

# Deborah Sokolove, artist and author



**Deborah Sokolove** is an artist, author, and liturgist. Her paintings combine elements from the icon tradition of the Eastern branches of Christianity; the elaborate knot work found in Celtic artifacts; the space-filling patterns of Islamic tiles; folk motifs from Latin America, Africa, and Asia; and contemporary notions about art. Her books are about the relationship between worship and the arts.

## About the Paintings



I grew up in Los Angeles, a city named after the Queen of the Angels. There, the echoes of Latino Catholicism permeate even the most resolutely Protestant, as well as non-Christian, neighborhoods. As part of their historical education, California school-children of all faiths are taken to visit the mission churches founded by Franciscan brothers, and learn local geography as a kind of litany of saints' names. As a child, I was profoundly affected by both the visual and the spiritual texture of the mission churches I had visited. The side walls, the massive ceiling beams, and especially the reredos behind the altars, were filled with painted and carved patterns; the statues and sacred images were clothed in lace and filigree. Although now I think also of the problematic nature of conquest and colonization, my earliest memories of these places are of the aura of prayer that infuses them.

Years later, in Israel, I visited mosques whose walls were covered with ornate calligraphies and decorative motifs. There, I experienced the same sense of peace, mystery, and the presence of God. Likewise, in the gothic cathedrals of Europe, and in the illuminated books created in medieval monasteries, the same love of ornament spoke to me of the extravagance of creation. The rich mosaics, paintings, jewels, and precious metals that adorn many places of worship are intended to make those who enter feel as though they were already in heaven, if only for a brief moment.

In my own work, I am attempting to evoke this sense of eternity, of the divine presence, that I find in these traditional artforms, as well as in the gleam of flickering candles, or in a night sky filled with stars. As an analogue to my belief that every time and place participates in God's self-revelation, I combine elements from the icon tradition of the Eastern branches of Christianity; the elaborate knot work found in Celtic artifacts; the space-filling patterns of Islamic tiles; folk motifs from Latin America, Africa, and Asia; and contemporary notions about art. The resulting paintings are intended as an offering into the life of the Body of Christ, my own prayers made visible as an invitation to others.



Station 1: Jesus is bound



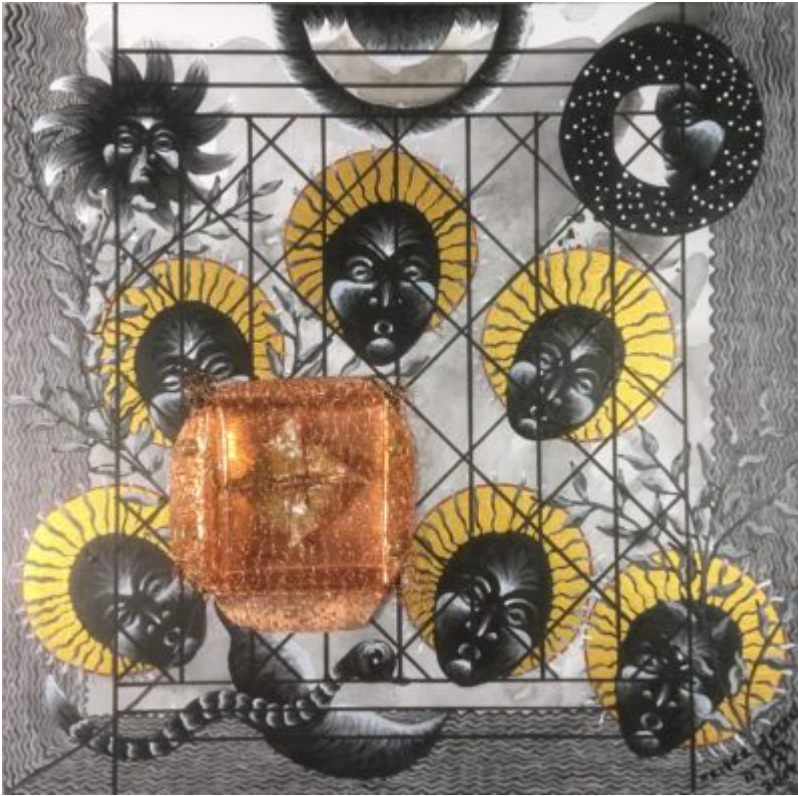
Station 3: Jesus Falls



Station 6: Veronica wipes Jesus' face with a cloth



Station 12: Jesus Dies on the Cross



Reliquary Series: Rivers of Stars



Reliquary series: Hidden Heart

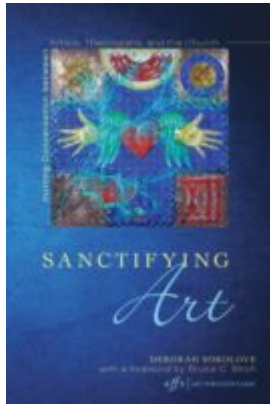


reliquary series relics



Reliquary Series: Night River

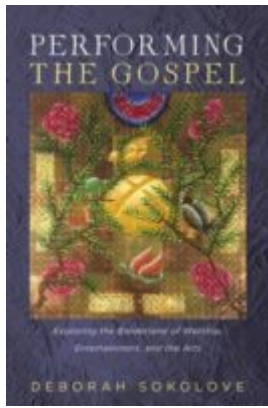
## Books



## **Sanctifying Art: Inviting Conversation between Artists, Theologians, and the Church**

As an artist, I have often been surprised and dismayed by the unexamined attitudes and assumptions that the church holds about how artists think and how art functions in human life. By investigating these attitudes and tying them to concrete examples, I hope to demystify art—to bring art down to earth, where theologians, pastors, and ordinary Christians can wrestle with its meanings, participate in its processes, and understand its uses. In showing the commonalities and distinctions among the various ways that artists themselves approach their work, *Sanctifying Art* can help the church talk about the arts in ways that artists will recognize. As a member of both the church and the art world, I want to bridge the gap between the habits of thought that inform the discourse of the art world and those quite different ideas about art that are taken for granted by many Christians. When art is understood as intellectual, technical, and physical as well as ethereal, mysterious, and sacred, we will see it as an integral part of our life together in Christ, fully human and fully divine.

[Sanctifying Art is available directly from the publisher here](#)

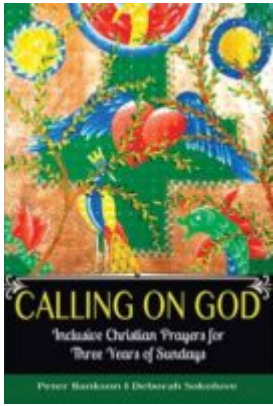


## **Performing the Gospel: Exploring the Borderland of Worship, Entertainment, and the Arts**

What is the difference between good worship and good entertainment? Too often, people disparage some aspect of worship by calling it “just entertainment” or “just a performance.” Others say that they do not need to go to church because they have profound spiritual or even religious experiences at concerts, plays, movies, or dances. How is worship different from these performing arts? How is art different from entertainment? This book looks at the history of the performing arts both in worship and as worship, with particular attention to the attitudes that shape our ideas about both worship and entertainment. Working definitions of words like “art,” “excellence,” “liturgy,” and “play” help to illuminate what different people mean when they use them in conversations about Christian worship. Putting theological, scriptural, and practical writings on worship and the performing arts in conversation with interviews with dancers, musicians, actors, preachers, and liturgical scholars, this volume is intended to help pastors, performers, and everyone who plans, leads, or cares about worship talk with one another in mutually respectful and helpful ways.

[Performing the Gospel is available directly from the publisher here](#)





# Calling on God: Inclusive Christian Prayers for Three Years of Sundays

## co-authored with Peter Bankson

Both of us grew up in a world where God was referred to almost exclusively in male terms. After a lifetime of prayer, contemplation, and study, we have come to understand that God is bigger, deeper, and more mysterious than the “old man in the sky” image that peers down on us from countless Renaissance paintings. Reading our Bibles, we find God spoken of as the rock of our salvation, imagined as a spring of living water, likened to a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wing. Metaphors like these remind us that it is impossible to comprehend God in any one image. If we human beings are made in the image of God, then everyone—men and women; old and young; people who are gay, straight, bi, transgender, or impossible to define; those whose skin is dark and those whose skin is pale, and any other kind of people we leave out of any list—everyone needs to be able to see themselves included in our images of God. Inclusive, expansive, imaginative language for God that we present in this book opens us, and those with whom we pray, to the Divine Mystery who holds us all in love.

[Calling on God is available directly from the publisher here](#)

[To see more examples of Deborah’s artwork, visit  
www.dsokolove.com](#)