


Ealing Agreed Syllabus: guidance for teachers

KS2_6: Spirituality through art

Overall aim: to explore how people connect with—and express—their spirituality through art.

<i>Let there be light...and dark</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	understand that light is often a source of inspiration for people; explore how this is reflected in art, architecture and ritual.
<i>Aim:</i> to look at how light and dark is used symbolically in art	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Note: this lesson should extend over two class periods, to fully explore the topic.</p> <p>Starter: Get pupils to close their eyes and imagine waking up to a bright summer day. Then repeat the exercise, this time imagine waking up on a dark winter day. What sensations, moods and feelings are generated by these imaginings? (<i>As a starter for the second lesson, one could imagine the various experiences of light that are not so uplifting—e.g. scorching heat, drought—and those experiences of dark that are comforting, e.g. a starry night.</i>)</p> <p>Activity 1: Show class a picture of Stonehenge at either the summer or winter solstice. Explain that, because the site of Stonehenge was first established before the beginning of writing (c 10,000 years ago) no one really knows why, although there is evidence that it was initially used as a burial site. However the eventual alignment of stones frames the rising sun at the summer and winter solstice. Today modern pagans still gather at Stonehenge to celebrate these pivotal moments in the yearly cycle of light.</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Although the site was established around 10,000 years ago, the standing stones at Stonehenge were erected 5000 years ago. It was c2600 BCE that they were aligned so that the north-eastern ‘entrance’ coincided with the path of the rising sun during the summer and winter solstice.</p>		<p>Powerpoint presentation of various places of worship and artefacts related to light.</p>  <p>Stonehenge at winter solstice www.abc.net.au</p>

Activity 2: As a group, suggest different uses of light in a variety of religions, e.g. sunrise service on Easter, Diwali lights, Chanukkah lights and the Ner Tamid in a synagogue. What do the examples suggested symbolise? Explain that the lighting of a candle in Buddhist ritual can symbolise the victory of enlightenment over the darkness of ignorance.

Activity 3: Show examples of places of worship where light and dark are used dramatically, e.g. through the employment of stained glass (see background information for examples). Explore some of these images in connection with metaphoric expressions such as 'finding light in a dark place', 'through the valley of the shadow', 'enlightenment' etc.

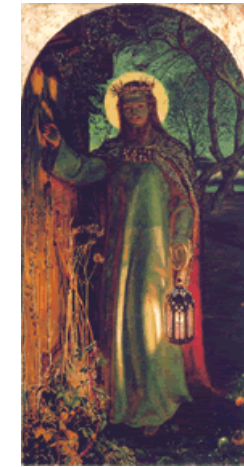
Activity 4: Look at examples of diyas, menorah, Ner Tamid, etc. What symbolism and attention to detail have the various artists and craftsmen used in creating these religious objects?

Activity 5: Look at the way fires and lanterns are used in the Japanese festival of O Bon (see background information). Compare this to the diyas lit during Diwali to commemorate the lamps set out to guide Rama and Sita back to their kingdom. Discuss the symbolism of light as 'showing the way.'

Activity 6: Read Revelation 3:19-21: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to them, and will sup with them, and they with me." Look at the way William Holman Hunt represented this in his painting *Light of the World*. Discuss the symbolism of the lantern, and the phrase 'light of the world.'

Plenary: On the IWB show class Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks*. Get them to respond emotionally: how does this painting make them feel? Then ask them to think about it: how does the artist use light and dark to say something about human experience? Make a list of the various creative ways human beings have expressed their feelings—both religious and otherwise—about light and dark.


Nighthawks, Edward Hopper, 1942 www.edwardhopper.com



Light of the World
William Holman Hunt, 1853-4



For the next lesson: Ask class to bring in an example of art, sculpture, weaving etc that has an emotional resonance for them. (Note: this could be one of their art works.)





<i>Expressions of faith</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	understand that it is possible to convey powerful beliefs and emotions through art; think about the creative ways they might use to express their emotions and beliefs.
<i>Aim:</i> to look at ways people have expressed and explored their belief through art.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Project on the IWB a large version of the James Tissot picture 'Ruins'. Discuss the following: What do you feel when you look at this picture? What do you think the title refers to? Why are the men huddled together? What about the hobo sack in the foreground? Could this 'burden' be a symbol of something?</p>		
<p>Activity 1: Looking again at the men in the picture, could one of them be Jesus? How would you know? (crown of thorns, stigmata, subtle halo)</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Tell the pupils a bit about James Tissot's life (see background information), in particular that he had been a painter of contemporary society before he had a conversion experience following the death of a loved one.</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Ask pupils to think about some important experience (religious or otherwise) in their own lives that got them to change. Relate this to Tissot: i.e. he was already an artist, but his religious experience caused him to change the theme of his art, and to visit Palestine so that he could study the landscape of the places where the various Biblical events were said to have occurred.</p>		
<p>Activity 4: Read Luke 5: 29-32. What did Jesus mean by: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Speak about the Christian belief that Jesus came to support/save the weak and downtrodden. How is this reflected in Tissot's painting?</p>		
<p>Plenary: As a class, share and discuss the works of art that pupils have brought in. How do these works reflect their experience and beliefs?</p>		

'Ruins (voices within)'

James Tissot, 1885
www.allpaintings.org

<i>Symbolism in religious art</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	understand that many representations in religious art are symbolic; begin to understand how symbols can represent aspects of their life.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore the use of symbols in religious art.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Ask class for examples of religious symbolism, e.g., the dove, water, cross, niche, wheel. Get them to imagine a picture of a waiter giving a diner a glass of water in a restaurant. Then get them to imagine those same two people pictured in a desert landscape, this time with the 'waiter' reviving the other person with water from a flask. What reactions do they have to the two mental pictures? Could the second mind-picture be interpreted in religious terms? How?</p>		 <p>Queen Elizabeth's coronation www.british-towns.net</p>  <p>www.saintmarymagdalene.org.uk</p>
<p>Activity 1: Show class a picture of the Queen on her throne, e.g. the famous photograph by Cecil Beaton. Point out that she is holding a sceptre and orb. What do these objects symbolise? (See background information.)</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Then, look at an image of Christ as King, e.g. the stained glass window from St Mary Magdalene Church, Enfield. What is he holding that is similar? In the picture of the Queen, the orb symbolises that she is the defender of the faith and head of the Church of England. What does the orb that Christ is holding symbolise for Christians? What does the crown symbolise in the two pictures?</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Now show class some pictures of the Guru Granth Sahib installed on a tahkt or throne. If you have already covered this in the unit on Sikhism, remind pupils that for Sikhs the focus of attention is their holy book, considered to be the living Guru. And that the symbolism, ceremony and artefacts used in conjunction with the Guru Granth Sahib is the same as would be granted to a living king or queen (see background information).</p>		
<p>Activity 4: Show class a painting or sculpture of the seated Buddha enthroned on a lotus, e.g. the one in the background info, p9. Discuss the symbolism, and compare it to the other representations discussed so far.</p>		
<p>Plenary: In Buddhism, the Buddha is often depicted enthroned on a lotus because it is believed that he, like the luminous lotus that rises above the mud, has transcended human suffering through his own spiritual efforts. Discuss with class what aspect of their life they might consider so important to put on a throne. How might they express this creatively and symbolically?</p>		

<i>Spiritual aesthetics</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	understand that religious art and architecture reflect the artist's aesthetic sense as well as their religious beliefs; understand that aesthetics can be a matter of individual taste.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore the idea that creativity itself can be a spiritual practice.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Brainstorm with class what they perceive as beautiful, pleasing or harmonious. Tell them that the word for this sense of the beautiful is 'aesthetic', and that this term is regularly applied to art. Point out that different people find different things to be beautiful. Explain to the class that people can have transformative experiences in reaction to beautiful objects and beauty in nature regardless of their beliefs. And that they can appreciate the beauty, spiritual significance and peace of places of worship without necessarily sharing the beliefs..</p>		<p>Powerpoint presentation of images from Islamic art and architecture, e.g. from http://www.flickr.com/photos/camdiary/sets/72157600706779191/</p>  <p>Arches in court of lions, Alhambra Granada, Spain picasaweb.google.com</p> <p>Virtual tour of the Alhambra: http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/200604/alhambra/tourmenu.htm</p>
<p>Activity 1: Get pupils to volunteer examples of places, buildings, gardens or artworks that they think are beautiful or inspiring. What do these places/objects make them feel? How do they relate these feelings to their spirituality or religious beliefs?</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Show a selection of images of Islamic architecture and design, including images of prayer rugs. Point out that the geometric patterns that are a common feature of Islamic art are a manifestation of the core belief in the oneness of Allah, i.e. <i>tawhid</i>.</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Point out that although the human form does appear (particularly in Persian tradition) most Muslims have been taught that the reproduction of human and animal form – and particularly that of the prophet Muhammad – is <i>haram</i>, or forbidden. This taboo has led to the development of calligraphy and geometric designs in Islamic art and architecture.</p>		
<p>Activity 4: Show some close-ups of geometric patterns in Islamic carving and tile work. Tell pupils that such a repetitive design is called an arabesque. Point out that the main function of these patterns – whether they appear on tiles, walls or fabric – is to give expression to human artistic endeavour without compromising the belief in and worship of Allah.</p>		
<p>Plenary: Look at some images of Islamic gardens around the world. What are the common features (see background information)? As a class design a garden that is both aesthetically pleasing and conveys a sense of peace.</p>		

<i>Art, religion and culture</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	begin to understand how religion and culture affect art and vice versa; think of their own creative response to a religious or mythic story.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore cultural influences in religious art	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Show class Piero della Francesca’s picture of the <i>Baptism of Christ</i> telling them a bit about the painter (see background information). Link the subject of the picture to other initiations. Discuss the symbolism of the Christian trinity as expressed in the painting. Point out that, although the painter is depicting an event in the Bible, the figures and landscape of the paintings all reflect his own country. In addition, he has used the background figures of the painting to address an issue of importance to his time, i.e. the possibility of the joining of Western and Orthodox (Eastern) Churches.</p>		 <p><i>Adoration of the Magi</i> He Qi</p> <p>http://www.heqiart.com/</p>
<p>Activity 1: Now tell class that you are going to look at the work of a modern-day religious artist. Show them a selection of He Qi’s paintings from recognisable Bible stories. Ask class: “What do you see?” In each case which story does the picture illustrate?</p>		
<p>Activity 2: Show another selection of He Qi’s pictures, this time choosing pictures that show a clear Chinese influence. Point out that this is an example of how artists portray subjects—religious or otherwise—in terms that reflect their own experience and culture.</p>		
<p>Activity 3: Look at a video clip (e.g. on YouTube) of a Chinese New Year celebration. Then look at another He Qi picture (e.g. Adoration of the Magi). What similarities do you find in the festival and the paintings (e.g. brashness of colour, use of masks etc.)?</p>		
<p>Activity 4: Taking an element from the same biblical story in activity 3, ask pupils to draw or describe in words their own version of the story (or one aspect of the story). How does their drawing or rendition of the story reflect their culture and beliefs?</p>		
<p>Plenary: Talk about what He Qi’s art says about his faith. How does it reflect his cultural inheritance?</p>		

Key words	Aesthetic, inspiration, creativity, arabesque, calligraphy
Points to note	Islamic scholars through the ages have discouraged Muslim sculptors and artists from producing three-dimensional and other pictorial representations of human or animal forms based on their understanding of the teachings in the Qur'an. Traditional Islamic arts are considered to embrace all styles and mediums except for three-dimensional and animate representation. In a class with Muslim pupils it is probably safest not to ask your pupils to draw human figures. And if you do suggest that your pupils bring in one of their artworks, make sure that the Muslim pupils know that this includes calligraphy, and could, for example, be a poem they had written in calligraphic style.
Expected outcomes	
<p>Pupils are working at an emerging level if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand that art is used in some religions as a means of expressing faith. ▪ are able to name two types of art found in religious contexts. ▪ know that symbols are often used in religious art. <p>Pupils are working at an expected level if they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ understand that creativity provides a vehicle for dealing with powerful feelings. ▪ know that religious beliefs can be expressed through a variety of creative arts. ▪ understand that religious art and architecture reflect the artist's aesthetic sense as well as their religious beliefs. ▪ understand that an artist's culture will be reflected in their work. <p>Pupils are exceeding expectations if they can do all of the above. In addition they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ are able to reflect on, and discuss an individual piece of art. ▪ are able to compare and contrast the different ways art is used in different religions. ▪ can recognise and express their own feelings in response to various works of art. 	

Background information



Lighting a candle
Church of the Nativity,
Bethlehem

www.traveladventures.org



Stained glass window
Guru Singh Sabha Southall

www.lgfl.net



Stained glass window
Temple Beth Shalom, NJ

www.ascalonart.com



Great Mosque
Muscat, Oman

www.flickr.com



Ganesh Diwali diya

www.flickr.com



Silver Yemenite menorah
with oil lamps instead of candles

ahuva.com



Floating candle in Buddhist temple

www.salup.com



Statue of Buddha
Byron Bay, Australia

www.flickr.com



Bon odori

www.flickr.com

O-Bon is an annual memorial festival held in Japan during July or August during which it is believed that the living entertain the dead. Paper lanterns decorated with the family insignia or small fires are set out to welcome the visitors, guiding the spirits either to the family tomb or to the domestic altar where a special place is made for the spirits where they are feted and fed with tiny symbolic meals.

Special dances (*bon odori*) are performed, and at the end of the festival, floating lanterns (*toro nagashi*) are put into rivers, lakes and seas in order to guide the spirits back to their world. In several places the small farewell bonfires have developed into large collective events, for example the *Daimonji Okuribi* which takes place on the hills around Kyoto.

Temples throughout Japan hold *manto* (ten thousand lights) and *seno* (one thousand lights) ceremonies, during which participants seek guidance from their ancestors.



Toro nagashi

www.dascoops.com



'David Singing'

James Tissot, 1885

www.jesuswalk.com

James Tissot (1836-1902) was an eminent French *genre* painter. He made his first appearance in the Paris *Salon* in 1859 with a number of watercolours and etchings. His work over the next two decades—a period when he was mostly interested in representing everyday scenes of society women and the fashionable circles he was moving in—reflects nearly every important artistic development of his time and reveals the interaction between academic and avant-garde developments in art.

In 1882 the death of his muse and mistress affected Tissot deeply and marked an important transition in his artistic development. He painted *Ruins (voices within)* (also known as *Christ Consoling the Wanderers*) in 1885, and in 1888 he had a conversion experience when he went into a church to catch the atmosphere for a picture. This experience led him to devote his remaining years to illustrating the life of Jesus and events in the Old Testament. He visited Palestine in 1886-87 and in 1889, and his illustrations to the events of the Bible (e.g. the painting at left, which is an illustration of Psalm 57:7) were enormously popular, both in book form and when the original drawings were exhibited.

Ruins (voices within) is a large painting showing Jesus comforting two downtrodden pilgrims in the ruins of the Cour des Comptes in Paris. As in his previous paintings, it shows a great concern for details and accuracy, thus straying from the conventional way of depicting sacred subjects. His work was acknowledged as a revolution in religious art not so much for the achievement itself as for the way in which it was achieved. For example, the colours he used were far removed from the golden ones of medieval and Renaissance religious art; the background is finely worked, and the characters are not idealised, with only a subtle halo about the Christ figure to set him apart.

Tissot died in 1902, and although initially remembered as an illustrator of the Bible, his depictions of fashionable 19th-century life and his genre scenes are now regarded as his most significant work.



The orb

www.royal.gov.uk



Spoon and ampulla for anointing

www.waxmuseum.bc.ca

British coronation symbolism

Britain is the only European monarchy still using its regalia for the consecration ceremony of crowning the sovereign. At Westminster Abbey the sovereign is escorted to the coronation chair (used at every coronation since 1300) by individuals carrying the processional regalia. These include two of the royal maces, three swords (representing mercy, spiritual justice and temporal justice), the sword of state (symbolising the sovereign's royal authority) and St Edward's staff (dating from 1661).

After the coronation oath comes the anointing by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who anoints the sovereign on their hands, breast and head using the ampulla and spoon. The holy oil used in the anointing is kept in a golden eagle flask, whilst the spoon is the oldest piece in the regalia, probably made for Henry II or Richard I. Following the anointing the sovereign is dressed in the coronation robes and presented with spurs (dating from 1661 and representing knighthood and chivalry), the jewelled sword of offering (dating from 1820) and the armills (gold bracelets representing sincerity and wisdom).

The orb (representing Christian sovereignty) is placed in the sovereign's right hand. They are then presented with the coronation ring (representing dignity) and two sceptres: the sceptre with the cross symbolises their temporal power under the cross, while the sceptre with dove—the rod of equity and mercy—symbolises their spiritual role. At the end of the ceremony they are crowned by the Archbishop of Canterbury.



Sceptre with dove

www.royalexhibitions.com



Armilli



Guru Granth Sahib
installed on the throne (*takht*)

[wikipedia](#)



Guru Granth Sahib
carried in procession much like a
sovereign or emperor in their palanquin
fatehgarhsahib.nic.in

Guru Granth Sahib as 'true king'

The focus of attention—and the only object of reverence—in the main hall of a gurdwara is the Guru Granth Sahib. It is treated with the respect that would be given to a human guru or ruler: it is kept in a room of its own during the night and carried in procession to the main hall at the start of the day's worship. It is placed on a raised platform (*takht* or *manji sahib*, 'throne') under a canopy (*chanani* or *palki*), and covered with a *rumilla* (a highly decorated silk cloth) when not being read.

“A chaur is waved over the Guru Granth Sahib: This is to express our regards and our respect for the Holy Scripture, the True King. The king commanded the greatest power, hence also the maximum respect and honour, in the olden days. Guru Nanak said that the true kings are those who love God and help others to do that. They are the rulers of the hearts of the people. The political kings are temporary kings and their authority ends with their death. The Gurus are the true kings; they teach truth and rule our hearts.

The Guru Granth Sahib is the embodiment of the spirit of all the Sikh Gurus and many other holy men whose hymns are included in it. We respect them as the true kings. The king sat on throne under a canopy. He used to have a fan like structure to be waved over his head as a symbol of his royalty. The Guru Granth Sahib, being the true emperor, is provided all these regal paraphernalia in the gurdwara. We install the scripture on a throne (called Manji Sahib) with pillows around for supporting it. A canopy (*chanani*) is provided above the scripture in the same way as it was put over the head of a king while he attended his court. During the session (*Diwan*), a person, with chaur in his hand, is always in attendance on the scripture installed respectfully in the hall. For maintaining due regards and respect, we carry this holy scripture to another room when the hall is to be cleaned or when the session is over for the day.

Before we bring the Guru Granth Sahib in the hall, we set everything in the hall properly. This is the court of the Guru. You will understand the whole ceremony better if you bring into mind the scene of the courtroom where everything is set and made ready before a judge enters his court. The Guru Granth Sahib is the Emperor or Emperors, hence all these ceremonial decorations.” (Sikh talking about the comparison of the Guru Granth Sahib to a human emperor. From: www.sikhmarg.com)



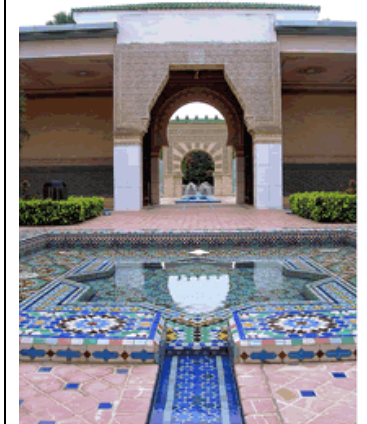
Fountains in Generalife Garden,
Alhambra, Grenada, Spain
[wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generalife)

Throughout the Islamic world, gardens of different sizes and purposes share the following characteristics:

- Love of the sight and sound of water is at their heart.
- They are enclosed by rectangular walls, making them mysterious from the outside and private within.
- The lay-out is symmetrical, geometric, harmonious.
- They are used to evoke feelings of peace, harmony and happiness.

For a lush green garden with fountains and pools in a hot, dry country, you need to create a special place to which you can bring water by a canal. You need to build a wall it to protect it from sand and dust. For that reason Islamic gardens are always rectangular and surrounded by a wall or screen which separates them from surrounding countryside or, in cities, from the streets

Because Islamic gardens are often created where nothing has been growing before, the gardener does not have to fit the garden round any existing trees or ponds. Because Islamic gardeners follow the tradition of decorating things through beautiful geometric patterns, pools and flower-beds are always precise geometric shapes like eight-pointed stars, octagons and rectangles. These are arranged according to a symmetrical, harmonious plan so that the garden itself is a beautiful, regular geometric pattern. This expresses ideals of harmony and order in Islam.



Islamic garden, Malaysia
[www.flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/14811170@N00/)



The **arabesque** is a design of repeating geometric forms that often echo the forms of plants and animals. Arabesques are an element of Islamic art usually found decorating the walls of mosques. The choice of which geometric forms are to be used and how they are to be formatted is based upon the Islamic view of the world. To Muslims, these forms taken together constitute an infinite pattern that extends beyond the visible material world. To many in the Islamic world, they symbolize the infinite nature of Allah's creation. In addition Islamic Arabesque artist conveys a definite spirituality without the iconography of other forms of religious art. (Left, Turkish tile with arabesque pattern, [wikipedia](#))



Baptism of Christ

Piero della Francesca, c 1448-1450

www.answers.com

Piero della Francesca (c1412 – 1492) was an Italian artist of the Early Renaissance. To contemporaries, he was as well-known as a mathematician as he was as an artist, though now he is chiefly appreciated for his art. His paintings were characterized by their humanism and use of geometric forms, particularly in relation to perspective and foreshortening. Most of his work was produced in the Tuscan town of Arezzo.

Piero's father was a tanner and Piero's first job was to paint the striped poles used to carry candles in religious processions. Eventually, however, he became a master mathematician. He wrote a number of learned treatises including an exposition of the rules of perspective that demands more mathematical skills than most painters have ever possessed.

Perspective and geometry figure prominently and subtly in all Piero's works. He made no attempt to please his contemporaries by doing what they expected: for example, in *The Baptism of Christ*, attention is likely to centre on the unknown background man taking his shirt off, a beautiful piece of painting which has no point other than the love of fine design.

The Baptism of Christ is part of a triptych commissioned by an abbey in Tuscany. It depicts the story of Christ's baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist. Christ is portrayed as a rough Tuscan farmer, and the initiation takes place in a recognizable Tuscan landscape.

The painting is replete with symbolism: Christ symbolized by the tree, God the Father in the blue sky and the Holy Spirit in the dove. The number of angels (i.e. 3) is also symbolic of the trinity. In an allusion to the contemporary council of Florence (1439)—whose goal was the unification of the Western and Eastern Churches—the three angels on the left are not, as in traditional iconography, supporting Christ's garments, but are holding each other's hand; in addition, the costumes and hats of the background figures are typical of the fashions of Byzantine visitors to Florence at this time.



Losing Paradise
www.heqigallery.com



The Risen Lord
www.heqigallery.com

Although the paintings of Chinese artist He Qi (pronounced *huh chee*) are full of the symbolism of the Beijing Opera, they are almost exclusively depictions of biblical events. He aims to introduce a new idiom for biblical art in China, one influenced by—but not part of—the European traditions. His website says, “[I hope] to help change the ‘foreign image’ of Christianity in China by using artistic language, and at the same time, to [contribute to] Chinese art the way Buddhist art did in ancient times.”

He has exhibited in the U.S., the U.K., Switzerland, Germany, Canada, Japan, and Hong Kong, as well as in mainland China. In 2006, the Overseas Ministry Study Center collected his work in *Look Toward the Heavens*, and he is now working on an ambitious project: an illustrated Bible.

He Qi does not come from a Christian background. His father was a mathematics professor in a university in Nanjing that was shut down during the Cultural Revolution. As a teenager, He was sent by the Communist Party to a communal farm to undo the ‘un-Communist’ effects of city life and his parents’ intellectualism. In an attempt to avoid the extremely hard physical labour expected of him on the farm, he entered a portrait competition, the winner of which would be given the opportunity to paint an official portrait of Chairman Mao.

His old neighbour, the dean of fine art at Nanjing Normal University, taught him the basics of sketching and oil painting, and then sent him off to the farm with some old art magazines. Raphael’s *Madonna and Child* was on the cover of one of the magazines. It was the first Christian image He remembers seeing, and it conveyed a peace he still considers the distinguishing characteristic of Christianity. In the daytime he painted Mao; in the evening he painted the Madonna, and he won the competition, which was his ticket from fieldwork to a career in art.

While earning his doctorate in religious art from Nanjing University, he spent some time studying in Munich. “If you want to become an artist, a painter, you have to learn art history first,” his professor told him. Hints of Raphael, Picasso, and medieval art appear in his works. But those influences are subsumed in the Chinese style of He’s Bible story portrayals.

Ironically, his Chinese aesthetic has not helped him gain acceptance as an artist in the Chinese Church, which on the whole thinks Christian art is Italian Renaissance art. “In 1998, there was a church very close to Shanghai, and the pastor came to visit Nanjing, to my private home. He asked me to do a wall painting, a mural for the new church as a decoration. And I recommended my painting, *The Risen Lord*. But the pastor looked at my painting, two minutes silent. Then suddenly he told me, ‘No, it’s too Chinese. We cannot use this image for our church. But we would like to invite you to make a copy of DaVinci’s *The Last Supper*.’ I [said], ‘No. You can ask a student to make a copy.’” (Extracted from “From Mao to Moses”, www.christianitytoday.com)



Kazakh prayer rug

www.bukhara-carpets.com

The only requirement in Islam for prayer—which involves bowing, kneeling and prostrating on the ground—is that it should be performed in an area that is clean. Prayer rugs are not universally used by Muslims, nor are they specifically required. But they have become a traditional way for many Muslims to ensure the cleanliness of their place of prayer, and to create an isolated space—a temporary mosque, so to speak—in which to concentrate.

Prayer rugs are usually about one meter long, just enough for an adult to fit comfortably when kneeling or prostrating. Modern commercially produced rugs are often made of silk or cotton. While some are made in solid colours, they are more often adorned. The designs can be geometric, floral or arabesque, but would never depict people or animals. Some show Islamic landmarks such as the Ka'aba or well-known mosques. They are usually designed so that the rug has clearly defined 'top' and 'bottom': the bottom is where the worshipper stands, and the top points towards the direction of prayer.

When the time for prayer comes, the worshipper lays the rug on the ground, so that the top points towards the direction of Makkah. After prayer, the rug is immediately folded or rolled, and put away for the next use. This ensures that the rug remains clean.

The Arabic word for a prayer rug is *sajada*, which comes from the same root word (*SJD*) as *masjid* (mosque) and *sujud* (prostration).



Persian prayer rug with calligraphy and arabesque motif

www.persiancarpetguide.com