

# Fine Art in Churches



A function of the Diocesan Advisory Committee is to advise the Diocesan Chancellor as to the suitability of works of art petitioned for use or display in an Anglican Church. These works should convey the ethos of Anglican worship, reflect the worship of the congregation, be a suitable addition to the Church and be of a high standard in terms of both design and craftsmanship.

Fine art that may be introduced into Churches includes paintings, carvings, coloured glass windows, textiles (altar frontals, banners etc), ornaments. They may be secondary to worship such as memorials, banners, statues or integral to worship such as an altar or font. The items may be purchased from catalogues; newly commissioned art works; acquired from other Churches or similar institutions and donated items.

A function of the Diocesan Advisory Committee is to advise the Chancellor on the suitability of works of art for Churches. It is essential to ensure that such items display Anglican beliefs and ideas of holiness and beauty. They should also reflect the worship style and dedication of the congregation whilst at the same time taking heed of the history and architecture of the Church building.

Fine art items for permanent inclusion within a Church need to be of a high standard. Artworks should be of sufficient quality, both stylistically and materially, to be worthy of their place in a Christian setting and to withstand the rigours of wear and tear and changes in taste.

Religious art has to a large extent, relied on symbolism to convey its message. This is particularly noticeable in coloured windows, paintings and banners where, for instance, saints are to be recognised by the particular articles they carry.

Whilst this was fairly easy for our predecessors to understand, it poses greater difficulties today when such symbols may not be known by the congregation or artist. It is essential therefore, to be sure that an artwork correctly signifies the sentiments desired. This does not mean that only traditional styles must be followed - on the contrary, innovative work from qualified specialist artists and craftsmen will be encouraged.

Deciding on a work of art for your Church can be a very exciting and challenging project, encouraging reflection on what your Church and its artefacts really mean to your congregation.

## How the DAC can advise you

Representatives of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) will be pleased to offer advice from an early stage if you are considering introducing a fine art work into your Church and would be happy to visit if you feel it would be helpful.

You may wish to have advice on the type of art to introduce (for instance, a coloured glass window or a new banner), or you may need confirmation that a particular item is suitable. If the new item is to replace an item of possible artistic merit, it is important to inform the DAC in order that such a work may not be innocently destroyed.

The DAC can help by advising you of points which will need to be considered at an early stage (later on, after making your faculty request, you will be asked to fill in a questionnaire). Initially, you will need to mull over one or two questions

- What do we want and why do we want it?
- Where will it be placed?
- Will it replace something old and if so why do we want to replace it?
- What will it mean to this Church and what will it 'say' about our congregation?
- What will it cost and how will we raise the money?
- What will it be like?

...this last question is very important, since it is not always easy to know what a work of art will be like on completion. You will have to consider whether you want a traditional or modern piece of work, abstract or figurative, which colours to choose, which materials (eg type of wood, fabric), what size you want it to be etc, - consultation may help and the DAC will be very flexible in helping you to work out your ideas.

It can be difficult to come to decisions regarding works of fine art because everyone has their own idea of beauty, style and spiritual essence. The DAC is very mindful of this.

Please bear with the committee if the faculty process seems long and arduous; it will only show evidence that there is real concern for you to obtain an item that is right for your Church and congregation.

## Stages in Applying for a Faculty for a Fine Art Item

**The first stage** is to decide what you want and if it can be afforded. You may wish to ask the DAC for help at this stage, with your decision, especially if this is a new venture for your Church. However, the DAC cannot help with financial matters. If the new item is to replace an existing work of art, a photograph of the item and full description including maker/designer (if known), size, age, whether a memorial and any other relevant detail may need to be included.

**It is important to consult the DAC at this early stage since you may waste much money by taking matters too far without approval.**

**The second stage** is to approach manufacturers, artists or crafts-person to enquire as to his/her qualifications and expertise in the kind of work you require. The DAC will need to be convinced that the work will be of a high standard artistically and materially. If you are unsure, please consult the DAC.

**The third stage** is to obtain catalogue pictures or to ask the artist or crafts-person to provide scale and possibly coloured drawing(s) which must be submitted to the DAC along with photographs of the area where the item is to be placed. The DAC will consider these for their suitability for your church and may need to consult you further.

**The fourth stage** is to formally request a faculty. The DAC will then consider the request and if approved, will recommend the Chancellor to grant a faculty.

**The fifth stage** is to go ahead with your project.

## Suggested steps for Approval of Work of Art in Churches

### Step 1:

- The desire for a work of art is established.
- Guidelines for Works of Art in Churches consulted.
- A written statement (with preliminary sketches) presented to PCC
- Written statement to express the purpose of the art work.
- Brief description, specification, sketches.

### Step 2:

- PCC to discuss the project with the DAC in order to establish the desirability of the work of art and the appropriateness of the initial design.
- If the work of art appears acceptable then:
- General idea, specification and budget approved.
- Costs of fees and production costs to be assessed.
- Detailed Design and Budget Brief prepared.

### Step 3:

- Two to three artists/craftsmen approached with design, brief specification and budget limits and are asked to prepare detailed sketches or scaled mock-up together with costs.

### Step 4:

- Artists/craftsmen submit sketches, samples, fees quotation for assessment.
- Work, specification and budget approved by DAC.
- Contract approved by PCC.