

**From Education to Freedom: The Changing
Purpose of Religious Art**

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*I pledge that I have not given, nor received, nor tolerated other's use of unauthorized aid
in completely this work.*

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Section I

Introduction

Christian art has been an essential part of Western society dating back to the 15th century.¹ The span and variety of Christian art is immense over centuries and countries. Before patterns of religious art in history and Christianity can be investigated, it is essential to define religious art. The concept of religious, sacred, spiritual, and more specifically Christian art can be defined in different ways:

1) work with obvious Christian subject matter like biblical narratives; 2) work whose worldview or spirit is Christian; or 3) work that is made for a Christian audience, to be used in some Christian way – usually liturgically. If these possibilities aren't confusing enough, sometimes people simply mean that Christian art is art made by Christians.²

Within the definition of Christian art is an element of freedom, showing that Christian art has evolved and changed to mean different things to different centuries and different cultures.

The mediums in which Christian art has been created range from painting to sculpture, from textiles to photography, from mixed media to drawings. During the Italian Renaissance numerous artists depicted scenes, characters, and stories from the entire Bible, both the Old Testament and New Testament for a specific purpose of educating the public. Religious imagery and icons were the most prominent and most respected images portrayed and depicted within artwork during the Italian Renaissance, a drastic difference from today's society. While many believe that religious art is not important in today's society, this is not an accurate statement or assumption.

¹ Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 359.

² Patricia C. Pongracz. and Wayne Roosa, *The Next Generation: Contemporary Expressions of Faith* (New York: Eerdmans, William B. Publishing Company, 2005), 9.

Contemporary religious art is still important in both the art world and the religious world, although many are not aware of this because religious art is given less attention than other artistic styles and movements. Many artists today use their own faith and religious background, along with spiritual inspiration to create amazing and influential works of art. The primary purpose of religious art as an educational and teaching tool during the Italian Renaissance has changed to a means of freedom for an artist to express their religious and spiritual feelings. Even though changes in the purpose of religious art have occurred, the inspiration and spiritual influence of an artist has been present throughout all religious art. Artists in the Italian Renaissance and in modern art today still depend on faith and spiritual inspiration and chose to share this inspiration through their own creations and portrayals of biblical stories.

Even though Christian artwork is not used for the same purpose in today's society and culture as it was throughout the Italian Renaissance, the creation of Christian art is noteworthy. The significance of Christian art has never disappeared for the church but has shifted and changed. The development and change of Christian art from an educational tool to an expression of freedom within religion is seen in the various developments and shifts in artistic movements and styles.

Certain biblical stories have been more prominently portrayed in artworks. These stories include the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Crucifixion and the Ascension of Jesus. One of these stories which has been depicted over the centuries in different styles is the Annunciation from the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. The Annunciation was a popular scene painted in Italy from the 1200s to the 1600s.³ The scene of the

³ Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, 80.

Annunciation was depicted not only as separate art pieces, but also as altar pieces as well as on various walls within chapels, churches and cathedrals.

The purpose of this thesis is to compare two different religious artworks, one from the 15th century during the Italian Renaissance and one from the 20th century in the time period of modern religious art, both depicting a significant Christian story. The two artworks are both depictions of the Annunciation, from the Gospel of Luke, but are clearly two different interpretations of the same text. The first artwork that will be investigated and analyzed is by Sandro Botticelli, an Italian Renaissance artist, titled the *Cestello Annunciation* painted in 1489-1490, at the very end of the 15th century. The second artwork that will be investigated and analyzed was created by modern and pop artist Andy Warhol, titled *Leonardo da Vinci, The Annunciation 1472* in 1984, at the end of the 20th century. The investigation of these two artworks will show the difference in the purpose of religious art from the Italian Renaissance to modern religious art, as well as showing the same constant importance of inspiration and desire to create religious artwork. Even after almost five hundred years, the desire to create religious art for oneself and for others to view has remained in the art world. The biblical story of the Annunciation still is pertinent to Christianity as a whole and there are themes which run through the five hundred years.⁴

Art is influenced by people and people are influenced by art. Religion influences people and religion influences art. During the time period of the Italian Renaissance religious stories, icons and symbols were the primary depictions in art. Everyone was not granted the privilege of having the knowledge and education to be able to read and write.

⁴ Please see Appendix A for color images of both Sandro Botticelli's *Cestello Annunciation* and Andy Warhol's *Leonardo da Vinci, The Annunciation, 1472*. These two images will be referenced throughout the entirety of the paper.

For those who were illiterate, artwork became the way they learned about religion and the way they came to know the biblical stories and scripture. Images became important to the church and religious art was highly valued and respected. Religious icons and imagery became the primary way that individuals were able to connect with religion and have a strong faith, something they could hold onto through the practice of education.

The Annunciation is a crucial aspect of Christianity. It is a story that holds much importance in the Christian faith and one that is recognized and remembered throughout millennia.

The Annunciation is one of the most important events in the Christian cycle, when the Angel Gabriel announced to the Virgin Mary that she would be the mother of the son of God. According to theologians, it was when Gabriel's words struck her ear that the human body of Christ was conceived in Mary's womb. The Annunciation is celebrated on March 25, which is also the first day of the Roman year; this also helps to explain the choice of December 25, nine months later, for the Nativity of Christ... Florence adhered to the tradition of celebrating the new year on the feast of the Annunciation until 1750.⁵

This story was admired as one which could artistically be used to educate during the Italian Renaissance and as a spiritual, faithful, expressive story in modern art. It is in the moment of dialogue between Mary and Gabriel that the coming birth of Jesus the Lord is near is announced.

The Annunciation scene is the event at which the Archangel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she had been chosen to carry and give birth to the Son of Man. Here in this moment the announcement of the spirit of God becoming human is made and the Virgin Mary gains importance. Gabriel comes to Mary in the Gospel of Luke and brings a message that Mary had not been expecting.

⁵ Frederick Hart and David G. Wilkins, 80.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38)

The Gospel of Luke contains a written description of the interaction between Gabriel and the Virgin Mary and the text can be seen as an educational tool, but only a very small portion of the population was able to learn from this method. In response to this, artworks serve as a means of translating the educational message. These two artworks one from the Italian Renaissance and one from modern art, will serve as the method for which the changes in religious art over five hundred years will be investigated and developed. The Annunciation depictions by Sandro Botticelli and Andy Warhol both include many elements of the text and are used to show how the purpose shifted from education to freedom of expression.

SECTION II

Sandro Botticelli's Educational Religious Artwork

The Italian Renaissance was a significant time period for religious art which birthed new artistic styles, techniques, and themes. During this time paintings of the Virgin Mary, Jesus, The Apostles, John the Baptist and various other biblical figures were the main subjects created over and over again by artists in different schools of training. Altar pieces of varying sizes grew in popularity and demand, as individuals and communities wanted them for their own viewing and for the viewing of both large and small groups of people in Italy.⁶

The new ideas which were discovered, promoted and changed during the Italian Renaissance gave light to biblical stories and allowed those who saw these depictions insights into the rich traditions churches had held for years. Explorations into the way light was used to create the most effective styles of depth flourished, as well as the foreshortening of buildings and figures during the Italian Renaissance. The correct placement of forms in space was also a new idea that various artists experimented with.⁷

Creating religious art that was used as an educational tool was emphasized because so much of the population was illiterate.

The principle involved – that the eye must have precedence over the brain in the painting of any object, that something which the brain known to be of one shape and colour but which appears at a given moment to be of another, must be shown as it appears and not as it is known to be – was to be one of the guiding forces in European painting for the next four and a half centuries.⁸

⁶ Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, 359.

⁷ Ernest T. DeWald, *Italian Painting 1200 – 1600* (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1978), 284.

⁸ Cecil Gould, *An Introduction to Italian Renaissance Painting* (London: Phaidon Press, 1957), I.

The importance of a visual aid was seen in the Church and the creation of various artworks on important biblical stories began. While not every individual was able to read and interpret a biblical story through written language, people with sight were, and still are, able to visually look at an artwork and see what is going on, to have their own interpretation of and interaction with a biblical story through the arts.

Having the privilege of being able to read the Bible was not something that everyone was granted. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic and the New Testament was originally written in Greek. As time progressed, version after version was translated from language to language. Eventually the most common language in the Western world for the Bible to be written in became Latin. Working to have the Bible translated into English became very important in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but this was something the Catholic Church was openly apposed to. Very early English translations of the Bible began to appear in the 1380s, but were unauthorized and adamantly suppressed and resisted by the Church.⁹ The lack of availability of scripture for the public to read only reinforced the need for visual aids to educate people about biblical stories.

Throughout the Italian Renaissance the Virgin Mary was a very popular image. Common portrayals in various artworks of Mary include her being enthroned, on clouds, as a protectress, bringing aid to Christians and as the Mother of Christ.¹⁰ The portrayal of the Virgin Mary is an important image in the Christian faith. Specifically the Virgin Mary has, and continues to today, held an important position in the Catholic Church. Catholics look to the Virgin Mary as one of the holiest of holy in their faith. She has

⁹ Hans J. Hillebrand ed., *Christianity The Illustrated History* (London: Duncan Baird Publishers, 2008), 204-205.

¹⁰ Rosa Giorgi, *The History of the Church in Art* (J. Paul Getty Museum: Los Angeles, 2008), 202.

been an image which many have been able to connect to and it was important for individuals viewing religious art during the Italian Renaissance to know her image and be able to spiritually connect with her. Since Mary is the mother of Jesus, and possesses the role of a mother, many were able to connect to the humanly side of her and the idea of a mother and child connection that she had. Individuals were able to be in dialogue with visual images of the Virgin Mary, specifically at this monumental moment in her life as she was made known of her pregnancy.

The Italian Renaissance produced and trained many artists who painted religious scenes, specifically the Annunciation scene. It was important that artists were trained to depict religious stories in a manner which the public was able to view and understand. One important artist who rose from this time period, one of the many who created an image of the Annunciation story and portrayed the Virgin Mary in a classical Italian Renaissance look, was Sandro Botticelli.

Botticelli was a 15th century Christian who was trying to adjust himself to the Neoplatonic¹¹ culture of the day. He was forced by his own conscience to return to the Christian way due to his fear that he would lose his soul.¹² Many know Botticelli as an artist who focused his artworks on pagan images and mythological traditions including works such as the *Birth of Venus*, 1484-1486 and *Primavera*, 1480. This all changed in 1481 when Pope Sixtus IV summoned Botticelli to the Vatican in order to work on the Sistine Chapel. When he began his work for the Sistine Chapel, Botticelli was inspired to

¹¹ Definition: A school of Greek philosophy established in Alexandria in the third century C.E that was revived by Italian humanists in the fifteenth century. These scholars translated the works of Plato and Platinus and tried to evolve a system that would reconcile Christian beliefs with Neoplatonic mystical thought. How much impact this movement had on art is still debated. Frederick Hartt and David G. Wilkins, *History of Italian Renaissance Art* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 728.

¹² DeWald, 288.

continue working and become interested in religious art, specifically Christian art.¹³

Through this invitation by Pope Sixtus IV, Botticelli gained an inspiration to hold on to the religious and spiritual aspects which were an important part of his being. The invitation also pushed him to hold on to the desire to paint religious scenes after this specific project was completed.

One of the major impacts on Botticelli's life, both personal and artistic, was the rise of Savonarola in Italy. In 1489 Savonarola arrived in Florence and began to attack the luxuries of life and prophesized doom in the very near future. Savonarola was an Italian preacher and reformer who was well known throughout Italy, specifically Florence. He was known for his clash with a corrupt clergy and tyrannical rulers. In 1494 after the overthrow of the Medici, he became the sole leader of Florence and proceeded to set up a democratic republic.¹⁴

Followers of Savonarola traveled around predicting and fearing destruction and hell.¹⁵ In 1492 Savonarola preached one of his most famous sermons on the sword of the Lord descending upon the city of Florence. After this sermon, there were a few incidents which caused people to believe even more than before, the words and teachings of Savonarola. The first event was the death of Lorenzo de' Medici, one of the most powerful leaders in Florence during that time period. The second event was the invasion of the French into Italy.¹⁶ Savonarola took political control of the city in 1496 and continued to influence and affect large populations in Florence. One of his most known

¹³ DeWald, 280-281.

¹⁴ Encyclopedia Britannica, *Girolamo-Savonarola*, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/525815/Girolamo-Savonarola> (accessed on 24 April 2009), 2009.

¹⁵ DeWald, 284.

¹⁶ Ibid, 284.

actions was to destroy many artworks which he claimed did not fit his beliefs and theories. His reign was not long and in 1498 he was abandoned by the Church and burned at the stake.¹⁷

Botticelli was living in Florence at the time of all the changes Savonarola brought into the city and into the Church. Botticelli was always a sensitive and temperamental individual. He was an adherent to the cause of Savonarola.¹⁸ Throughout everything that Savonarola introduced and changed, Botticelli never abandoned his Christian belief in his own life. After Savonarola's influential time in Florence, Botticelli was sent into an "emotional tailspin".¹⁹ This "emotional tailspin" affected his life, which translated into his artwork, and gave him strength to reach to his religious past and religious influences. During the later part of his life is when he began creating religious artworks and when they began to gain popularity. There is a correlation between the rise of power of Savonarola and the beginning of the Botticelli's creation of religious artworks. In a sense the struggle that was occurring within the city of Florence only encouraged Botticelli more and more to hold onto his religion and use art as a method for sharing the biblical stories.

Beginning in the 1480's, Botticelli began to paint influential and beautiful large altarpieces.²⁰ Large altarpieces in the Italian Renaissance were influential, symbolic and held a personal connection with those who viewed them because they were placed in public places for many to see. Instead of being displayed in a family's private home, which was a previous focus of artwork, these paintings were displayed in churches and

¹⁷ DeWald, 284.

¹⁸ Ibid, 284.

¹⁹ Ibid, 288.

²⁰ Frank Zöllner, *Sandro Botticelli* (Prestel: Munich, 2005), 153.

cathedrals across Italy. The access to artwork for individuals was easy, as almost all attended church, and churches had religious images, therefore being a perfect spot to view these works. In the early Christian Church many services were held in Latin, a language which was usually reserved for those serving in the Church and leading the service. The visual aid was necessary for those who did not understand the language as the only way that they could learn about the biblical stories, themes and messages.

From 1489-1490 Botticelli worked on one of his masterpiece artworks, one which would become one of his best known altarpieces. This artwork was of the Annunciation, titled the *Cestello Annunciation*.²¹ This artwork was tempera paint on wood panel, a popular form of painting and altarpieces during the 15th century. The painting was first commissioned to be an altarpiece for a chapel in the Cestello in Florence by a man named Benedotto di Sir Francesco.²² The chapel was specifically a funerary chapel for him.²³ This painting is very stylistically typical of Botticelli with special detail paid to the figures, textures and fabrics.

The biblical story which is depicted in this altarpiece is the announcement proclaimed by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary. Depicted is Gabriel entering the house of Mary. Before Gabriel comes into the house it is evident that Mary has been reading her book. It shows how she was interrupted in the middle of a normal day as she was going about her daily habits. Gabriel enters and announces to Mary that she has been chosen as the Mother of God and she will bear the son of God.²⁴ A typical, ordinary

²¹ See Appendix A for an image of the artwork by Sandro Botticelli.

²² Edmund Swinglehurst, *The Life and Works of Botticelli* (Parragon: Great Britain, 1994), 57.

²³ Zöllner, 153.

²⁴ Zöllner, 153.

scene of a woman in her home is transferred into a spiritual moment by the entrance of the angel.

Many symbolic images appear across the entire painting. On the edge of the right side of the painting is depicted a lectern which refers to the interruption of Mary's reading. The house that Mary is in is very sparse, but there is a definite iconographical complexity to the artwork. The house setting that Mary is a part of shows her economic status within society and shows how she is not a wealthy and powerful woman, but an ordinary woman in her humble house. The bare walls and bare floors, with a lack of ornamentation show this simplistic setting that Mary is in when the angel Gabriel appears to her.

When looking at the meaning and story behind this painting it is important to consider and remember the original frame and inscription which surround the painting.²⁵ On the lower right corner of the frame is a passage from the Gospel of Luke with the words of the Archangel Gabriel. The angel's inscription is "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." (Luke 1:35).²⁶ This inscription corresponds to another inscription on the opposite side of the frame. The inscription on the other side of the frame is Mary's response: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." (Luke 1:38).²⁷ The combination of visual imagery and visual text reached out to those who saw it in an educational manner, for both those who were able to read and for those who were not able to read. For those who were not able to read, the text around the image signified the importance the actual text held, implying a connection between the written word and the visual imagery.

²⁵ Zöllner, 153.

²⁶ Ibid, 154.

²⁷ Ibid, 154.

The inclusion of these inscriptions creates a dialogue between Gabriel and Mary, much like the images of the two figures in the painting create a dialogue between each other through a two-dimensional work of art. The images are clearly in dialogue with one another within the narrative structure that Botticelli has created in his Annunciation depiction. This dialogue carries over to a dialogue which takes place between the viewer and the actual art piece. The dialogue within the painting is significant because it tells the viewer that there is an important message which is being transmitted between the two characters. These two dialogues that are intertwined with one another through Botticelli's work directly relate to the idea of biblical and theological messages and stories shared through visual images during the Italian Renaissance. This is important because it shows that the written language, forms of literature, were not the common and most popular methods for sharing these crucial messages within the church. It is significant that Botticelli has created images which a member of a church is able to view, with little to no background knowledge or formal reading education, and still receive the spiritual knowledge that was significant in the Italian Renaissance.

The gestures of Gabriel and the gestures of the Virgin Mary are essential to the message of this painting. The gestures of both of their hands are an echo of one another.²⁸ These hand positions are important in respect to the conversation which is going on. Since many could not read during this time period, this visual image of a physical contact was important because it showed the interactions between the earthly and the heavenly realms. While Mary never suspected that she would receive this message of good news, the angel is able to connect to her and deliver the message. Connection, dialogue and physical contact are all things that a viewer of this Italian

²⁸ Zöllner, 155.

Renaissance painting could relate to in their own lives and understand the importance with a biblical viewpoint. Botticelli's portrayal educates the viewer on the interactions and gestures that were passed between the two characters of the story without relying on a reading of the text.

Architecture is a significant aspect of the *Cestello Annunciation*. It is a very simple architectural design that Gabriel and Mary are placed in, with a lack of ornamentation.²⁹ Aesthetic beauty is a quality that Botticelli shows is significant to the painting and to the biblical story. Education through the visual arts was more inspiring and effective when the artwork that was created contained a quality of aesthetic beauty.³⁰ The geometry of the floor tile patterns creates great spatial depth. The space is created by the central orthogonal of the floor pattern. Clearly Botticelli thought about the details which needed to be portrayed in relation to the spatial representation. Gabriel, the "intruder" is separated from the Virgin Mary by the lines on the floor of the room which they are standing in. Space conveys the symbolism of the threshold between the heavenly messenger, Gabriel, and the earthly recipient, Mary.³¹ Botticelli has clearly looked at the Gospel of Luke to incorporate the critical scriptural details in his painting. Gabriel is shown arriving in this setting, through the motion of the fabric of the clothing and an air of abruptness which is expressed through Gabriel's body language not crossing into the earthly realm of Mary and where she is situated.

Similarly to the pattern embedded on the floor of the room they are standing in, the edge of the door jamb has a crucial part in the dialogue that is taking place between Gabriel and the Virgin Mary. Botticelli has painted the door jamb to appear as if it is

²⁹ Zöllner, 154.

³⁰ Ibid, 154.

³¹ Ibid, 154.

stopping Gabriel's hand which is outstretched in greeting to Mary. Although upon further examination it is clear that the fingers of Gabriel have in fact crossed over the door jamb and are crossing the line separating heaven and earth.³² Here is the visual experience of the heavenly realm meeting the earthly realm. The close attention Botticelli paid to the wording of the biblical text, to the way that it was written and shared with those who were able to read is essential in teaching those who could not read the importance of the Annunciation story. Gabriel tells Mary not to be afraid of this message for God was with her, shown through the comforting approach of hands that Gabriel is shown with.

The qualities valued during the Italian Renaissance are woven in the characteristics and examples of religious artworks. Botticelli is one of the prominent artists who brought in the ideas of aesthetic beauty and grace into his artworks. It is hard to imagine the idea of a magnificent artwork, one of great aesthetic beauty created with no inspiration. The fact that religion was an important part of Botticelli's life, an aspect which he was concerned with, shows that there is a spiritual side of his life that is conveyed through his artworks.

Artistically Botticelli excelled at linear perspective during the 15th century art world, the art world in which he was trained, lived and developed his distinctive Italian Renaissance style. Movement through the two characters is graceful and calm, yet full of anticipation and eagerness. The movement within the angel Gabriel and The Virgin Mary is extremely delicate and smooth. This differs from the robust and noisy qualities that had been seen in previous Italian Renaissance paintings.³³ Both figures have a

³² Zöllner, 154.

³³ Gould, 26.

hesitant action in their body language and gently shudder at the moment of this announcement to Mary that she will carry the Christ child because of the monumental degree of this announcement. These emotions and reactions that Botticelli has so wonderfully portrayed are elements which humans were able to appreciate and understand, another method in how it was used as an educational tool for the Church.

Botticelli's depiction is only one of the thousands of religious artworks that were created in the Italian Renaissance. The *Cestello Annunciation* is a perfect example of an educational artwork, one that was intended to visually share and proclaim the story written in the Gospel of Luke. The artistic qualities and techniques which were used show a clear depiction of the Archangel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary in dialogue. Religious art movements after the Italian Renaissance would continue to focus on the importance of visual aspects, but would transition from an educational purpose to a purpose of expression and freedom within art. As societies and cultures grew and changed, so did art and the purpose of religious art in the Church and communities all around the world.

SECTION III

Andy Warhol's Freedom of Expression Religious Artwork

Even though religious art is known primarily as a subject matter in the Italian Renaissance and as a prominent theme in very early art movements, religious art has continued to be an important subject matter in contemporary art into the 20th century. While religious art is not the primary method in which a community or an individual learns about biblical stories and traditions anymore, it still holds incredible importance in not only an artist's life, but the life of those who view the artwork. Artists very often feel a strong connection to faith and religion throughout their lives and have used art as a way to express this connection and spiritual element of the way they live their lives. Religious art, all forms of art, become an outlet of faith for creative minds; art can show one's faith and beliefs in ways that words could never possibly convey.

There are many modern contemporary artists who have been inspired and determined to create religious art based upon their own religious, spiritual and sacred experiences, or those of others. These artists have chosen to express their faith through mediums moving far past paintings. Andy Warhol is a famous modern artist who is known not for his religious artworks but for his modern and contemporary images of pop culture. His life and collection of artworks is not immediately associated with the realm of religious art, yet he is an example of an artist who used religious elements within his own life to create art.

When one thinks of Warhol, one thinks of images and icons such as Marilyn Monroe, Campbell's Soup cans, Brillo Soap Pads boxes, and Coca-Cola bottles, all images of modern popular culture. Warhol is known to the world as a renowned pop

artist who created contemporary art in New York for over 38 years.³⁴ Warhol is best known for creating artworks that relate to classic popular culture including his work titled *Campbell's Soup Cans (Chicken with Rice, Bean with Bacon)* created in 1962 or his work titled *Marilyn Diptych* created in 1961.³⁵ His passion in art focused on representing various popular culture icons in new and various ways. It would be difficult to find someone who's first thoughts were of religious art in relation to the artist Warhol. However, contrary to popular first thoughts, there is a definite connection between Warhol, his art, and religion, although it is one that he felt very private about.

While society has not been made aware of the religious artwork of Warhol as much as the pop art he created, there is a large collection of religious influenced artwork accredited to Warhol. In his lifetime he created over one hundred specifically religious artworks.³⁶ Examples of his religious artwork include the *Last Supper* series of works created in the late 1980s, *Praying Hands* an ink and dye drawing on paper from the 1950s, as well as *Raphael I-6,99* which was a painting based off of Raphael's famous *Sistine Madonna*.³⁷

Even though his religious artwork began to appear at the very end of his life, this does not mean that religion had not been present throughout his entire life. From birth, religion was an integral part of his life. Warhol was born into a fervent Catholic family on August 6, 1928. His mother Julia was especially religious and valued her faith

³⁴ Jane Daggett Dillenger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 15.

³⁵ David Bourdon, *Warhol* (New York: Abradale Press & Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989), 91, 128-129.

³⁶ Dillenger, 17.

³⁷ Dillenger, 38, 41.

immensely, an aspect she passed on to her son. She raised her family in the Byzantine Catholic tradition.³⁸

The Byzantine Catholic or Eastern Catholic tradition was known as one of the three major doctrinal and jurisdictional groups of Christianity. Characteristics of this group are the continuity with the apostolic church, its liturgy as well as its territorial churches. The majority of the population who practices this faith life lives in the Balkans, the Middle East or in Russia.³⁹ The actual place of worship held importance for this tradition, and it was within churches, chapels and basilicas that artwork was displayed. It was within this tradition that Warhol grew up and learned the traditions that his mother so fervently practiced.

Examples of religious activities the family often participated in included observing all the saints' days and sending care packages to poor relatives in Czechoslovakia.⁴⁰ Warhol's brother, John Warhola, described Andy as

really religious but he didn't want people to know about that because it's private.... Andy got real good religious [upbringing] from my mother. At home before he used to leave the house when he was living with my mother ... they always used to pray I look back and that was the way we were brought up.⁴¹

Warhol always went to mass at St. Vincent Ferrer even up until his death.⁴² Close personal friends and family knew of Warhol's inclusion of religion in his life, but many

³⁸ Dillenberger, 16.

³⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, *Eastern Catholic Church*, [http://www.britannica.com/EBcheck/topic/Eastern Catholic Church](http://www.britannica.com/EBcheck/topic/Eastern%20Catholic%20Church) (accessed on 24 April 2009), 2009.

⁴⁰ R. Jay Gangewere, *Ten Years Later – What Would Andy Say?* (Carnegie Museums: 1997), www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmagg/bk_issue/1997/mayjune/feat4.htm (accessed 10 March 2009).

⁴¹ Daab, Zan Schuweiler. "For heaven's sake: Warhol's art as religious allegory." *Religion and the Arts* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 15-31. *ATLA Religion Database* (accessed March 9, 2009), 18.

⁴² Dillenberger, 13.

others were left in the dark about it. John Richardson referred to Warhol's religious side in the eulogy he gave at Warhol's funeral:

Besides celebrating Andy Warhol as the quintessential artist of his time and place – the artist who held the most revealing mirror up to his generation – I'd like to recall a side of his character that he hid from all but his closest friends: his spiritual side. Those of you who knew him in circumstances that were the antithesis of spiritual may be surprised that such a side existed. But exist it did, and it's the key to the artist's psyche.⁴³

Those who did know about his religious life were privileged to know that side of him.

Warhol chose to create his religious art for a reason, as he was moved by some aspect of his religious and faith life to create these images. The fact that Warhol was raised in the Eastern Byzantine Catholic church had a direct correlation to his representations of images and icons. One of Warhol's close friends during the last years of Warhol's life, Christopher Makos, detailed the involvement in church life that he was known to have.

Andy went to church every Sunday. A lot of his friends were Catholic. He may have related better to us Catholics because we all had the same background: mass, priests, nuns, Catholic school, a sense of guilt. His religion was a very private part of his life. In church he was Andrew Warhola and not a cool pop star Andy Warhol. I think it took a lot of pressure off him. It restored to him a perspective of the world that he had grown up with. In church he was the anonymous Catholic.⁴⁴

From the way that Warhol presented himself within a church setting, one could imagine that he was not looking for the fame and attention in religion and faith like he gained through the pop art world. He did not want the pressure which he had accumulated from his popular culture works when he attended services, but rather wanted to be on the same level as everyone else who attended worship services.

⁴³ Dillenger, 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 38.

In the Western Catholic Church there are many visual images which are used for purposes in worship, Christian traditions and practices, as well as personal prayer or worship items. Images and icons are used to contribute to the atmosphere of a worship space and have been for many centuries, as is seen in the Italian Renaissance. People connect with images on many different levels including individual levels which span cultures, religions, family styles and backgrounds. Images engage the viewer further deeper into the story, further into what is going on and the complexity or simplicity of the artwork. The Eastern Byzantine tradition is known to have “the icon mediate between the believer and the holy person represented by the icon”.⁴⁵ Personal connection goes far beyond the education one may gain from an artwork; it becomes a form of worship for many. The mediations that are established between a work of art and a viewer are personal and something that can be very much different for every individual who views it. Art and religion have been connected from a very early time in history. Images and icons allowed individuals to have contact with the divine in a way that was different from solely reading the scripture. Warhol recognized the strength and potential power of an image and the way it fully allows someone to understand an issue better. With this recognition he chose various biblical stories to express through artworks.

In the late 1950’s Warhol began painting for Tiffany and Co. on a variety of greeting cards.⁴⁶ These images were the first artworks he publicly created that had very, very subtle religious themes and images. Warhol created his first pop art painting in the early 1960s and began silkscreen printing in 1962, the technique which he chose to use for his Annunciation scene. Capturing the scenes of popular culture which were

⁴⁵ Dillenger, 19.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 24-25.

prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, he took these well known images and made them into icons that decades later would continue to recognize and associate with him.

Warhol did not begin to actively create recognizable religious images and artworks until the later part of his career, a similarity to Botticelli's life.

Warhol finally created paintings in which his secret but deeply religious nature flowed into his art. Technically he achieved a freedom and a virtuosity that are analogous to the mastery seen in the late work of some Renaissance and baroque masters. As with these earlier artists, Warhol's virtuosity served a profound spiritual vision.⁴⁷

The themes of religion and faith can be seen weaving through his artworks throughout his life. Specific themes have to do with life and death and the final judgment. These were clearly issues that Warhol spent much time thinking about and trying to figure things out about.

In 1984 Warhol created an Annunciation artwork. Warhol's Annunciation piece is very different from the stereotypical Italian Renaissance Annunciation scene one would typically see as a religious artwork and very different from Botticelli's depiction of the Annunciation. Even though his work detours from the typical view, he was obviously aware of artists and artworks from other time periods. The title of his piece is *Leonardo da Vinci, The Annunciation 1472* and was based off an Annunciation painting by Leonardo da Vinci in 1472.⁴⁸ Warhol was moved by the Annunciation scene by da Vinci and chose it to base his own interpretation of the Gabriel and Virgin Mary story off of it.

To fully understand Warhol's interpretation of the story, da Vinci's work must be analyzed first. In da Vinci's work, the angel Gabriel kneels in a lush, grassy lawn while

⁴⁷ Dillenger, 43.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 50.

the Virgin Mary sits in an elaborate lectern. In his painting the Virgin Mary is painted seated on the threshold of a villa with granite walls. In front of her rests her book open on a lectern and her hand is placed on top of it. The angel's presence is shown and Mary acknowledges the presence of the angel by lifting her hand in a gesture of restrained surprise. The rest of her body language is a different story as she shows very little emotion throughout the rest of her body. Shimmering mountains appear in the background of the painting and become lost in the dense clouds which surround the tall peaks.⁴⁹ The colors used are very dull, subtle, and calm. Warhol looked at this painting and took various aspects of it and chose to incorporate them into his own work but made many alterations.

The painting that Warhol chose to look at for inspiration for his own depiction of the Annunciation was painted by Leonardo da Vinci during the Italian Renaissance. His painting incorporates many of the same purposes for religious artwork that Botticelli's portrayal of the Annunciation did. The full figures of both Gabriel and Mary are portrayed by da Vinci giving a clear depiction of what is occurring in the painting, and therefore what is occurring in the scripture.

Warhol eliminated the foreground, the figures and chose to focus on the landscape creating a violet triangular mountain. The background setting of the artwork takes up a majority of the image, including nature aspects and in opposition the brick wall on the right side of the artwork, the side which is associated with earth and the Virgin Mary. Warhol's inclusion of the brick wall signifying that the home of Mary is important because it expresses the earthly setting that Mary is in when the angel Gabriel comes to her. In addition with the removal of the figures he removed the full figures of both

⁴⁹ Frederick Hart and David G. Wilkins, 484.

Gabriel and Mary. Instead of seeing their entire bodies we see only their hands.

Gabriel's hand is erect and has an urgent feeling to it. In contrast Mary's hand has spread fingers in a gesture that is very responsive even with her hand remaining on the lecturn.⁵⁰

The anticipation of the scene and dialogue between the two can clearly be seen by the viewer.

It is apparent that Warhol used the biblical passage from Luke in the creation of his artwork. He interpreted the core of the story as a method of sign language. Present in the story is the communication between heavenly and earthly realms. The heavenly realm is brought down from the heavens by the angel Gabriel and the earthly realm, Mary, is present and attentive to receive what is delivered to her. Warhol's intentions were to depict the communication from the "heavenly messenger to the earthly vessel at the moment of the Incarnation".⁵¹ What is so important about this piece is the fact that Warhol knew the biblical story, had studied it and had realized the importance of all the intricate details of the story. The fact that he based his artwork off of Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation piece elevates the notion of Italian Renaissance religious art's use as an educational tool.

If one is not familiar with the biblical story one will not see the imagery and symbolism in the Annunciation scene created by Warhol. This specific portrayal of the Annunciation falls into the category of modern art. The scene is painted with strong abstract themes and modernistic features. This is extremely different from Botticelli's work. Religious art in the modern art realm no longer needs to have the strong teaching

⁵⁰ Dillenger, 48.

⁵¹ Ibid, 48.

purpose. With the freedom that contemporary art exhibits and allows comes the abstract and sometimes unclear portrayals of biblical stories.

One very interesting aspect of this work of art is the color choice that Warhol decided to use. The colors that are used are very brilliant, vibrant and lively. One does not usually see the combination of purple mountains amongst dark blue and green trees against a deep red sky. Warhol stepped out of the use of normal colors and has opened up a new world of interpretation on this biblical story. These colors express the abstract and modern qualities of his artwork. With the use of abstract colors which are not typically associated with the Annunciation story, Warhol has given a form of mystical and magical quality to his artwork. No one was present at the time of the Annunciation besides the Virgin Mary and the archangel Gabriel, no human knows exactly what the setting looked like or what colors the background really was, therefore the colors of the various objects in the image can be played around with and exaggerated in some cases.

The representation of the icon of the Virgin Mary was nothing new to Warhol's life. The image of the Virgin Mary is highly used in the Byzantine Catholic Church. Throughout his life he was exposed to many different versions and styles of the portrayals of the Virgin Mary that he was definitely influenced by these images in the creation of his own images. Most likely he was exposed to religious artworks in the church that he attended as altarpieces. Since modern religious art had not begun to be put up in worship spaces during the lifetime of Warhol, he was exposed to religious artworks that were at one point used for educational tools or for the purpose of different worship practices. The deep roots of education in Italian Renaissance art was exposed to Warhol

early in his life, something which would have impacted the way he thought about the connection between religious artwork and learning about biblical stories.

Technical aspects were also important to Warhol's artwork. In his later works which were evidently religiously influenced "Warhol's technical freedom and mastery and his deepened spiritual awareness resulted in paintings which evoke what the Romantics and the Abstract Expressionists called the Sublime".⁵² In this sense "sublime" is referring to something that is "of the most exalted or noble kind", something that is "awe inspiring".⁵³ Warhol took the new developments of the modern art world and incorporated the deep roots of religion that were within him in a new form of freedom to show significant biblical stories in new and creative ways. Those who viewed his artwork were able to see the passion that he held through the expression of his artistic qualities.

It is somewhat of a mystery to the exact reason why Warhol decided to keep his religious life so private. Religion and faith can be a very private aspect of one's life and many feel the importance of keeping it something within themselves. Warhol was known to do this. For the last four years of his life Warhol went to a mission for the poor on Easter and Christmas to give food to the homeless. Warhol kept this aspect of his life hidden with the fear that it did not fit his pop art artist image that he held in the wider art world.⁵⁴

The religious art that Warhol contributed to both the modern art world as well as the religious world can not be ignored. Warhol made new leaps with new depictions of traditional biblical stories. Discovering the religious artworks of a well known pop artist

⁵² Gangewere, www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmagg/bk_issue/1997/mayjune/feat4.htm.

⁵³ The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English (New York: Oxford University Press), 2002.

⁵⁴ Gangewere, www.carnegiemuseums.org/cmagg/bk_issue/1997/mayjune/feat4.htm.

pushed for the recognition of modern religious artists and to appreciate the inspiration and expression that they were able to show through various works. Even though Warhol's works were not used for the purpose of educational tools in modern religious context as they were in the Italian Renaissance, they are important to look at to see the developments in religious art across the centuries.

Section IV

Synthesis

Sandro Botticelli's *Cestello Annunciation* and Andy Warhol's *Leonardo da Vinci, The Annunciation, 1472* are two very different pieces of artwork that depict the same biblical story. Each artwork possesses qualities and characteristics which were typical of the time period they were created in and demonstrate the change which occurred in religious art over five centuries. After investigating further into the artwork by Botticelli, there are many reasons which support his Annunciation depiction classification as a tool for education. Likewise, after investigation into Warhol's depiction of the Annunciation, there is strong evidence that the purpose of his artwork was not for education, but rather to embody the freedom of religious expression through modern art, incorporating the element of worship for a viewer.

Now that both of the artworks have been separately assessed and analyzed as individual works of religious art specific to their time period, it is important to engage the works of art in dialogue with one another. One major difference between the two artworks is that Botticelli's painting contains two full body character depictions, while Warhol's work only contains the hands of the two characters. The two figures in Botticelli's artwork are visibly present in the foreground of the image and immediately catch the viewer's attention. Every viewer of this painting was able to tell that the figure on the right was a woman and that the figure on the left was an angel, signified by the wings on his back. The portrayal of two figures is also present in Warhol's work, although he accomplishes this in a very different manner.

In Warhol's depiction of the Annunciation, the hands of the two figures are the elements which he has chosen to focus on to create and relay his message of this biblical story. Without the full depictions of the figures that the hands belong to, it is difficult to distinguish whose hands they are. If one views this artwork without background knowledge of the Annunciation story, and more specifically how this story has been represented and looked from a religious art perspective, it is difficult to distinguish and articulate exactly what is occurring in this moment. It is important to note, that Warhol chose to focus on a specific and intricate detail of the Annunciation story by using the hands as the main focus. It is through the hands of the Virgin Mary and the archangel Gabriel which the dialogue and the connection are made, not only between the two characters but also between the artwork and the viewer. With the lack of clear, distinct, descriptions of the story, it is difficult to describe this image as one that would be used to benefit a large community as an educational tool on the story of the Annunciation.

While the portrayal of only the hands of Gabriel and Mary in Warhol's piece does not exhibit the purpose of education, it does show the freedom of expression that he is able to embrace within modern religious art. Warhol has chosen to portray the Annunciation story in a way that allows the viewer to make their own interpretations about the story. Without the full figures of both the angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, the viewer is able to visualize for themselves what they would look like. This is different from Botticelli's piece where the viewer sees the whole bodies of both figures and is left with very little room for interpretation or imagination on what the scene looked like.

Each artwork is a product of their time period. Botticelli painted during the Italian Renaissance; Warhol painted in the second half of the twentieth century. Artistic

styles and techniques are the core elements which convey the idea that art is not stagnant; new and different purposes for art are constantly developing and changing. While there are many stories, specifically biblical stories which are repeatedly visually created over centuries, the way in which these are depicted changes with transitions in cultural, societal and religious movements.

While there are indeed many differences between the two works of art, there are also similarities between them; because in fact they are both depicting a story from the same Gospel. While the depictions and the purposes for the depictions differ, the text of the Gospel story has remained the same. In both artworks, the artists have created an apparent separation between the heavenly and the earthly realms. Botticelli has accomplished this by creating a space between the two figures, also shown through the geometric patterns and lines of the floor which they are standing on, as well as the edge of the door jamb which acts as a vertical separation between Mary and Gabriel. In Warhol's artwork he has depicted the separation between the two sets of hands. The hands are in the very foreground of the artwork, while mystical mountains loom in the background of the piece. The tallest mountain, in the very center of the artwork acts as a divider between the two sets of hands, and visually draws your eyes up to create this separation. But what is significant to note is that both artists have taken the two different realms and put them in conversation with one another, which translates into a dialogue the viewer can have with the artwork, whether it be for educational reasons or to experience the expression of a certain emotion and passion the artist has felt and is now working to share through their artwork.

Modern and contemporary art as a whole has a completely different approach and set of theories in regards to religious art, compared to other art movements. Modern art encompasses various areas of the world, various cultural, societal, and religious influences, as well as new technological advances. Modernism expresses a type and style of freedom in a way that is different from past art movements. Existing in our world today are various technologies, cultures, societies, influences, and popular culture items which have never been present in the art world before. Incorporated into modern and contemporary art are themes and portrayals of various spiritual and religious symbols, icons, images and emotions. For example Warhol mixes his Byzantine religious tradition with the biblical story of the Annunciation and pop art to produce his depiction of the Annunciation.

In the art world many believe that religious art connotations, functions, icons and symbols have disappeared.⁵⁵ Many believe that religious art is something that was done many hundreds of years ago and that modern artists are not concerned with spiritual aspects that can be expressed and represented through various forms of artwork. Some art historians think that religion has found no space within new modern and contemporary interpretations of the world.⁵⁶ With new approaches to art in modern and contemporary themes, many times the religious and spiritual inspirations and influences may not be apparent to the common eye, but may need to be sought through explanation of the artwork; a reason that religious art is not as noticed today as it was in the Italian Renaissance. When the religious symbols and connections are not apparent, are not being used for educational and instructional purposes, they can be much harder to see. A

⁵⁵ Patricia C. Pongracz and Wayne Roosa, 7.

⁵⁶ Ibid 7.

piece of educational artwork, one that distinctly and purposefully shows a biblical story for the function of telling the story to someone who is not able to learn it from the written text, can be much more noticeable compared to an artwork which abstractly expresses a story through the freedom of religious art today.

The connection between religion and art can not be separated. Religion and art are so intricately intertwined, an aspect which has been present for a large majority of history, that there is no possible way to separate the two completely from one another. Art is an expression, a way for many individuals to show how they interpret and reflect on faith and religion. Religion can be difficult and

... art is a kind of replacement for religion, a way to embrace a higher sense of purpose and an attempt to resolve the enigma of what comes before birth, after death, and what transpires in between. What goes unmentioned in the art world today is the inherent connection between art and religion.”⁵⁷

Art is a way for a society, culture or individual to take personal experiences and expressions and put them in a form for someone else to see. Expression of personal faith and personal experience is a very common quality in modern religious art, for example the fact that Warhol decided only to depict the hands of the Virgin Mary and Gabriel shows that he had the freedom to choose to only depict the hands, having no need to create figures which had to educate his viewers.

Many individuals in the art history world believe that religious art has become obsolete. The need for religious art to function as primarily an educational tool no longer exists as more and more of the population is exposed to the actual text of biblical stories. This can be proven wrong by the amount of exhibitions showcasing religious, sacred, liturgical or spiritual art. Within the United States there are various religious art exhibits

⁵⁷ Patricia C. Pongracz and Wayne Roosa, 15.

which have been held over the past thirty to forty years, and increasingly in the last ten to fifteen years. For example at The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, from January 23 – May 29, 2000, there was an exhibit titled *Faith*⁵⁸. The Museum of Biblical Arts has a very clear mission and purpose in which it “celebrates and interprets art related to the Bible and its cultural legacy in Jewish and Christian traditions through exhibitions, education and scholarship.”⁵⁹ In 2005 the museum highlighted forty-four artists who are continuing to show the relevance of religion in the arts. It also celebrated the 25th anniversary of the founding of Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA). The exhibit focused on the importance of faith in these artists’ lives and was titled *The Next Generation: Contemporary Expressions of Faith*. Harry Philbrick, one of the curators of the exhibit, stated that religious art “.....intends to supply that very thing which the religious believer is seeking: some way to explain the mystery of existence.”⁶⁰ The mystery of faith and religion has the freedom to be released and discovered through modern religious art.

Artists choose to create religious artwork for various reasons. Some artists are moved by a certain biblical stories, some are inspired by an aspect of their faith. Some artists have grown up with religious influences their entire life, while others have found faith at some point later within their lives. At times other artists will inspire an individual who is so moved to create art based on some aspect of another work of art. Art is visual, faith is invisible. Faith is invisible in the sense that it is believed, but it is something that can not be seen. Faith and art are able to come together in a form of dialogue which allows both sides to communicate in a unique way. It is a communication which works

⁵⁸ Patricia C. Pongracz and Wayne Roosa, 15.

⁵⁹ Christians in the Visual Arts., “Christians in the Visual Arts.” www.civa.org/index.php, (accessed January 28, 2009).

⁶⁰ Patricia C. Pongracz and Wayne Roosa, 15.

to bring together a physical sense of the world and what the mind believes about reality in relation to faith.⁶¹

Artists interpret the world in a way which takes into account personal style and personal experiences. Along with these come societal, cultural and religious influences which affect an individual. Various religious backgrounds have put out statements on what the importance of art is to the religious community. Specifically the Catholic Church issued a statement from Vatican II which dealt directly with religious art in the church:

Very rightly, the fine arts are considered to rank among the noblest expressions of human genius. This judgment applies especially to religious art and to its highest achievement, which is sacred art. By their very nature both of the latter are related to God's boundless beauty, for this is the reality which these human efforts are trying to express in some way. To the extent that these works aim exclusively at turning men's thought to God persuasively and devoutly, they are dedicated to God and to the cause of His greater honor and glory.⁶²

The arts are something that the Church has appreciated and respected for many centuries. Religious arts are seen as relating to God through a human expression. While Warhol embodies the freedom that modern religious art allows for, Botticelli also embodies the richness that religious art often is accredited for having. The statement from Vatican II supports the creation of religious arts, even in modern times when religious art is not used primarily for educational purposes. This statement by Vatican II matches the purpose of religious art in the time when Warhol was working more than it matches the work Botticelli did.

⁶¹ Patricia C. Pongracz and Wayne Roosa, 13

⁶² John W. DeGruchy, *Christianity, Art, and Transformation: Theological aesthetics in the struggle for justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 233.

Further, the impact of religion, faith and spirituality on individuals is also noted by Protestant theologians. While there has been much discussion surrounding the importance of religious art in the Catholic Church, it is significant to see that the Lutheran church values religious artwork as well. Paul Tillich, a Lutheran theologian, believed that “art had the power to reveal and evoke God’s presence and the ultimate truths of reality.”⁶³ Art can provide an experience of the presence of God through the artist, but then conveyed through those who view the artwork. Just as Botticelli and Warhol were inspired by other artists, current religious artists are inspired by past ones to create new and exciting works of religious art. Joe Larson, a current MN artist, creating art for Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer in Minneapolis, says that painting the various artworks “is a spiritual experience.” He has not only been inspired by Paul Granlund, but also Richard Caemmerer.⁶⁴ Larson does not primarily look at religious art as an educational tool, but really focuses on the spiritual experience that one has when creating a work of religious art. Larson’s reasoning connects more closely with Warhol’s religious artwork, than it does with Botticelli’s religious artwork.

Artists throughout history have used art as a way to express the religious themes, symbols, icons, stories and practices of Christianity. The Italian Renaissance art world was filled with paintings portraying religious icons, symbols, stories and themes which were most honored. Even though the Italian Renaissance occurred centuries ago, there are artists in the twentieth century, and continuing into the twenty-first century who have not only been motivated by their own religious, spiritual, and faith lives, but have been inspired by artists of the past. Botticelli, classified as an Italian Renaissance artist and

⁶³ Jean Johansson, “Art as communal, spiritual experience,” MetroLutheran, April 2009.

⁶⁴ Johansson, “Art as communal, spiritual experience”

Warhol classified as a modern pop artist, are two individuals who have used their own faith lives and inspirations from other artists to create religious art. The common thread between these two is the personal connections which each one of them had to religion and their own faith. While the purposes of their creation of artworks were different in the time periods they were working, the commonality of incorporation of aspects that were pertinent to their own lives exists.

Even though Botticelli and Warhol are from two very different time periods, there are many similarities which run through their artwork. Both artists were inspired to paint an Annunciation scene, depicting the Virgin Mary receiving word from Gabriel that she has been chosen to give birth to Jesus, the Son of Man. Due to the nature of religious art in their times, they chose to express it differently.

Art has been known as representing that which cannot be seen, the abstract concepts of religion and faith. Art can be an outlet for the expression and explanation of that which has an abstract basis of being, that which can not be visually seen in front of one at every moment.

Art used to be an illustration of the metaphysical. It has now become the metaphysical itself. The vitality and dynamism of contemporary art challenges religion's ability to face the relevant issues of the end of the millennium: artificiality, reproduction of the species, and equality.⁶⁵

The shift has now occurred to have art become the abstract itself. No longer does artwork need to be the method in which people learn about biblical stories, but rather the artwork is a creative and abstract outlet for religion. Religion is something often

⁶⁵ Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, *Faith: the impact of Judeo-Christian religion on art at the millennium [exhibition]: January 23 – May 29, 2000*, (Connecticut: The Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000), 76.

compared to something is invisible and art becomes the tangible and visible outlet for religion and faith.

Art historians today approach art, specifically contemporary religious art in a new and enlightened way. Realizing that the art world is not the same as it was ten, fifty, even one hundred years ago, the need for the awareness and recognition of this new breath is essential.

In other words, artistic creativity is not only God-given but one of the main ways whereby the power of God is unleashed, awakening both a thirst for justice and a hunger for beauty. Artistic creativity, we may say is a sacramental act that moves both heart and mind.⁶⁶

Without the constraints of educational purposes, artists put their heart, soul and mind into embracing their faith to creatively express religion. Artists take the freedom which has been granted to them through societal and cultural changes in religious art to experience and express religion and faith in a way that is abstract in contemporary art.

In conclusion, the primary purpose of religious art created during the Italian Renaissance as compared to today has changed and shifted from an educational and teaching method to an abstract and expressive outlet for artists to create and share their spiritual and faith filled inspirations for worship. Religious art may appear as if it held more importance in the art world during the Italian Renaissance; this is not true shown by the amount of religious artwork that has been created and exhibited in the modern art time period. Churches all across the world still honor and respect forms of religious art which educate and inform those within the community of various theological and biblical messages. This is not the most common outlet for information to be spread. With the advance of new technologies, and with the liberty being expressed through artwork, one

⁶⁶ DeGruchy, 241

must know some background on religious themes and ideas to understand many abstract and contemporary works with religious pertinence. The primary purpose to educate in religious art no longer exists, but an expressive and creative element prevails.

Appendix A:



Cestello Annunciation – Sandro Botticelli – 1489-1490

<http://artchive.com/artchive/B/botticelli/cestello.jpg.html>



Annunciation – Leonardo da Vinci – 1472-1475

http://www.yourwaytoflorence.com/uffizi1/Uffizi_Pictures.asp?Contatore=126



Leonardo da Vinci, The Annunciation, 1472 – Andy Warhol – 1984

Four variations of screen printing of the same image

<http://blog.libero.it/Vernissage/view.php?id=Vernissage&mm=0&gg=090316>

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Bourdon, David. *Warhol*. New York: Abradale Press & Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1989.

This source covers the entire life of Andy Warhol and the different artistic movements and time periods that he was a part of. His influences on modern art and Pop art as it became to be known, are outlined within this source. Warhol had a very interesting and intricate life that involved many societal and cultural influences. His family and life events also were very significant in his artworks. Warhol based a majority of his works on popular culture images and ideas which this source explains. There are also multiple quotations included throughout the text.

Chadwick, Whitney. *Women, Art and Society*. 4th ed. London: Thames & Hudson, 2007.

This book is a comprehensive edition of the connections and breakdowns of women, art and society. It is an art history book which investigates the social, economic, religious, cultural and environmental aspects of women and art. There are many female artists, as well as portrayals of females in this book. A large majority of this book focuses on modern and contemporary portrayals of women involved in art. Chadwick has been a professor of art history at a few institutions including San Francisco State University and has written many books on art and feminism. In contrast to the other sources, this one contains a weighted art history side which emphasizes the various art history theories and methods which can be used when looking at the connection between women and art. The intended audience of this source is someone who is highly interested in art history and gender/women's studies. It emphasizes the two subjects and shows how they are connected as well as how they have and continue to influence one another.

**Christians in the Visual Arts. "Christians in the Visual Arts."
www.civa.org/index.php (accessed January 28, 2009).**

Contemporary Christian art is important and thriving in today's art world. This website contains information on current and recent exhibitions of contemporary Christian artists and art groups. It is the website of a Christian visual arts organization that connects artists, the Church and culture. It contains information on current artists who are choosing to create art related to faith and religion in a contemporary manner. There are also listings of exhibitions and workshops. It is a strong website in regards to keeping up with current and modern Christian artists who are creating works of art inspired by spirituality and faith.

Coogan, Michael D. and Bruce M. Metzger, eds. *The Oxford Illustrated Companion to the Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

This source is a collection of entries and information related to and about the Bible. Each entry is detailed with specifics to give more information to better understand or explain various themes, stories, people, places and events from the Bible. Along with the different written descriptions are many visual images. Various important religious art masterpieces are included in this companion to the Bible. Oxford University Press is a very well accredited publishing company. This source directly combines religion and art and the two are in conversation with one another in this book. When looking at an entry to find out more information, this book is useful in finding related religious artworks. The audience for this source is for someone who wants to go to an encyclopedia entry to find out more information and be inspired or directed to look at other entries or various artworks to gain further knowledge on that topic. As a reference style source this book will be important in looking at specifics from the Bible including the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Gabriel.

Daab, Zan Schuweiler. "For heaven's sake: Warhol's art as religious allegory." *Religion and the Arts* 1, no. 1 (Fall 1996): 15-31. *ATLA Religion Database* (accessed March 9, 2009).

This article by Zan Schuweiler Daab the association Prof. of Art History at Converse College. The article discusses various religious aspects including a preoccupation with death that Warhol had, as well as sin and Judgment Day. There are various comparisons with his pop artworks and his religious artworks and how they overlap and there are in fact common themes between the two worlds of his art. There are reasons behind Warhol's religious paintings and Daab discusses these while including visual images into his article.

DeGruchy, John W. *Christianity, Art, and Transformation: Theological aesthetics in the struggle for justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

This book focuses on the historical and contemporary relationship that exists between Christianity and art. Art and Christianity are both part of changes a society goes through and this book looks at how both of them influence society. There are a few main themes and topics which are primarily discussed in this book including the power of images, the role of art in the life of a church, and theological aesthetics in today's society. Sacred images are important and powerful within the church and this book looks into various aspects of beauty, spirit and theology of religious and sacred images and icons. John DeGruchy is a Professor of Christian Studies and Director of the Graduate School in Humanities at the University of Cape Town. He has four published books and received the Karl Barth Prize by the Evangelische Kirche der Union in Germany in August 2000.

Dillenberger, Jane Daggett. *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*. New York: Continuum, 1998.

This is a significant source because it organizes and tells the history of Andy Warhol's religious art career. The book gives in details the religious influences which were important in Andy Warhol's life and the impact that his faith life had on his entire career. A significant aspect of this book is all of the visual images which are included. Not only are there images of the finished pieces, but there are smaller images which show sections of his religious artworks. Religion was an important part of Andy Warhol's life from a very early age and continued to be an important part of his entire life up until his death. Included in this book is his Annunciation piece with descriptions of why he was inspired to create this work of art.

Hartt, Frederick. *Sandro Botticelli*. Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York: 1953.

This is a book which begins with an introduction to Sandro Botticelli, the Italian Renaissance artist's life and outlines specific aspects which were important throughout his life. Hartt discusses Botticelli's various styles and techniques. Another important aspect of this book is the timeline in the back of the book which contains important dates from his life. The majority of the book contains images of Botticelli's artwork with descriptions and details of the artworks.

Pongracz, Patricia C. and Wayne Roosa. *The Next Generation: Contemporary Expressions of Faith*. New York: Eerdmans, William B. Publishing Company, 2005.

This book looks at the way artists today have created contemporary religious art. Even though many believe that religious art many not be as important or as prevalent in today's society and art world, it is still a very important subject matter. Many artists are inspired by the Bible as well as their own faith and religious life. This book was based off an exhibition held at the Museum of Biblical Art located in New York, New York. The intended audience for this book is anyone who is interested at looking how contemporary artists have been and continue to be inspired by a piece of writing that is so old compared to the contemporary art. There are forty-four artists who are included in this book and a look at their style, technique and theories for the way that they create art.

Zöllner, Frank. *Sandro Botticelli*. Munich: Prestel, 2005.

The content in this source all relates to the Italian Renaissance artist Sandro Botticelli and is an oversized book which provides extremely important images of Botticelli's most important and famous artworks. The book is broken down into the different time segments of Botticelli's art production and the common themes that exist between each time segment. The Annunciation is one of the feature works in this book and there is much discussion of this work as a late altarpiece in

Botticelli's life. Botticelli's techniques, styles, mediums, themes and influences are explained and discussed.