

## **Artist Statement: Edward Knippers**

The human body is at the center of my artistic imagination because the body is an essential element of the Christian doctrines of Creation, Incarnation, and Resurrection.

Disembodiment is not an option for the Christian. Christ places His Body and His Blood at the heart of our faith in Him. Our faith comes to naught if the Incarnation was not accomplished in actual time and space - if God did not send His Son to us in a real body with real blood.

Heresy results when we try to minimize the presence or pre-eminence of the body and the blood. Yet even believers have become comfortable with our age as it tries to disembody reality. Physicality is messy; it is demanding and always a challenge to control.

The naked human body is one way of starkly stating that we have nowhere to hide. Further, it allows me to have something of the spiritual timelessness of the Eastern Icon tradition by avoiding the cultural trappings of modern or ancient dress and, at the same time, enabling me to ground my subjects in the specifics of time and space (the glory of the Western tradition). This bridging of the two traditions is important to me because the spirituality of the Biblical events is as solid and real as the events themselves.

In finding the spiritual in the interactions and choices of real people, incarnation can be shown as the symbiotic reality that it is. In other words, the choices and actions that we make always have profound spiritual ramifications because we are human beings. This uniquely human cause and effect is at the core of my painting, and I find that the nude allows me to cut past the shroud of ordinary expectations in order to see ourselves and our actions for what they are.

We are more comfortable with a disembodied voice on the line or a virtual image on a screen, that move our human interactions, even consciousness, from the concrete into a virtual realm, than we are with the real world. When we must deal with the physicality of the real world, it is increasingly uncomfortable.

This discomfort with the physical presents at least two options and neither is Christian. Some resort to worshipping the physical creation - as seen in contemporary sexual idolatry, including pornography and other sexual exploitation, or in the resurgence of pagan creation-centred religions. Others resort to a kind of Gnosticism - prudishly rejecting the physical creation's importance and disdaining as evil what God Himself called "good."

### **Christ's Physicality and Ours**

For Christians, on the other hand, the body (both Christ's and ours) is a mystery. We are not to either worship or disregard our physical being. Christ's is to be both worshipped and glorified. As orthodox Christians we insist on the bodily resurrection for both Christ ("...if Christ be not risen...your faith is also vain." Corinthians 15:14) and, just as scandalously, for ourselves ("...he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus..." II Corinthians 4:14).

Regarding the physicality of Christ, we believe that the price God paid for our redemption necessitated the breaking of his body. Redemption would not have been accomplished if He had given us only His mind (and thus been merely a great teacher), or only His healing (a great physician), or even only His love (a compassionate friend). Without His body broken for us, Christ's sacrifice would be incomplete and we would be lost for without the broken body there can be no redemptive resurrection.

Concerning our bodies, having a body is a prerequisite for being human and as inconvenient as this can be, it is a constant reminder of our humanity and our createdness; we are creatures and not the Creator. Yet even as a part of creation we are able to make our bodies a living sacrifice to God because of Christ's real and complete sacrifice for us. In thus offering our bodies, we not only show our hope in the world to come, but even now we can taste the Glory of His Body and His Blood - we can truly live before we die.

### **The Movement behind the Veil**

The breaking up of space into facets of color in my recent work is not so much a nod to modernism as it is a use of a modernist vocabulary to speak of ancient truths.

Since the death of my dear wife, Diane, I have become increasingly aware of the ever-present veil that separates this world from the next. I hope that my cubist-type language suggests a multi-dimensional world quite different from our own as it keeps the eyes in constant motion through transparent overlappings.