The responses of viewers in different cultures and times cannot be controlled by the patrons who traditionally influenced how a Biblical text was visually expressed.³⁴

²⁵ Spellman, Leslie, P. “Luther and the Arts,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.10 No.2., 1951: 166.

²⁶ Spellman, 175.

²⁷ Geraldine J. Wheeler, “Visual art, the Artist and Worship in the Reformed Tradition: A Theological Study”, (PhD thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2003), 9.

²⁸ Stephen Félix-Jäger, “Inspiration and Discernment in Pentecostal Aesthetics,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, 23, 2014: 92.

²⁹ Richard Shusterman, “Art and Religion.” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 42, no. 3 (2008): 3, 9.

³⁰ U-Wen Low, “Then I Saw: The Influence of Albrecht Dürer’s *Apocalypse* as Paratext.” *Religion and the Arts* Vol 23, Issue 4. 2019: 346.

³¹ Low, 344, 346.

³² Low, 346.

³³ Low, 347.

³⁴ Martin O’Kane, “The Artist as Reader of the Bible. Visual Exegesis and the Adoration of the Magi,” *Biblical Interpretation*, Vol 13, Issue 4, 2005: 339.

The responsibility of the Christian artist in visually interpreting the Scripture is far-reaching. Pentecostalism crosses global cultural and religious boundaries and sensitivity is required to the different meanings that different cultures ascribe to artistic expression.³⁵ In order not to engage in interpretation that is ascribed meaning only in a particular culture, the artist must be aware of expressions from one's own social imagination.³⁶ The artists' worldviews are inherent in their visual creation. Morgan writes of the 'sacred gaze' that invests meaning and spiritual significance in an image.³⁷ Where the concept of the 'sacred gaze' and the assertion that art defends spiritual values overlaps with culture-crossing human elements of an artwork, it can become difficult to discern where the Holy Spirit is at work and when the work is the artist's decorative imagination. Without the intervention of Holy Spirit inspiration, the artist has only their human capacities to draw from.

If the gift of prophecy is the call of every artist to interpret scripture, then it must also be employed to judge true teachings from false teachings.³⁸ Biblically inspired art, intrinsic to the artists' worldview, shapes the viewers' understanding of the written narrative. As a simplified example, generations of people began believing Eve ate an apple because Albrecht Dürer's 1504 engraving *'Adam and Eve'* depicted an apple tree.³⁹ Five hundred years later people approach artists' interpretation of texts in a more subjective manner, even so, Christians look to authoritative sources for enlightenment on theological truths. O'Kane proposes that art engaging in biblical subject matter accentuates the role of the artist as an active Bible reader and the viewer and their familiarity with the text are similarly involved in the process of interpretation.⁴⁰

The journey from text to translation is broad, however overlaying narrative with imagery not found in the text, such as depicting God with a long grey beard or three kings with gifts in a stable, may mean boundaries between subjective interpretation, contemporary accessibility, and false teaching are blurred. Artists make decisions about portraying a character, a story, or a message that may change a viewers' understanding. Such issues raise more questions. How are artists sensitive to the sociocultural distance between the original contexts and our current culture?⁴¹ Should Christians look for God's inspiration in all Christian artists' work, or should only those with hermeneutical foundations be considered? Is an apple an apple? What of iconic symbols not based in specific Biblical texts? A painting of feathers by a Christian artist

³⁵ Stephen Félix-Jäger, "Inspiration and Discernment in Pentecostal Aesthetics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol 23, 2014: 93.

³⁶ Félix-Jäger, 94.

³⁷ David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze, Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005), 3.

³⁸ Pak, 163.

³⁹ Vaughan Anthony Hart, "Navel Gazing: On Albrecht Dürer's Adam and Eve (1504)," *The International Journal of Arts Theory and History*, Vol 12, Issue 1, 2016: 2.

⁴⁰ Kane, 339.

⁴¹ Kevin John Navarro, "Becoming a complete worship leader." (DMin thesis, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1998), 111.

will have a different meaning than feathers used in non-Christian religious practices. The debate in cultural meaning-making led to Félix-Jäger asking if God's inspiration can be seen in works across faiths and "in all creation".⁴²

To err on the side of caution, the church historically delineated work by human hands as decorative and not inspirational. Once communication in arts and worship was inseparable, but worship became restricted to the sanctuary and a vocation in the arts was unfulfilled in religious terms. In a report on the Department of Worship and the Arts for the National Council of Churches in 1957, Marvin Halverson writes of the "fateful cleavage between reason and emotion" that consigned the arts to a decorative role.⁴³ He states that worship is the heart of the "church life crucible in which common symbols of communication arise", with an emphasis on worship involving common life.⁴⁴ Acknowledging the hostility between the two, the Department sought to acquaint ministers with the ignored heritage in art by forming a committee of theologians and art scholars. Their intention was to encourage churches to "make use of living artists in the building".⁴⁵

Writing in 1958, Robert Dwyer explains the artists' journey through centuries of service to the church. From the catacombs to the High Renaissance, the Church has been concerned that beautiful artistic genius be as accurate as language in its catechesis, however, post Reformation secularism infiltrated the work and the "language of liturgy had become an alien tongue".⁴⁶ Dwyer places the secularisation of the arts sealed by the end of the eighteenth century and the post-modern Church interest in art as scarcely more than illustrating Biblical teaching.⁴⁷ Religious art had become vulgarised, sentimental, and the height of ignominy. Nonetheless, he contends the breach between the Church and the artist can be bridged.⁴⁸ He proposed the Church was finally emerging from the Counter-Reformation and could offer artists the greater riches of inspiration.⁴⁹ In a time when "art is everybody's business", Dwyer contended it is unthinkable that the Church should fail where it succeeded through the centuries in seeing the artist as realising God's revelation of Himself.⁵⁰

In 1992, Patrick Sherry examines the relationship between divine and created beauty and contributes to the intellectualisation of inspiration, almost but not quite breaking free of the emphasis on doctrine and ethics. He does clarify the role of the Spirit as the "beautifier of

⁴² Félix-Jäger, 95.

⁴³ Marvin Halverson, "Department of Worship and the Arts", *The Christian Scholar*, Vol 40, no. 4, 1957: 345.

⁴⁴ Halverson, 346.

⁴⁵ Halverson, 348.

⁴⁶ Dwyer, 121-3.

⁴⁷ Dwyer, 122.

⁴⁸ Dwyer, 129.

⁴⁹ Dwyer, 130.

⁵⁰ Dwyer, 131.

creation".⁵¹ Sherry delineates beauty as objective through the Spirit's inspiration in the artists and subjective through the viewer's internal spiritual response, although the focus remains on God and the Spirit and not the artist.⁵² However, Sherry's ideas of inspiration as the divine enabling of humanity to mirror God's creativity further pave the way for artists to express divine nature. Inspiration in the biblical sense is almost always connected to inspired writings, whether connected to original scribing or to translating texts, however, it is the same Holy Spirit that inspires prophecy and creativity. Sherry suggests all inspiration is encompassed in the doctrine of Creation.⁵³

At the turn of the twenty-first century theologians had begun to urge the integration of theology, discipleship, artisanship, and leadership, especially in worship. Navarro proposed the time had come for worship leaders to be theologically sound.⁵⁴ Viladesau looks at limited theological questions within these three areas designated by the word "aesthetics" – imagination, beauty, and art. Referring to 'art', he communicates on theological insights that explain the factual involvement of religion with art and examines ways in which the arts serve as revelation on the nature of God. Viladesau makes the helpful distinction between the situation of the artist and the viewer. He states, "artists announce what is eternal in a unique manner" and presents that the aesthetic experience depends upon the viewer's interaction with the work, thus, the theological aesthetic appreciation is a mediation between the artist, the work, and the viewer.⁵⁵

Through a series of surveys and interviews, Robert Wuthnow contended that artistic activities and spiritual growth are integrated in a cultural shift toward religious experience and called for churches to allow artistic spiritual self-expression. Without delving deeply into an explanation of either spirituality or artistic practices, Wuthnow urges that engaging the arts theologically is imperative for future church leadership.⁵⁶ Despite this, concurrent authors Harold Best and Douglas Campbell continued to undermine the position of the arts in faith, reverting to the perspective of art being marginalized by the Church.⁵⁷ The lack of consensus on the role of contemporary Christian art and the relationship between secular and sacred works continued.

⁵¹ William M. Thompson, "Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics. By Sherry, Patrick. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992." *Horizons: The Journal of the College Theology Society*, Vol 20, Issue 2, 1993: 356.

⁵² David Brown, "Reviewed Work: *Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* by Patrick Sherry," *Literature and Theology* 7, no. 2 (1993): 210–11.

⁵³ Félix-Jäger, 88.

⁵⁴ Navarro, *Becoming a Complete Worship Leader*.

⁵⁵ Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁵⁶ Robert Wuthnow, *All in Sync: How Music and Art Are Revitalizing American Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

⁵⁷ Daniel A. Siedell, "Art and the practice of evangelical faith-A review essay," *Christian Scholar's Review*, Vol 34, Issue 1, 2004: 119-131.

Popular ministries as well as various denominational leaders and academics began to accept and promote visual artists in early 2000s as having a significant function within the liturgical and ecclesial roles. Rick Joyner, evangelical leader of MorningStar Ministries and prolific prophetic author, published views on *The Elijah List*⁵⁸ and had substantial global influence through his call that the Lord was “raising an army of artists”. He stated the artistic expression of worship was a powerful media influence effecting the direction of nations.⁵⁹ David Taylor, assistant professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, is known for pulling together popular culture and academia in Christian engagement with the arts. In a film interview produced by Taylor between Bono, Irish singer and activist, and Eugene Peterson, author of the Message Translation, Bono reinforces art as one of the remaining sources of reverence, saying the only way to approach God is through symbol. Despite the theological implications, Bono’s summary is insightful, “Art is essential, not decorative”. Taylor points to music makers, artists, sculptors, and painters as the way to make a cynical secular culture think about the truth of the gospel.⁶⁰

It is within popular literature that the experiential encounters of Christian artists are recorded. A handful of well-known international prophetic artists have documented their personal narratives of ‘painting with God’.⁶¹ The consensus in these books is that while theology carries restrictions and limitations in creative pursuits, the under-represented perspective is a tone of empowerment, encouragement, and invitation to reveal God’s creative nature in the visual arts. The limitations placed around the role of artists in traditional Protestant and Pentecostal churches in the last century is more than restriction in church involvement. It resulted in obstruction of the development of artistic imagination.⁶² Dyrness writes that Protestants (and subsequently Pentecostals) lost touch with their heritage and this estrangement between the Church and the arts had wide-ranging consequences. The lack of academic guidelines means these artists are working without “a clear theological or artistic consensus”.⁶³ The result is this element of Christianity is absent in many of today’s cultural endeavours, be it architecture, film, fine art, or the myriad of artistic pursuits on the internet.

⁵⁸ Rick Joyner, “The Holy Spirit and the Arts – Those Who Know the Creator will be the Most Creative People on the Planet”, https://www.elijahlist.com/words/display_word.html?ID=5889

⁵⁹ Rick Joyner, *The Holy Spirit and the Arts*, <https://publications.morningstarministries.org/holy-spirit-and-arts>

⁶⁰ Andrea Palpant Dilley, “The Matchmaker: If Church Leaders and Artists Have Been Estranged in Western Culture, then David Taylor is Helping to Lead them into a More Blissful Union”, *Christianity Today*, Vol 60, no 5, June 2016, 57.

⁶¹ Listed alphabetically: Allen Arnold, “*Waves of Creativity*”; Stephen Bennett, “*The Divine Artist*”; Grace Bailey, “*Painting with God*”; Theresa Dedmon, “*Born to Create*”, “*Cultivating Kingdom Creativity*”; Makoto Fujimura, “*Art + Faith – A Theology of Making*”; Wendy Manzo, “*40 Days hath November: Personal Prophetic Paintings*”; J. Scott McElroy, “*Finding Divine Inspiration*”; Philip Graham Ryken, “*Art for God’s Sake: A Call to Recover the Arts*”; “Luci Shaw, “*Breath for the Bones – Art, Imagination and Spirit*”; Gail B. Spooner, “*Art Sozo: Painting with God: Connecting to God’s Heart*”; Matt Tommey, “*Unlocking the Heart of the Artist*”, “*Creativity According to the Kingdom*”, “*Prophetic Art – A Practical Guide*”.

⁶² William A. Dyrness, *Visual Faith (Engaging Culture): Art, Theology, and Worship in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 11.

⁶³ Dyrness, 14.

Geraldine Wheeler in her dissertation on art and worship in the Reformed Churches ventured cautiously that the artists may contribute to the prophetic work of the gospel.⁶⁴ Commenting on the rise of media-saturated culture, she states the “development of images which reflect the values and promises of God as a counter to exploitative images may become a calling for artists, including graphic artists and photographers, who see the world with the eyes of faith”.⁶⁵ She undertook research with a case study of the role of visual artists in the Uniting Church in Brisbane to ascertain the importance of artists within a Protestant culture of worship and made contributions to understanding the function of visual art in the Church.⁶⁶

While the context of Wheeler’s research led to only a restricted insight to working under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it also revealed artists understanding their responsibilities concerning the “message” that dominates their work. Artists who expressed the narrative of visual art articulated that it is “not the artist’s job to retell the Biblical narrative” but to fulfil their calling by helping Christians relate to visual interpretations.⁶⁷ In discussing the hermeneutical process of engaging with and receiving visual art, she states:

There is the horizontal and human process of reception of a work of art in which the Holy Spirit also participates in the human interpretative processes, understanding and subsequently the transforming of human lives and human community.⁶⁸

Wheeler concludes with artists’ theological reflections that in corporate worship some desire the imagination response of meditating on the visual form while others want verbal interpretations.⁶⁹

3. The emerging identity of the prophetic artist

Recent scholars such as Edmund J. Rybarczyk and Steven Félix-Jäger address a Pentecostal perspective on artistic pursuit. Rybarczyk proposes aesthetics in the Pentecostal context must embrace the arts as an integral part of the Christian mission. He offers an exploratory introduction to the physicality of aesthetics, encouraging Christians to process the worship experience through the lens of their surrounding aesthetic space. Pentecostals accept “supernatural charismata” (that is, charismatic leaders and people capable of supernatural activities) yet overlook created beauty in their worldview that continues to divide the arts into secular and sacred.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Geraldine J. Wheeler, “Visual art, the Artist and Worship in the Reformed Tradition: A Theological Study” (PhD thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2003), 342.

⁶⁵ Wheeler, 307.

⁶⁶ Wheeler, 331.

⁶⁷ Wheeler, 333.

⁶⁸ Wheeler, 335.

⁶⁹ Wheeler, 339.

⁷⁰ Edmund J. Rybarczyk, “Pentecostalism, Human Nature, and Aesthetics,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* Vol 21, 2012: 253.

Félix-Jäger fully embraces the role of the Holy Spirit in visual arts and does not separate between secular and sacred topics. He does divide art into various functions to be assessed on whether it has fulfilled its purpose, saying “art that belongs in the church service is liturgical art” and should not be assessed out of context.⁷¹ He calls upon Pentecostals to understand the Spirit’s involvement in artists’ inspiration in order to engage and transform their culture of art.⁷² He expounds upon a theological outlook of the artistic process found in divine inspiration.⁷³ He quotes Sherry in defining inspiration as the “way in which God through His Spirit lets us share in His creativity”, looking to what extent the Holy Spirit inspires the artist.⁷⁴ Félix-Jäger encourages Christians to process the worship experience through imagination and the senses and bypass logic, stating Pentecostal expectancy undergirds their worship and the Pentecostal artists’ experiences of spirituality structure their inspiration.⁷⁵ He overlays the artworks with David Morgan’s “sacred gaze” as the Pentecostal worldview attributes it with spiritual significance.⁷⁶ Félix-Jäger draws heavily on Amos Yong’s assessment of discernment requiring “the cultivation of the pneumatological imagination” and allowing the Spirit to illuminate if the work is God-inspired.⁷⁷

Wheeler addresses the prophetic nature of visual artists in the worship sanctuary, stating visual images can give “prophetic comment upon the world” and may contribute to people’s understanding, however she argues more for the prophetic criticism from the viewpoint of interpretation of the work rather than the artists’ execution of the work under divine inspiration. Conversely, Stahl embraces the prophetic in art as a futuristic challenge to the culture of normal, using the term ‘prophetic’ in artmaking as a way of participating in acts of creation whilst “raging against the brokenness of our world”, with art acting as a “becoming like God” in the process of divine *poiesis*.⁷⁸ Quoting Robin Jensen, Stahl makes claims about art as a channel of transformation.⁷⁹ Stahl uses the term ‘prophetic’ as art prophetically foreshadowing the coming Kingdom, but restricts it to the prophetic witness of the gaze of ‘disability art’ disrupting the gaze of Church able-bodied idolatry.⁸⁰

Evangelist Wigglesworth claims prophetic utterances are all of no value unless they are perfectly covered with divine love.⁸¹ Clear indication exists in Old and New Testaments that God would have all people filled with divine power speaking prophetic utterance from a

⁷¹ Steven Félix-Jäger, *Pentecostal Aesthetics*, 191.

⁷² Félix-Jäger, 86.

⁷³ Félix-Jäger, vii.

⁷⁴ Félix-Jäger, 88, 89.

⁷⁵ Félix-Jäger, 91.

⁷⁶ Félix-Jäger, 94.

⁷⁷ Félix-Jäger, 101.

⁷⁸ Devan Stahl, “The Prophetic Challenge of Disability Art”, *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, Vol 39, no.2, 2019: 259.

⁷⁹ Stahl, 263.

⁸⁰ Stahl, 267.

⁸¹ Smith Wigglesworth, 199.

spiritual holy love-filled place.⁸² By definitive necessity, God's love is at the centre of the prophetic artists' identity when that identity is biblically assessed. As Pentecostalism articulates the religious encounter in experience, assessment of the transformative, prophetic, and spiritual nature of an artwork could be based in the experience of the artwork. This assessment raises questions, and the same process of discernment can be used to assess the prophetic artist. Does the art, the artist, and the artist's lifestyle draw someone into a more intimate relationship with God? Ideally the artist is seen in service to God, as a channel for His love, grace, and mercy, in accordance with His will.

Wenk argues that scholars of prophetic ministry who focus on prophecy and inspired speech tend to assume that the experience of inspiration is at the heart of the prophetic self-understanding, however he identifies that the real issues, as seen in Matthew's⁸³ critique of false prophets,⁸⁴ are not grounded in an encounter or experience with God's love, but rather with the prophet's 'fruit', the result of a lifestyle in obedience to God's will.⁸⁵ Identity is more closely aligned to discipleship than to the inspiration of the prophetic.⁸⁶

4. Prophetic artists are predominately women

It seems incongruous that while historically the work of women artists has been restricted, there is now an abundance of women painting prophetically both within church services and outside the church walls. Nochlin writes that the reason "why there have been no great women artists" in much of academic art history was the social, institutional, and educational structure that oppressed opportunities for women to participate and achieve artistic excellence, none of which had any specific connection with the quality of the art produced.⁸⁷ Despite the promotion of equality and emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and an advocate for women in ministry,⁸⁸ Pentecostalism as an institutional structure seems to be repeating the genderism of art history with the lack of women's ministry opportunities in reality.

The supposition of a double standard afforded to men and women in ministry is supported by the existence of the 'ideal-real' gap between Pentecostal idealistic empowerment of

⁸² Paul said, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy" (1 Corinthians 14:1). Moses said, "...Oh, that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" (Numbers 11:29).

⁸³ Matthew 7:15-23

⁸⁴ Matthias Wenk, "What is prophetic about prophecy? An attempt to Overcome the dichotomy in the scholarly discussion on Prophets and on prophecy in the New Testament," Presented at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Society for Pentecostal Studies, 2017, 12.

⁸⁵ Matthias Wenk, "What is Prophetic about Prophecies: Inspiration or Critical Memory?," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology*, Vol 26, Issue 2, 2017: 180, 190.

⁸⁶ Wenk, 14. 192.

⁸⁷ Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 176.

⁸⁸ Glenda Hepplewhite, "Developing a Model for Empowering Female Pentecostal Undergraduates: Alphacrucis College as a Case Study," (PhD Thesis, Alphacrucis College, 2021), 2.

women and its actual practice.⁸⁹ Clifton writes it is apparent almost universally that women are excluded from the structures of power in church.⁹⁰ The presumption is that Pentecostal communities provide equal opportunity for men and women, however, it is a predominately masculine culture and the unspoken 'rule' is that men lead and women are given a 'decorative role'.⁹¹ Opportunities to excel are not connected to the quality of leadership nor the outworking of ministry gifts.⁹² Therefore, it could be supposed that women prophetic artists would also face a hostile ministry environment.

Ironically, instead of facing hostility, women are pioneering visual arts and noticeably number the majority among prophetic and worship artists. In three prophetic artists' social media groups that I facilitate, two international groups are 94% and 88% women, and the Australian group is 92% women. This female:male ratio is mirrored in ten other groups led by three men and seven women, averaging 79% women internationally and 84% women in Australia.⁹³ These percentages represent 44,207 women worldwide who have identified themselves as prophetic artists in these groups. I propose the proliferation of women prophetic artists correlates to the 'decorative role' assigned to both art and women within the church. As far as I can ascertain, this 'decorative' theory is not supported in the literature, however, in practical experience and given the history of patriarchy in church, women have always served in undervalued although irreplaceable unofficial positions and welcomed to participate in non-ordained positions within ministry.⁹⁴

During the recent decade, the use of art and artists in marketplace ministry has been led by women. Communities of artists are stepping outside the doors of the church and taking Christ into places incompatible with attendance in a Sunday service, using the medium of art to fulfil the commission "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature".⁹⁵ Sanders

⁸⁹ Shane Clifton, "Empowering Pentecostal Women," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies*, Vol 12, Issue 2, 2009: 172.

⁹⁰ Clifton, 175.

⁹¹ Clifton, 176.

⁹² Hepplewhite, 3.

⁹³ Facebook Insights statistics 'The Prophetic Artist' (3,475 members 94% Female); 'Prophetic Art Australia' (463 m 92% F); 'Creative Prophetic Life' (290 m 88% F). Personal correspondence with group leaders and mentors, Matt Tommey 'Thriving Christian Artists' (21,272 m 85% F); Pamela Jones 'Fans of Prophetic Art' (2,227 m 78% F); Karen Harry 'Creative Realms Prophecy in Art' (801 m 86% F); Cheryl Colantonio Storey 'Glorious Church Prophetic Art' (287 m 75% F); Matthew Christopher Brown 'Spiritual Warfare Prophetic Arts' (278 m 72% F); Petra du Toit 'Prophetic Art South Africa' (1,638 m 84% F); Shelly Michelle 'Prophetic Art Studio' (10,871 m 81.4% F); Christopher W. Bennett 'Prophetic Art International' (1,373 m 75% F); Pei Lu Choong Angie 'Prophetic Creative Art & Healing room' (274 m); Thea Clarke 'Prophetic Art on Fire' (757 m 80.7% F); Rebekah Jones 'Prophetic Art for Jesus' (12,522 m 60% F); April Glarner 'Prophetic Art for Jesus' (681 m); Cecilia Möller 'Prophetic Art' (407 m); Theresa Dedmon 'Theresa Dedmon – Creative Community' (3,806 m)

⁹⁴ Karoline M. Lewis, *She: Five Keys to Unlock the Power of Women in Ministry*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), 13.

⁹⁵ Mark 16:15.

argues that the “stained glass windows had to leave the church”.⁹⁶ Leader of Kaleidoscope Community church, she has initiated several art-based ministries, aimed at generating missional conversations and connecting with the wider community through art.⁹⁷ Art with a “definitive purpose of engaging with people that would not enter a church”.⁹⁸ Theresa Dedmon, former head of Prophetic Arts at Bethel Church, writes she is called to bring creative arts into public view, not only to transform church life but to reach outside the church walls.⁹⁹ Her art and that of the Bethel team, leads people to healing and salvation. It is not art hanging on the church walls but art in doctors’ offices, cafes, and other public spaces. Dedmon trains Bible College students to prophesy through different creative expressions, including outreaches where artists prophetically draw images and present them to people outside the church.¹⁰⁰ In my own experience, the overwhelming majority of those in art worship teams and attending Prophetic Art Workshops are women, which means exploring my own role as a female spontaneous prophetic artist provides important insight into this highly gendered practice.

5. Auto-hermeneutic Phenomenology

To interpret and describe the phenomenon of spontaneous prophetic art in the Pentecostal worship sanctuary, I analysed my own work over 15-17 years in art worship ministry. An attempt was made to study insights into the foundation of divine inspiration of the artist as expressed in intuitive artmaking by revelatory spiritual knowledge. This contrasts with natural knowledge as gained by observation, experience, reason, logic, and testimony, and expressed in learned techniques of artmaking in a religious setting. In other words, an attempt was made to document the spontaneous inspired nature of prophetic artmaking. Auto-hermeneutics¹⁰¹, systematic self-observation¹⁰², and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)¹⁰³ provided a method to describe and understand the collection of my experiences and analysis of their meanings. My choice of this qualitative research method reflects on its usefulness for including subjective narrative portrayal and its ability to go beyond a standard thematic analysis in a single-case study.¹⁰⁴ The challenge was to explore in depth my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, during my discovery of the prophetic nature of art worship and use

⁹⁶ Michelle Sanders, *Art and Soul: Generating Missional Conversations with the Community through the Medium of Art*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stack, 2014), Kindle location 54.

⁹⁷ These include Art and Soul, Art for Justice, and Patmos Artist Network. Sanders, Kindle chapter 1.

⁹⁸ Sanders, Kindle chapter 2.

⁹⁹ Theresa Dedmon, *Born to Create: Stepping into your Supernatural Destiny*, (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2012), Kindle Intro.

¹⁰⁰ Dedmon, Kindle chapter 1.

¹⁰¹ Tim Gorichanaz, “Auto-hermeneutics: A phenomenological approach to information experience,” *Library & Information Science Research*, Volume 39, Issue 1, 2017: 1-7.

¹⁰² Deirdre Corby, Laurence Taggart, Wendy Cousins, People with intellectual disability and human science research: A systematic review of phenomenological studies using interviews for data collection, *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, Volume 47, 2015: 451-465.

¹⁰³ Angie Bartoli, “Every picture tells a story: Combining interpretative phenomenological analysis with visual research,” *Qualitative Social Work*, Vol 19, Issue 5-6, 2019: 1007-1021.

¹⁰⁴ Joanna M. Brocki, and Alison J. Wearden, “A Critical Evaluation of the Use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in Health Psychology,” *Psychology & Health*, Vol 21, no. 1, 2006: 88.

language easily comprehensible to those who have no preconception of the role of prophetic artist.

The research was designed as a retrospective critical analysis of data collected from several diverse sources: personal vignettes, weblogs and social media posts, memory data, self-observation, self-reflection, and external data provided as feedback and questions both in-person and online in publicly accessible social media commentary and in groups with private membership. Early in the era of painting in worship services at DaySpring Church, Castle Hill, Sydney, I began making notes after painting to submit to leadership. As leader of the art worship team, I instigated that each artist would make notation of their prophetic impression on the artwork and pass it to the speaker of the day as soon as possible after painting, this was often immediate and before the preaching began. Although no longer accessible, these notes became part of our collective learning, and the subsequent exchange of conversation forms an inextricable part of the reflective data in this study. The artists' notes later contributed to posts on the church website and afterwards, the social media site, for the congregation to follow the progression of the worship art. My own notes subsequently became social media posts through the years 2009-2014, and to this day my custom is to post an interpretation alongside any prophetic paintings. From between 400 and 450 paintings, the notes utilised in the research were narrowed to 288 pieces.

6. 6-step Identification of Themes across Data Sources

The data was analysed according to an adapted form of the 6-step principles of IPA devised by Smith et al.¹⁰⁵ Firstly, a detailed line-by-line analysis was undertaken from the collected data sources. Each painting and event were analysed individually and then coded thematically and according to data source and event type. Considering the data sources acknowledged the varying importance attributed to data types. Themes were further identified according to the notes: as descriptive; emotive; symbolic or iconic meaning; and contextual meaning. The next stage involved reviewing themes to note where: 1. Only the spirit of the experience was captured, 2. Intellectual meaning-making was employed, and 3. Connections between themes could be made. Themes were constructed with constant referral to the painted images in conjunction with the written text. Patterns and interrelation between themes were noted after the development of themes was completed.

My own perspective and background as a white, middle-class, female Pentecostal Christian pursuing an unconventional form of worship was noted. An attempt was made in the interpretative phase to acknowledge my own preconceptions and not work within a pre-existing theory,¹⁰⁶ however, as themes emerged the bias of my background and assumed

¹⁰⁵ J. A. Smith, M. H. Larkin, & P. Flowers, *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method, and research*, (London: SAGE, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ J. A. Smith, "Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, Vol 1, 2004: 45.
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knowledge in my notes became evident and had to be identified in the interpretation. Thus, the levels of analysis and conclusions drawn should not be generalised across global or diverse cultural communities. I also noted how my beliefs changed, evolved, and matured through the 15-year timeline, and the need to discern what was common with other prophetic artists within my collective knowledge of my community, and what was unique to my practice, became evident.

There were 288 paintings with notes on one or more elements: their process of creation, meanings, type of event, and context. See Appendices 1-4 for examples. Themes were consolidated until superordinate and subordinate clusters emerged. I attempted to retain a descriptive language for the themes to reduce mystery and increase understanding for the reader. The categories included: visual representation by number or colour, icons, symbols; Biblical illustration, paratext, teaching; location, timeless, landscape/seascape; event context; abstract, surrealism, ethereal; art defending values. Importantly, the works were sub-coded into spontaneous downloads with no preconceived image or thought; spontaneous download of image after a word or image prompt; spontaneous-in-the-moment interpretation; interpretation upon meditation; premediated or planned work; and commissioned personal prophetic works. The spontaneous and preconceived works were compared to identify correlations.

7. Autoethnographical framework

The written narrative account of the research is presented through an autoethnographical framework. My narratives focus on the meaning-making of the subjects, colours, numerical content, and symbolism within the artworks, and occasionally offer a personal story of the experience of creation. This section is necessarily written in a less academic and more informal style. Autoethnography is generally written to invite the reader into the writer's personal experience.¹⁰⁷ In this case, it is the art itself that invites the viewer into the spiritual encounter on the canvas.

The ethnographic culture of the worship art community is evident. Artists do not create in a vacuum. All art is built from previous experience, existing skills, and knowledge. Worship art and prophetic artworks are built from existing relationships, experiences, and from the artists' history with the Holy Spirit. Worship art is not a performance nor a solitary creation but a spiritual encounter that is the culmination of all that has gone before and what is happening on the stage in that moment. I am indebted to the team of worship musicians and singers in every venue where I have painted. My work as a prophetic worship artist is the process and product of being part of a corporate collective and supportive community brought together in the spiritual realm for brief moments.

¹⁰⁷ Tony E. Adams (Eds) et al., *Handbook of Autoethnography*, (Taylor & Francis, 2021) 140. See also review, Carolyn Ellis, "Autoethnography as Method," *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* Vol 32, no.2, Spring 2009: 361.

Culture results from human interactions with each other and therefore is inherently group-oriented and in the case of prophetic art culture, it is team centred.¹⁰⁸ In the autoethnographical accounts I chose to write about specific encounters to give the congregation insight and understanding of the cultural identity of those called to the artistic prophetic lifestyle.¹⁰⁹ The activity of prophetic art and its interpretation is left and right brained. At times the painting experience is intense and more immense than any language could express. Words do not do justice to the spiritual encounter and any articulated interpretation of the canvas image feels pitifully insignificant. Other times, the experience of painting is enchantingly loose and free, and the simplicity of the image and its explanation conceals the epiphany it represents. It is unpredictable.

8. Excerpt from Autoethnographical accounts

In 'Writing the Self into Research', Pace argues that autoethnography is a mode of storytelling that fractures the boundary between science and literature and when the story is sacrificed at the altar of traditional academic rigour it loses the qualities that made it a story.¹¹⁰ In 'A Question of Memory', Efrat argues that autoethnographies legitimize giving a voice to self-narrative as a bridge between art and social research.¹¹¹ In 'Bodies of/as Evidence in Autoethnography', Spry frames lived experience of autoethnography as the evidence of how we know what we know. While the personal or emotional element does not stand in for literary acumen, what constitutes knowledge, and the evidence of knowledge, must reside in critical reflection. Spry says, "But evidence, like experience, is not itself knowledge; like evidence, experience means nothing until it is interpreted".¹¹²

This medium of expression offers an original contribution to the field. In this light, I offer the following excerpt from autoethnographic writing based on my lived experience of creating and interpreting prophetic art. As well as publicly accessible on a personal website, this example and Appendix 1 - 4 are available on a ministry website where they are used as a mentoring tool for emerging prophetic artists.

8.1 The Joy of Surrender

Stepping onto the stage with the worship band, the adrenaline runs high. The music starts. People pile out of their seats and come to the front. It's true, the anointing is

¹⁰⁸ Heewon Change, *Autoethnography as method*. Vol. 1. Routledge, 2016. 17.

¹⁰⁹ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography: An Overview." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 36, no. 4 (138), 2011: 276.

¹¹⁰ Steven Pace, "Writing the self into research: Using grounded theory analytic strategies in autoethnography." *Journal of Writing and Writing Courses*, 2012. 3.

¹¹¹ Tamar Efrat. "A question of memory: Constructing an artist's screen memories through video." *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*. Order No. 3348349, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2009. 18.

¹¹² Tami Spry. "Bodies of/as Evidence in Autoethnography." *International Review of Qualitative Research* 1, no. 4 (2009): 603.

thicker at the front. I use a palette knife to smear blobs of colour onto the canvas directly from my paint pots. It is just me, God, and the canvas.

Breathe.

Click.

It's like stepping off a high-diving platform in a pin-drop, going straight into the water without a splash. No noise. No outside. In the zone, under the water, nothing else exists. I work fast with my hands, smooshing and blending the colours as they may, adding paint, no plan other than aware of ensuring there's a white bright light source somewhere in the mix, until the background is done, and the canvas is covered. End song one.

The discipline to disengage with your surroundings and trust cannot be taught. You must be yielded. The click is like a seat belt, you don't start a fast journey without a seat belt. He is your security. CLICK into Him. You must trust. How much are you willing to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit? Prophetic art is not taught by instruction but only by adventure. In Him, be free.

I step back from the canvas and look. Lord, what are you saying? It is pink. Pink is joy. Pink is harmony in the spirit realm. I smile. I never paint pink.

I feel — "This is the joy of a surrendered heart. Today I give you the strength to choose joy and stillness over static and the noise of the enemy."

The drum beats loud and fast; I beat blue paint onto the canvas with my fingertips. The darker blues become cities. I feel the evil despair around us emanating from cities, it is a rush of chattering clattering static noise of the enemy spreading fear and negativity in cities. I paint white through the pink swirl and the shape looks like Australia. I stop to capture the progress in a mobile phone photo, and I hear 'it's not the end yet, don't look at the darkness of now, joy will come from turning into the light'. The swirls become white into pink, light into joy. I paint white feathering, angels are ascending and descending, 'don't despair'.

I pick up the tiniest brush and make orange dots in the city. Orange means intimacy with the Holy Spirit. The dots are pockets of people in an intimate relationship with God. Yellow dots are the churches. *When you see evil around you, don't despair, there is good: look for it, draw it out of people, be His catalyst for good.*

Today I choose joy.



Figure 1: Wendy Manzo. *Joy of Surrender*. 2017, Acrylic on Canvas, 102cm x 91cm, Private Collection, Brisbane.

9. Deeper understanding of spontaneous prophetic art ministries

The prophetic artist speaks the language of God in images. Whether they speak to one individual, a congregation or country, or the Body of Christ overall, it remains a spiritual gift of blessing, 'following the way of love'¹¹³ and birthed in the heart of an artist who loves God and loves His people. The books of Zechariah and Jeremiah testify that there is no limit to the creativity in communications of the Holy Spirit.

The prophetic artist stands on the threshold between two realms allowing the spiritual realm to manifest on the canvas. When an artist creates a work with God, there is a supernatural element within the work that empowers others to experience an encounter. Prophetic art is not about imparting information, but transformation. In creating a piece of art, the prophetic artist aspires to make a space for the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. It is an invitation into a divine partnership. The impact of prophetic art can happen in an instant. It is Spirit-to-spirit communication that often does its life-transforming work before the viewer has connected with the art in their conscious mind. I have seen testimonies of prophetic art that has carried the anointing to heal, to save and set free, to redeem and restore, and to bring transformation and breakthrough.

¹¹³ 1 Corinthians 14:1-3.

The artist offers the work of their hands as worship, it is a pictorial love-letter, as it is love that stirs the anointing to prophesy, regardless of the form of prophetic delivery.¹¹⁴ Prophetic art often begins as worship art. Where prophetic art becomes complex in its definition is when it incorporates other Christian artistic forms. Prophetic art may also be worship art, visual praise, symbolic and iconic art, representational images, and historical biblical illustration. These other forms may or may not be prophetic, as the prophetic nature of the art is also within the perception of the viewer. Sometimes a piece of art may not seem prophetic to the artist, but it has a profound impact on someone else. At times there is no written or spoken interpretation of the art needed for the prophetic meaning to become evident, other times the artist may be called upon to give an interpretation. The artist is a 'messenger' and not an infallible oracle. God may speak with many perspectives and interpretations through the one piece of art. He prepares hearts to receive an image in a way that is relevant to them.

Prophetic art is more than an illustration of an icon or a Bible story, it carries the transformative resurrection power of Jesus. The same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in the artist.¹¹⁵ The prophetic artist then, by necessity, must live a life of transparency. Whatever is within the heart of the artist will come out on the canvas in that moment of meaning-making. It is unlike spoken words or the creation of prophetic song in that the art has a tangible visual life and visual image is stronger in memory than audio.¹¹⁶

It is not one or the other when it comes to the artist developing creatively and intellectually. It must always be both. Solomon sent for Hiram who was filled with wisdom, understanding and skill in working with bronze for the temple.¹¹⁷ The artist must practise and study to show themselves approved, there is no room for misrepresenting the Word in a prophetic artwork. *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*¹¹⁸ Pentecostalism emphasizes experience, however, the Spirit-filled artistic imagination funds both understanding and the prophetic calling.¹¹⁹ Pentecostalism is based on testimony and experiential spirituality.¹²⁰ Prophetic art is a spiritual experience and encounter that bypasses the structure of logic and it is firmly grounded in the Pentecostal expectancy of encounter that fortifies the worship experience, however, Holy Spirit inspiration will not contradict the Word of God.

At the heart of Pentecostal life is the theology of Spirit baptism that not only transforms individuals but transforms culture.¹²¹ The prophetic artist is called to be so aligned with the

¹¹⁴ Wigglesworth, 199.

¹¹⁵ Romans 8:11

¹¹⁶ Katie Linder, Greta Blosser, and Kris Cunigan, "Visual versus auditory learning and memory recall performance on short-term versus long-term tests," *Modern Psychological Studies*: Vol.15, No. 1, 2009: 42.

¹¹⁷ 1 Kings 7:13-51. Verse 14: "...and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning..."

¹¹⁸ 2 Timothy 2:15

¹¹⁹ Félix-Jäger, 91.

¹²⁰ Hepplewhite, 313.

¹²¹ Clifton, 179.

Father's heart that they bring His creative flow into people's lives and give them liberty to see how the Father has placed them in community to use what gifts He has placed in them. This is how the artist transforms culture, with Spirit empowered people released into their God-given destinies, capable of crossing race, class, and gender boundaries and unifying communities.¹²²

10. Conclusion

What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. (*I will paint with the spirit, and I will also paint with the understanding.*) Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified.' (1 Cor 14:15-17)

Much of this article has been about constructing the foundation for the scholarly conversation around spontaneous prophetic art and the (predominantly female) spontaneous prophetic artist. Whether the prophetic art is created spontaneously under inspiration in a worship setting, created with pre-thought and planning in a worship setting, or in a private art studio with no audience, the art carries the testimony of Jesus. *"For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy."*¹²³ The prophetic artist carries the same anointing — and responsibility — as a prophet and a worship leader; the same Holy Spirit inhabits the mantle of the creative expression of God. There is much more work to be done in establishing an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the creative prophetic inspiration that forms the identity of the prophetic artist.

This discussion communicates the concept of an emerging identity of the prophetic artist in Pentecostalism through the subjective experience of my own practice as a prophetic artist, and the authentic in-context narrative, which sets a comparison for further research study. These accounts serve as an accessible way of deepening our understanding of spontaneous prophetic art experiences, bearing witness to the role of the Holy Spirit in arts ministries.

¹²² Clifton, 179.

¹²³ Rev 19:10

Appendix 1: Covering

'Covering'

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.' Genesis 1:1-3

When I began this painting, I experienced a beautiful sensation of light, both of weightlessness and brilliance in the room. The colours were exquisitely soft and gentle. As I continued, the bottom of the painting turned to sea and an arc of glory came over the top of the painting. I immediately knew I was in Genesis.

As I prayed into this, the word 'Covering' came to me, with various meanings. When the Spirit hovered over the face of the waters, the Hebrew word is 'rachaph'. It means to move with a high degree of care, to brood as an eagle hen broods over her nest, to hover over with gentle vibrations that generate the energy necessary to bring order and life. The representation in the painting is the Spirit covering the earth in a protective manner when God calls forth "light".

What was barren and formless, the Spirit of God gives life to. From destruction, chaos, and darkness, He brings life, vitality, and light. The act of protective covering is a "creating activity".



'Covering'

Appendix 2: Room For You

'Room For You'

Painted: Final evening Encounter Conference DaySpring 16th March '19

This one will be hard to articulate.

I came onto stage with less than nothing, nothing being the normal state of surrender before painting in worship, but this night I was spent. It was the last night of an intense 4 days and nights in conference.

I asked Ashleigh Green, the worship singer beside me on the stage, "What's your word for tonight?" and she answered "Miracle". We laughed and agreed.

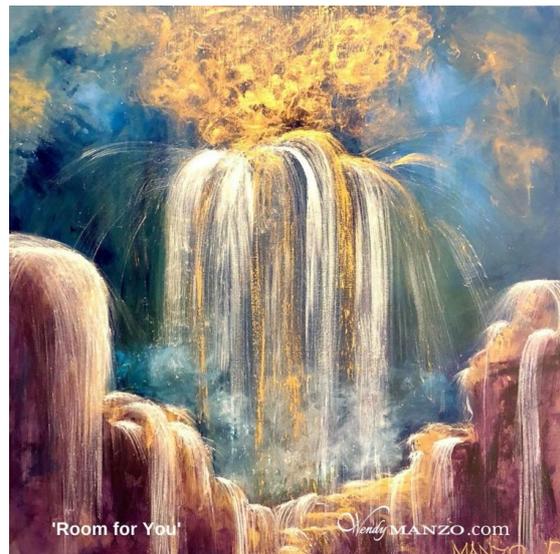
I just painted. I was lifted somewhere else, and just painted. I could not see what it was, until an overflow of some sort started to trickle over the edges. I felt in the distance there was a "Niagara Falls" but couldn't see it. I keep 'pulling' it through the centre of the painting. It must have looked odd to those watching. I was lost in worship. I painted a mist rising with the back of my hand, because the lights were drying the paint too quickly and the back of my hand was the only place that worked. I don't even know how I 'thought' that. The sounds of worship were intense. Holy ground. Then a gold glory cloud appeared on the canvas, and from it flowed light and life. It looked like a waterfall of sorts but not really. Like fireworks but not really. It just looked like LIGHT to me. An overflow of light into every space.

At one point I said, "Lord what is this?" And He answered, "You make room for Me and this is what I'll do". That undid me ... I don't think I stayed standing, and I know I cried from the sheer closeness of Him.

And that's all I can say, because I've got nothing ...



Wendy Manzo painting live on stage at Encounter Conference



'Room For You'

Appendix 3: We All Belong

'We All Belong'

Painted: 17 Dec '20 Empowered School of Evangelism

The living waters flood throughout humanity's foundations and feed the roots with divine love. We are all are formed in His image – we ALL belong to Jesus.

“And he must needs go through Samaria.” John 4:4

For his journey, Jesus did not need to go through Samaria, but for his mission, he did. He was taking the living word of God to 'the other' side, and met the first evangelist, the woman at the well.

The painting represents the living waters nurturing both 'sides' and a reminder that “we all belong”. When our heart knows that all are truly loved by Jesus, our language to 'the other' can be heard.

We live in a fallen divided world, but there is no division in Christ, we are all one, and the Father is not willing that any should perish but that ALL should come to repentance.



'We All Belong'

Appendix 4: Beneath the Crying Tree

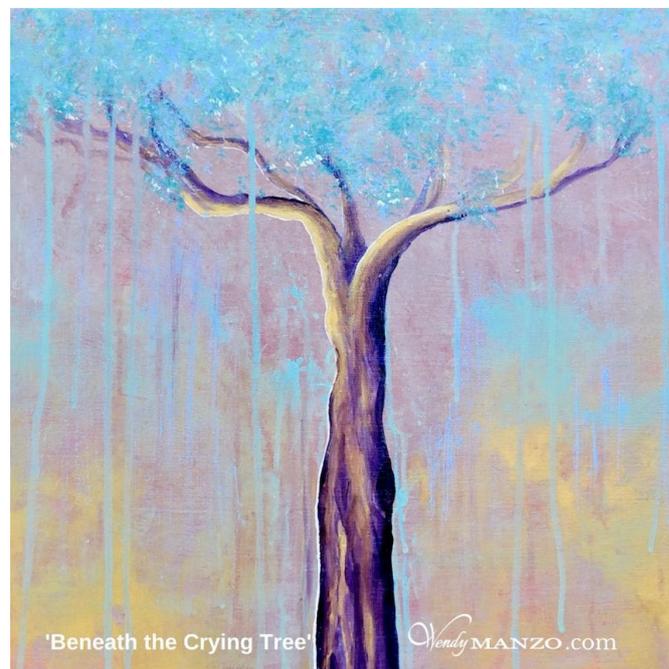
'Beneath the Crying Tree'

'The word of the LORD came to me saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree." Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it."' Jeremiah 1:11

As I painted a gentle mix of soft muted colours, the cloud across the top began to 'weep' and in a sudden flurry, the form of a beautiful tree appeared on the canvas. I didn't want to give this painting a sad name, especially as the tree is firmly grounded and standing strong, but there is no escaping the sorrows it has been through.

Gold on the tree and in the atmosphere represents His divine glory. The Lord gives you the ability to mine gold from your history of circumstances. Notice the glory beneath the tree. People will flourish around you because of the compassion you carry. This is an Almond Tree. It is a symbol of resurrection, because it is the awakener of Spring, its blossom is the first to flower, budding amidst barrenness. It is a 'watching' tree.

In music, the root note is played by the bass, carrying the chord, and creating the basis for harmony. It is beneath the sound, underpinning and establishing foundation. Beneath the crying tree is not a spatial place, but the bass note that holds the rhythm. The bass is rarely the celebrity, but it is the fundamental cornerstone. Beneath the crying tree is the essential thread holding it all together, the fabric upon which the threads are woven.



'Beneath the Crying Tree'