

ELPIDA HADZI-VASILEVA ‘*Transpire*’

St Bede’s Catholic College

‘*Transpire*’ is a glowing 23.5ct gold-leaf tree which spreads its luxuriously entwined roots and branches over ceiling, walls and windows of an internal stairwell in the school.

MICHAEL PINSKY ‘*Intersection*’

St Bernadette’s Catholic Secondary School

‘*Intersection*’ is a giant, illuminated, grid-like compilation of students’ drawings of crosses which brightly pulsates within the heart of the school.

Review by Professor John Haldane

From the early part of the twentieth century it was realised that art might have a special role in general education, both as practice, and as object of study: in each case introducing pupils to the idea of creative expression.

In the 1940s the School Prints movement championed by Herbert Read and Brenda Rawnsley brought original lithographs by Henry Moore, Picasso, Braque and others into British classrooms and since then there have been other schemes to bring art into schools.

The commission by Bristol City Council of two unique artworks for two city Catholic secondary schools (St Bede's and St Bernadette's) marks a new development in the interplay between art and education. The two artists, Michael Pinsky and Elpidia Hadzi-Vasileva, have each engaged imaginatively with the physical, functional and cultural environments of the schools.

Pinsky's ‘*Intersection*’ weaves together an image derived from crosses hand-drawn by pupils of St Bernadette's. The particular religious symbolism of the cross is obvious enough, and a mainstay of Christian art and decoration; but it is also a universal mark, an element of drawing, a means of signing, a method of marking place and position. All of these are recalled in the work but beyond that it brings them together into a net(work) a fabric of signatures representing an actual school population and their successors.

Hadzi-Vasileva is also concerned with symbolic meaning but in the form of a stucco and gilt wall and ceiling relief. The ramifying lines suggest patterns both branching above and rooting below ground, and the design manages to be both figurative and abstract, and on both accounts a representation of growth and development, referring externally to the landscape beyond and internally to the progress of pupils through the school and into the fertile ground of knowledge.

Art has a special role in introducing and keeping fresh the alchemy by which matter is transformed into objects and places of wonder and beauty. The City Council, the schools, the artists, and Art and Sacred Places which was involved in the commissions, all deserve thanks and congratulations on playing their part in providing the opportunity for that alchemy to be practised.

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