



# Art and the Church: A Fractious Embrace: Ecclesiastical Encounters with Contemporary Art

*Jonathan Koestlé-Cate*

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A vibrant critical exchange between contemporary art and Christianity is being increasingly prompted by an expanding programme of art installations and commissions for ecclesiastical spaces. Rather than 'religious art' reflecting Christian ideology, current practices frequently initiate projects that question the values and traditions of the host space, or present objects and events that challenge its visual conventions. In the light of these developments, this book asks what conditions are favourable to enhancing and expanding the possibilities of church-based art, and how can these conditions be addressed? What viable language or strategies can be formulated to understand and analyse art's role within the church? Focusing on concepts drawn from anthropology, comparative religion, art theory, theology and philosophy, this book formulates a lexicon of terms built around the notion of encounter in order to review the effective uses and experience of contemporary art in churches. The author concludes with the prognosis that art for the church has reached a critical and decisive phase in its history, testing the assumption that contemporary art should be a taken-for-granted element of modern church life. *Art and the Church: A Fractious Embrace* uniquely combines conceptual analysis, critical case studies and practical application in a rigorous and inventive manner, dealing specifically with contemporary art of the past twenty-five years, and the most recent developments in the church's policies for the arts.

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