

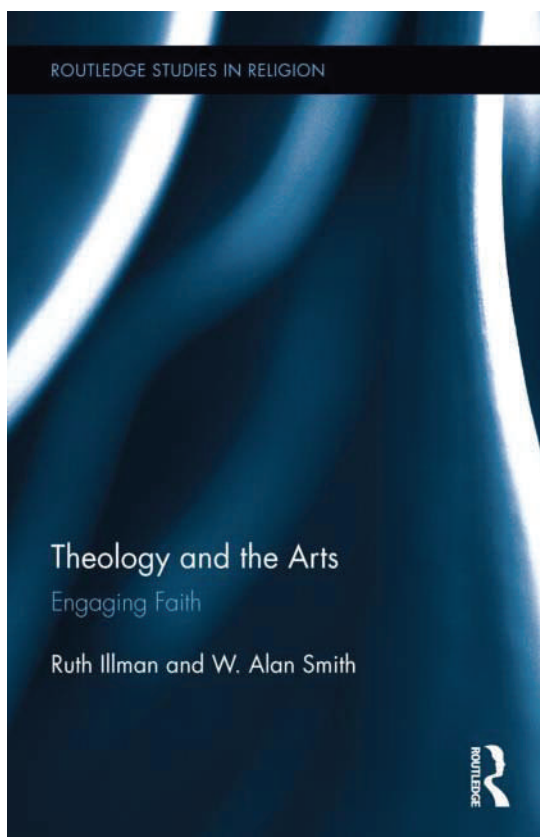
Theology and the Arts

Engaging Faith

Ruth Illman and W. Alan Smith

'The book's contributions to theology are many: it bridges the disciplinary study of practical theology and the arts, challenges and amends theology as it has been constructed, gives ample space to showing practical theology at work, and works across differences of international location and religious tradition.' – Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Vanderbilt University

'W. Alan Smith and Ruth Illman have identified a movement within theology that bridges disciplines as diverse as art history, ethnography, and justice and peace studies. Their methodology making sense of this development is truly momentous.' – Kimberly Vrudney, University of St. Thomas, USA



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This book brings the emerging fields of practical theology and theology of the arts into a dialogue beyond the bias of modern systematic and constructive theology. The authors draw upon postmodern, post-secular, feminist, liberation, and dialogical/dialectical philosophy and theology, and their critiques of the narrow modern emphases on reason and the scientific method, as the model for all knowledge. Such a practical theology of the arts focuses the work of theology on the actual practices that engage the arts in their various forms as the means of interpreting and understanding the nature of the communities and their members, as well as the mechanisms through which these communities engage in transformative work, to make persons and neighborhoods whole.

This book presents its theological claims through the careful analysis of several stories of communities around the world that have engaged in transformational practices through a specific art form, investigating communities from Europe, the Middle East, South America, and the U.S. The case studies explored include Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Druze, indigenous, and sometimes agnostic subjects, involved in visual art, music, dance, theatre, documentary film, and literature. *A Practical Theology of the Arts* demonstrates that the challenges of a postmodern and post-secular context require a fundamental rethinking of theology that focuses on discrete practices of faithful communities, rather than one-dimensional theories about religion.

Contents: Part 1. A Practical Theology of the Arts Introduction: A Prelude 1. When the Center No Longer Holds: Challenges to Modernism 2. Otherness and Meaning: Dialogue and Interpersonal Relatedness 3. Outlining a Practical Approach to Theology and the Arts Part 2. Études 4. Art as Community Practice: Murals from the Voice of the Community 5. Fabric Arts in Peru as Identity 6. Literature as a Scene for Dialogue 7. Eliminating Walls, Honoring Stories: Improvised Theatre "Creating Space" 8. Film as an Embodiment of Interpersonal Relations 9. Music as an Attentive and Creative Interplay 10. Embodied Grace: Dance—An Art Form that *Transforms* 11. Finale and Recapitulation

Ruth Illman is Director of the Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, associated to Åbo Akademi University in Åbo, Finland. She is committed to research on interreligious dialogue and the role of the arts in this dialogue, cultural encounters and peace research. She is also the editor-in-chief of the international peer-reviewed journal *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*. Illman has published widely in international journals such as the *International Journal of Public Theology*, the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, and *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*. Her book entitled *Art and Belief: Artists Engaged in Interreligious Dialogue* was published by Equinox Publications in 2012.

W. Alan Smith is Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Florida Southern College. An ordained minister, he has been active in regional and general levels of work in the denomination as well as in higher education. He was most recently the Executive Secretary of the Religious Education Association. He is the author of numerous articles in journals including *Religious Education*, *Teaching Theology and Religion*, and the *Forum on Public Policy*.

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