

Volume 5, Number 1, 2016

ISSN 2324-6375

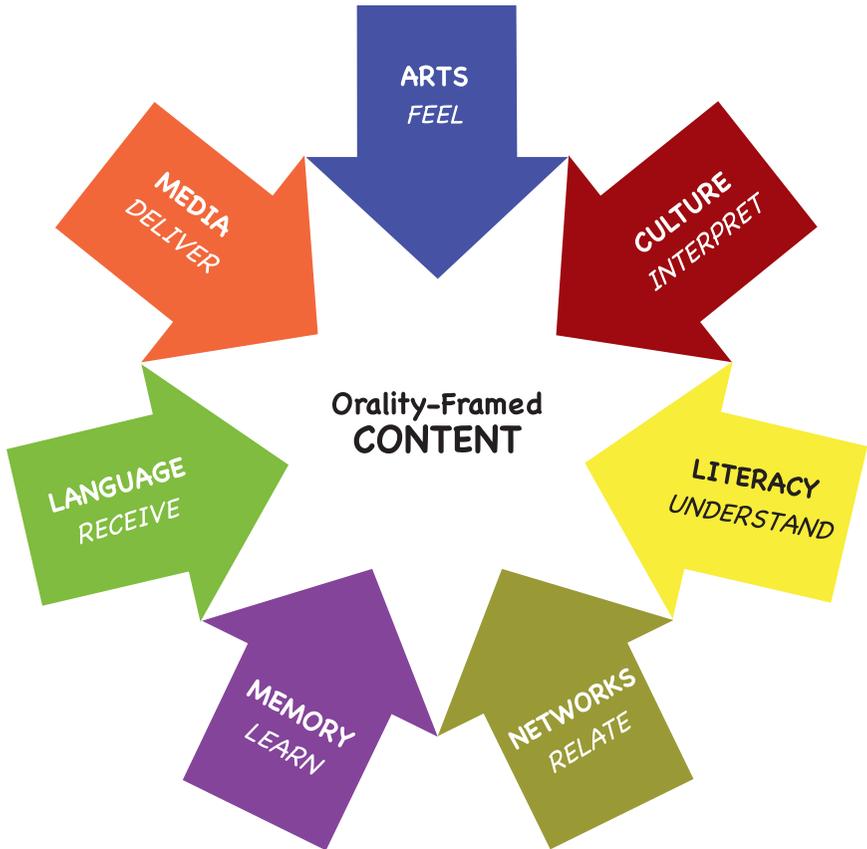
# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

## **Arts & Orality Part 1: Foundations and Applications**

**Piper • Kreider • Hawn • Lim • Oswald • Pierce  
Rowe • Carson • Rayl • Ferguson • Unseth  
Hoogerheide • Krabill • Bowman • Lowther • Atkins**

# The Seven Disciplines of Orality



*Courtesy of Dr. Chuck Madinger who leads Global Impact Mission and serves on the International Orality Network's Leadership Team facilitating the Research Task Force.*



**ION**

INTERNATIONAL ORALITY NETWORK

# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

Volume 5, Number 1, 2016

ISBN 978-962-7673-35-4

ISSN 2324-6375

## Cover Photo

A group of women who are part of a choir react with delight as they hear a story told by pastor Elasi, in their mother tongue—Nyanga.

## Additional Photos

All photos not otherwise credited have been contributed by members of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE).

## Word Art

The word art at the beginning of each article was created using Wordle.net with the font *Loved by the King*.

## Articles

All of the articles in this issue—aside from those by authors Atkins, Hoogerheide, and Unseth—have been adapted or directly reprinted with permission from William Carey Library from the volume *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*, edited by James R. Krabill, gen. ed., and Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013).

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.’”

Exodus 31:1-5 (ESV)

“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!”

Psalms 30:11-12 (ESV)

# Orality Journal

*The Word Became Fresh*

Orality Journal is the journal of the International Orality Network. It is published online semi-annually and aims to provide a platform for scholarly discourse on the issues of orality, discoveries of innovations in orality, and praxis of effectiveness across multiple domains in society. This online journal is international and interdisciplinary, serving the interests of the orality movement through research articles, documentation, book reviews, and academic news. Occasionally, print editions will be provisioned. Submission of items that could contribute to the furtherance of the orality movement is welcomed.

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ISBN 978-962-7673-35-4  
ISSN 2324-6375

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**PRINTED IN HONG KONG**

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# Co-Editors' Note

*Samuel E. Chiang and William Coppedge*

*"In the beginning God created..."* Genesis 1:1

*"In the beginning was the Word..."* John 1:1

The International Orality Network and the International Council of Ethnodoxologists are excited to collaborate in both 2016 editions of the Orality Journal. The two networks, through this publication, are exploring the relationship between orality and the arts.

The beginnings of both Genesis and the Gospel of John offer a natural starting point for a consideration of this unique relationship. God Himself is a creative God, creating not from impulse nor for mere utilitarian purposes, but *creatio ex nihilo*: he creates out of the overflow of his creative being. This Creator God is the Triune God - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thus far from being an individualized activity, divine creation maintains an inherent communal component as each member of the Trinity participates (Genesis 1:1-2; Isaiah 42:5; Proverbs 8:22-31; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:1-4, 11:6) in bringing creation into existence.

This Triune God creates by communicating though: *"All things came into being through the Word."*<sup>1</sup> Creation and communication are inextricably bound together in the nature of the Triune God. Naturally, every human person, made in the image of a Triune Creator, is inherently creative and communicative. The articles offered in this edition of the Orality Journal provide an array of opportunities to consider such creativity and artistic communication from various cultures around the world.

What needs to not be missed, though, is the Trinitarian component that threads its way through these case studies. Whether discussing henna art or music, these stories describe individual artists and their artistic expressions, yet every one of them creates and communicates within a communal network of relationships. Herein lies a subtle witness to Trinitarian nature of the creative God who made all human persons like himself.

The authors and participants within these case studies are seeking to probe the depths of the creative arts and oral communication as both a means to discovering echoes of the Triune Creator but also as a means to understand specific human cultures. Far from extracting human persons from their cultural context, they believe the Incarnation is a testimony to God's commitment to enter into human culture. Like Jesus, they are not mere observers of culture only. These writers and artists desire people from all cultures to be in communion with their Triune Creator which ultimately makes possible the restoration of human creativity (the arts) and human communication. For when one enters into communion with the Triune God, transformation becomes possible, not only for an individual person but for one's cultural community. As editors, we gladly commend these articles to you in the hope that they may stimulate godly artistic creativity in your current cultural context as well as deeper communion with the Triune Creator.

On the journey together,



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<sup>1</sup>John 1.3.

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# Note from Guest Editors

*Katie Hoogerheide and James R. Krabill*

*Katie Hoogerheide serves as Associate Director of the Center for Excellence in World Arts at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics in Dallas, Texas. Her work and graduate-level studies include experience in the areas of organ performance, ethnoarts, linguistics, and education. She also works as Associate Editor for the Global Forum on Arts and Christian Faith ([artsandchristianfaith.org](http://artsandchristianfaith.org)).*

*James R. Krabill served from 1978–1996 as a Mennonite mission worker teaching Bible and church history in oral culture settings among African-initiated churches in West Africa. Currently serving as Senior Executive for Global Ministries with the Mennonite Mission Network, Krabill has authored or edited various works, including *Music in the Life of the African Church* (with Roberta King and others, 2008) and *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (2013).*

**R**esonate. All of us who have a message we want to share with other people want that communication to resonate in their hearts. When the message is the greatest news ever to come to earth, the story of a Savior, the stakes seem particularly high. And so we seek knowledge, pursuing the wisdom of others who have reported some measure of success in their quest for sharing the message across boundaries.

In that quest for shared knowledge, the International Council of Ethnodoxologists has been asked to guest edit this volume of the Orality Journal. We have been tasked with sharing with you just how much impact the arts can have in cross-cultural communication. Their absence impoverishes communication; their distortion disrupts communication; their genuine presence enriches communication. As you read the articles in this edition, you will see over and over again how the arts help messages with brand-new content to be perceived as more familiar, less foreign. The arts form one critical component for making our messages resonate.

The three articles in the FOUNDATIONS section provide a grounding in biblical, historical, and cultural perspectives on engaging the arts. As Piper explains, the inclusion of indigenous artistic expressions in

worship emerges naturally from biblical principles. Looking at the Early Church, Kreider gives us a view of the timelessness of incorporating artistic expressions into worship. In order to introduce us to the range of physical senses that can be involved in worship through the arts, Hawn & Lim draw from various symbols used across cultural boundaries.

The arts have been identified by the International Orality Network as one of at least seven aspects influencing orality-framed content (see “The Seven Disciplines of Orality” graphic on the inside front cover). Although these seven aspects appear as discrete arrows, in reality each of the seven is inextricably woven through the others. None can carry a message independently. All join together to create effective oral communication.

The arts are no exception. This volume highlights the arts, but even a cursory glance through the articles in the APPLICATIONS section shows the great extent to which the arts play an indispensable role in strengthening the other six disciplines in the act of communication. As just a few examples:

- **MEDIA:** Oswald shares how “vivid indigenous arts” in Tibet have brought the story of Jesus to life through film. Authentic arts content makes even the best delivered media resonate more deeply with the local people.
- **LANGUAGE:** Hoogerheide and Unseth address the importance of using language with the nuances of form familiar to an audience. Relevant artistic structures, discourse markers, and storytelling conventions make even the most accurate pronunciation, vocabulary, and word order seem more familiar and less foreign.
- **MEMORY:** Both Unseth and Bowman tap into the arts as ways of internalizing biblical stories and their messages. Familiar artistic expressions provide vehicles for more rapid and satisfying retention of new content.
- **LITERACY:** Unseth mentions the value of written collections of proverbs for understanding how to communicate more naturally within a culture. Only locally-recognized forms and expressions will serve to inform connecting effectively with the oral traditions.
- **NETWORKS:** Pierce, Rowe, Carson, and Rayl (“Sharing Faith”) each illustrate natural relationship building around the arts. Well-loved art

forms draw people to connect with others through their hearts rather than only through their minds or their physical presence.

- **CULTURE:** Krabill and Krabill depict the power of interpreting biblical concepts through the lens of local cultural rituals. Everyday artistic elements speak into local people's lives organically from the rhythms in the place they call home.

In each scenario, we see how arts are part and parcel of communities, inseparable from so many contexts of communication. Our attempts at sharing about Christ in a way that resonates with any group of people will not ring true without the natural colors, gestures, sounds, and communication frameworks familiar to those people. Without them, any incarnation of the gospel remains incomplete, a robotic, lifeless framework, rather than a living creation.

Just as the arts saturate their communication contexts, so the different elements within the realm we call "the arts" also blend together. We often speak of artistic domains such as music, dance, or drama. In reality, any artistic element is nearly always accompanied by several more, blurring our attempts at drawing boundaries between types of artistic expression. Consider the Balinese paintings inspired by another form of visual art, carved masks, and also by traditional dance postures and shadow puppet figures (Rayl, "A Balinese Painter"). Consider the tendency towards multi-arts descriptions such as "dance drama" (Rowe), or the account in which people hearing music spontaneously break into dance (Lowther). We can neither extract the arts from their communicative contexts nor specify one kind of artistic expression as consistently distinct from another.

Terminology changes. Arts research around the world continues to uncover new ways of talking about arts within different societies. The ancient Greeks used to indicate music, dance, lyrics, and poetry all with the one word *mousikē*.<sup>1</sup> English speakers might refer to both lyrics and melody by the term "song" but may or may not think of lyrics when they speak about "music." The point is not to separate and label artistic expressions, but rather to become aware of those elements of artistic expression that make communication contexts authentic for the people in a given culture.

That's why we chose a few artistic keywords from each APPLICATION article for listing in the Table of Contents—as you scan the list, you'll get just a taste of the rich array of artistic combinations within the cultures of the world. For example, through her description of trauma healing, Atkins introduces us to carving, wood burning, hat weaving, wall decorations, songs, laments, and dances. Likewise, Ferguson's journey with storytelling taps into drama, dance, song, painting, henna, and music videos. As you read the articles, you'll discover just how much these different artistic elements interact with each other. The Wordles at the top of each article also provide a sense of how all artistic expressions are connected through the commonality of their communicative effect, although some rise to the surface more in certain contexts compared to others.

It is our hope and prayer that the articles found in these pages will encourage you to new levels of finding and appreciating the power of artistic expression in your own communication contexts. We think you'll start noticing artistic elements in places you might not have thought to look before—in the materials, sounds, sights, and body movements around you. And, as with all the other disciplines of orality, our best results will come from encouraging the people of the culture to share the good news with others around them. They embody communication in a way no outsider ever can.

### ICE and ION Collaborate

It has been a special privilege as guest editors of this journal and as representatives of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (ICE) to partner with ION in this important collaborative effort. ICE began in 2003 as a small group of people working in cross-cultural arts ministries with a shared vision “to see Christ-followers from every culture express their faith through the own heart music and other arts.”<sup>2</sup> In its first decade the ICE network grew to over three hundred associates, some of whom launched their own national and regional initiatives in Latin America, the Philippines, and the Korean diaspora.

Several charter members of ICE (Tom Ferguson, Frank Fortunato, Robin Harris, Roberta King, Paul Neeley, Brian Schrag, and others) were involved in the orality movement in its early years, giving papers at ION gatherings on the ways in which music and arts connected to storying and orality. In 2007, Avery Willis approached ICE leaders to launch a Music and Arts Task Force in ION, and the foundational meetings that took place were energized by the vision of promoting a global movement for the use of all culturally-appropriate arts in making disciples of oral learners.

In addition, the Task Force was committed to the idea that storytelling, singing, dancing, dramatizing, drawing, sculpting, and other local arts are fundamentally interrelated means of telling God’s story. They affirmed that music and arts support other strategies to evangelize, disciple, and empower oral people, but that they can also stand on their own in communicating God’s story. Robin Harris served as the first Task Force coordinator, eventually passing the baton to Frank Fortunato, who served for several years and was succeeded by Erica Logan.

The arts presence grew steadily at ION with Task Force participants teaching and learning about ethnodoxology approaches, and bringing multicultural worship to ION gatherings. Collaboration between the ethnodoxology movement and its orality counterpart also grew, resulting in regular participation in one another’s events, publications,<sup>3</sup> and other initiatives. Arts was recognized within ION as one of the “Seven Disciplines within Orality”<sup>4</sup> and storytelling, once the primary

concern of the orality movement, came to be considered as only one of many effective forms of communicative art forms to be employed in the complex task of discipling oral learners.

The ION and ICE networks thus have much in common in our desire to see God's kingdom grow and mature through every form and means of communication God has graciously put at our disposal. May the collaboration illustrated in this issue of the *Orality Journal* be a sign pointing to even more such efforts between us in the days and years to come!

With special thanks to Samuel Chiang, who first invited us to consider this project, and to Robin Harris, President of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists, who offered invaluable counsel and logistical support as the project took shape and moved toward completion.

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Mike Cartwright's article on "Greek Music" in the *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, online at [www.ancient.eu/Greek\\_Music/](http://www.ancient.eu/Greek_Music/) (accessed November 6, 2015).

<sup>2</sup>From the ICE website at [www.worldofworship.org](http://www.worldofworship.org).

<sup>3</sup>There were several chapters which specifically focused on Bible-storying methods and case studies in ICE's large volume edited by James R. Krabill, Frank Fortunato, Robin P. Harris, and Brian Schrag—*Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook* (William Carey Library, 2013), [www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com](http://www.ethnodoxologyhandbook.com).

<sup>4</sup>Samuel E. Chiang, "Learning from my own mistakes," *Mission Frontiers* 36 (2014):3-4.

## Engaging People through Visual Arts

*Geinene Carson*

*Geinene Carson has a BFA in Painting and Sculpture. She has been with Operation Mobilization (OM) since 1999 serving in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. She now resides in Atlanta, Georgia, serving as a consultant for ArtsLink, the visual arts ministry she founded within OM. She is a wife, mother, practicing artist, and well-traveled advocate and mentor for using the arts as a bridge between peoples and cultures.*

mural  
painting

The small town was full of abandoned houses. Old bricks, doors, and broken pots littered the sides of the streets. Upon arrival, the artists began observing the people, spending time among them, and praying for an understanding of the culture. Every morning as they walked through town, they received invitations to enter homes and drink tea with locals. Over those cups, God began to teach these artists about the area and people he had brought them to.<sup>1</sup>

### The Posture of a Conscientious Artist

The conscientious artist has great opportunities to build bridges with communities of different cultures. When an artist is willing to spend time prayerfully observing a culture and creating informed art, it is more likely that his or her art will attract and occupy people's attention. To go further, artists who invest in the lives of the local people and make

themselves accessible along with their work will likely reap much favor. With favor comes the right to be heard.

“There’s a deeper meaning in this piece. I’m going to return tomorrow to sit and contemplate it,” one young man proclaimed. And return he did, to sit silently for hours in front of a painting entitled “The Passage of Time”—an artist’s

response to the changes she saw in the local village over the course of two years. This North African man had read the Bible but had many questions. Standing in front of the painting, the artist shared her inspiration and the painting's deeper truth, centered on the gospel. This curious student returned for several days to gaze at the painting that had captured his attention and to continue conversations with the visiting artists.<sup>2</sup>

As an expressionistic painting of a tree, there was nothing overtly Christian about the painting. The tree, however, resembled the locally common olive tree. Painted in prayerful response to the artist's perception of changes in the community, the artwork begged deeper engagement. Through the artist's availability, that engagement was made possible and meaningful conversation ensued.

However, particularly in the West, it seems that artists think their work should speak for itself, their only responsibility being to birth and release their work to the exposure received by hanging on a wall or sitting on a podium. What artists can learn in cross-cultural experience is the importance of their own presence to bring further depth and influence to their work.

### **The Role of the Artist as Observer, Learner, and Relationship Builder**

Artists who go into the community as learners not only create informed art, but also naturally initiate genuine relationships. Another opportunity for local interaction is through the artist staying visible during the art-making process by creating publicly or maintaining an open studio. With this approach, art exhibitions, for example, become less about viewing art and more about a celebration of shared experience.

Through being accessible at art events, the artist honors those viewing the artwork as well as the artwork itself. This accessibility places more importance on the actual message and expresses sensitivity to the people receiving it. In spite of the stereotype that art should speak for itself, the artist can show a motivation to communicate and build lasting relationships. Moreover, artwork created with a sense of shared ownership is better appreciated and its message more deeply received.

This practice of working within culture and being accessible to it is not simply a pragmatic strategy. In so doing, we follow in the footsteps of Christ, the incarnation of God,

“full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). God in Christ gave grace through works of healing and provision, and through his death and resurrection. These works were in response to humanity’s need and were a reflection of God’s character. Through his accessibility, Christ also spoke the truth of God represented within his creative acts.

Artists who are believers should respond to this challenge by knowing what they are being called to communicate, standing confidently in their divine inspiration. If artists are never present with their work, then how can it be expected of those not of the kingdom, not of the same culture, to understand or interpret their artwork with the same insight? If there is no effort invested in building relationships with the viewers nor any level of citizenship with the community, people may not feel that questions and curiosities conjured up by a piece of art merit dialogue.

### **Artists in Contexts Where Ministry Is Challenging**

Even though the exhibition was the goal they were working towards, it became quite apparent that much of their ministry would involve personal interaction

with the artisans of the area. The group’s prayer was that their creations would resonate with the very people they had built relationships with, speaking a message of restoration and redemption into their lives.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, God has opened unique doors for artists to minister in parts of the world that are typically closed to the gospel. We have been exploring ways artists can impact Muslim communities through murals, art workshops, exhibitions, encouraging creativity in public institutions, and establishing community art centers. This creative approach has allowed us to be less confrontational and yet more direct in communicating the good news of Jesus. People who would reject gospel tracts stop to ponder scripture associated with images that are familiar to them.

Some years ago, a group of visual artists were invited onto a public university campus in one of these areas harder to reach. They had been warned that the town had the reputation of being one of the most hostile in the country. The artists did what came naturally, building relationships with local people by carefully observing the culture, prayerfully creating art,

and producing an exhibition. The people were welcomed into the studio space to view the artistic process and, in some cases, to directly collaborate on a piece of art. This genuine encounter between the people, the artwork, and the artists helped to draw nearly one thousand visitors to the exhibition. The nonthreatening atmosphere created a perfect forum for reducing the distance between cultures. Locals were shocked to see an art exhibit focused on celebrating their own people. These artists thoughtfully created art that displayed the familiar in a new light, creating a venue for deep spiritual conversation.

Viewers gave each piece of artwork their undivided attention, seeking out each artist to ask in depth about the meaning behind every color, symbol, pattern, and title. Had the artists left their work to simply “speak for itself,” they would have never encountered such keen interest. Through their availability, the depth of the artwork’s inspiration and meaning was fleshed out, and opportunities for truth-sharing and meaningful relationships were seized. The artists, thrilled by such an outcome, discovered that God has an exciting role for visual artists in his kingdom mission.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Anonymous, “Restoring Broken Jars,” OM Artslink, 2009, [http://omartslink.org/news/news\\_WAsia\\_09.php](http://omartslink.org/news/news_WAsia_09.php).

<sup>2</sup>Anonymous, “Peace Reflected Artistically in North Africa,” OM Artslink, Summer 2007, [www.omartslink.org/getInspired/inspiredNorthAfrica07.php](http://www.omartslink.org/getInspired/inspiredNorthAfrica07.php).

<sup>3</sup>Anonymous, “Restoring Broken Jars.”

<sup>4</sup>Anonymous, “Restoring Broken Jars,” OM Artslink, 2009, [http://omartslink.org/news/news\\_WAsia\\_09.php](http://omartslink.org/news/news_WAsia_09.php).







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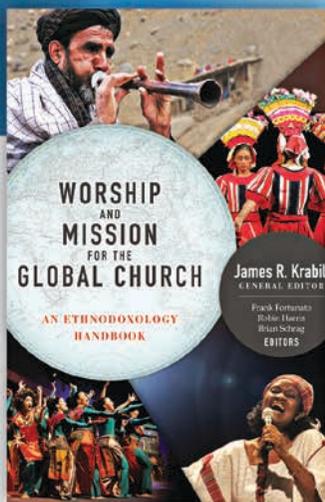
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ISBN 978-0-87808-493-7  
James R. Krabill, General Editor  
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ISBN 978-962-7673-35-4