

Graduate Research Symposium Proposal

Title - Judaic Mosaics: Shifting Views on the Second Commandment and its Impact on Design

Program of Study – MFA Studio Arts

Presentation Type – PowerPoint

Mentor – Professor Smith

Student Name – Hannah Lynch

Dating back to the earliest civilizations, societies utilized art as a means to communicate and to preserve their unique stories. From Spanish cave paintings to Navajo cotton weaves, history is presented throughout the crafts of every culture. Studies of these images disclose not just the narrative of the people, but also, the values they held with the highest regard. Looking to the Israeli nation in particular, mosaic art found in excavated synagogues defends the earliest priorities and beliefs of the Jewish people. Inspired by her recent trip to Israel, the student proposes to present research on ancient Jewish mosaics in order to draw conclusions about the nation's culture during the time of artistic creation. The student will simultaneously examine the history of the Jewish people specific to these periods, to best synthesize information inferred from the mosaics with the actual events of the correlating era. Primary focus will be placed on the progression of compositional content, from aniconic to iconic, highlighting the shift of boundaries placed on the second commandment, "you shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4). The student will clearly outline a timeline of mosaics, from the era of the Second Temple in Jerusalem to the subsequent periods after its destruction. Images will be provided throughout the PowerPoint presentation, as well as scholarly historical defense for drawn conclusions. In order to apply the research to her field and

degree program, the student will demonstrate her progress on designs for two mosaic pieces, one representative of an aniconic design and one representative of an iconic design. In keeping with the student's degree thesis to investigate the psychological impact of one's environment on resulting mood, the student seeks to design the mosaics in a manner that appeals to two dichotomous emotions. Proposed as an intriguing addition to the Graduate Research Symposium, the student intends to present a scholarly perspective on art history and Judaic culture, with an emphasis on how Christian artists may apply these concepts in modern art.