

An Angel in the East End of London

This is a very personal account of how one of the largest works of public art in London at the time came to cover 850 sq. ft. of the exterior of a remarkable, iconic modern Anglican church in London's East End in 2004. This was '**Angel**,' a temporary site-specific installation by artist, **Rose Finn-Kelcey** (1945-2014) which, in the first half of 2004, glittered and shimmered gloriously through 85,000 shimmer discs over a busy and gritty East End parish.



I have now retired from active ministry but from 1995 – 2013 I was the Vicar of that church and parish and in that time I can truly say that art transformed the identity and culture of that church community in totally unexpected ways, freeing attitudes and creating an openness to new things which would have seemed impossible in the first nearly 40 years of that church's existence.

In 2007 '**Angel**' at St. Paul's, Bow Common was the joint winner of the 2007/2008 ACE Award for 'Art in a Religious Context'. And then, in November 2013, just a week after I retired, the church itself was formally recognised as the most significant modern church in Britain as Winner of the **National Churches Trust Diamond Jubilee Award** for the UK's "**Best modern (post-1953) church**" (photo below). There were over 200 nominations and a very prestigious short-list of 10 notable buildings. The judges were from the National Churches Trust, the 20th Century Society and the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association.

The judges commented that the building has been "*hugely influential and a signpost for future Anglican liturgy*". They further went on to say that "*this building is the embodiment of the ground swell of ideas about Christian worship, loosely termed the **Liturgical Movement**, which swept Europe and the United States after the Second World War. According to this thinking, the church as a building is first and foremost a liturgical space - a house for the performance of the liturgy and the gathering of the community.*"



It is a little unexpected, perhaps, that Britain's best modern church should be in what is still such a very 'unprestigious' area of the nation's capital. For the years in which I knew it and for some years before, the parish of St. Paul with St. Luke, Bow Common was the 4th poorest parish in the Diocese of London on the UK Index of Multiple Deprivation. Indeed, from the earliest days of this being a populated area, this was not a prosperous area, though fortunes have varied since that time. The fullest account so far of this remarkable building and a history of the area can be found on the church's website <http://www.stpaulsbowcommon.org.uk/heritage/detailed-history/> *.

Since 1998 this building has been used internally as a remarkable space for art, starting with the relocation in expanded form of an exhibition which had just been shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum and which was as startling a revelation of the unexpected genius of the building for this kind of use to those of us whose church it was, as to anyone else! But none of us had imagined that with the right artistic eye and mind even the exterior could become stunning gallery space. It was artist Rose Finn-Kelcey who had that remarkable eye and mind and instinct and who, in 2004, brought her 'Angel' to dwell and shimmer for a while in our small corner of the East End.

None of this was obvious or even possible when Robert Maguire and Keith Murray created this extraordinary space in 1958-60 to replace the bombed out Victorian gothic first church of St. Paul's, Bow Common. Churches just didn't 'do art' back then, so nothing unexpected there. But they do now - or some of them do - and many of them could host art installations but have never thought to do so! When Rose came into our lives she was commissioned by Art and Sacred Places (ASP) and with the also remarkable Rachel Steward of Artwise as curator. As we approached the turn of the millennium we were witnessing to the now not uncommon close partnership between art in its many forms and sacred spaces - mostly Christian churches - which were never built with such things in mind and whose members may possibly have been aghast at such a use when first built.

The Back Story

Angel did not just 'appear' in Bow Common. It could never have appeared without a very particular back story which took the church from a much guarded sacred shrine, resistant to such alarming innovations, to becoming an ideal and wonderful gallery space for a variety of art. Indeed, every 'sacred space' which now welcomes and embraces art will have its own individual 'evolutionary' tale, tracing how such a thing had come to be. Classically, churches have been 'safe places' which no-one would ever have dreamed of 'messing with' in innovative ways, even for community or aesthetic use. Even though churches have long been sponsors and patrons of 'The Arts,' often containing remarkable artistic interpretations of religious themes, they have had a singular use for liturgy and worship alone and not as exhibition space.

But, as society itself has evolved post-War and religion has lost its once guaranteed special and 'protected' status, there has been a greater freedom to explore and innovate and risk new uses of once very singularly defined sacred spaces. This does not just apply to Christian churches. In 2000 St. Paul's, Bow Common was part of a 'Millennium Art Trail' in which



synagogues and a mosque, as well as a number of churches, each displayed a single art work and together formed a contemporary artistic 'Pilgrims' Way' across London. At our church we exhibited Nigerian artist Sokari Douglas Camp's crucifix strongly referencing the horrific racial murder of 19 year old Stephen Lawrence in Eltham in south-east London in April 1993. The view above shows this work in the church with Rt. Revd. John Sentamu, then Bishop of Stepney and now Archbishop of York. (This is a very appropriate juxtaposition as Bishop Sentamu was one of the Advisers to the Stephen Lawrence Judicial Enquiry.)

In the major account of the church which I wrote in 2015 (*see link above**) this back story is traced in the Appendix [Section I, p 314 onwards]. The original Victorian building had been destroyed in World War II and Government War Reparation funds provided for the rebuilding of one church to replace two damaged church buildings - the nearby St, Luke's, Burdett Rd., as well as St. Paul's, Bow Common. The bigger site of St. Paul's was chosen as the location for a new church and the new combined parish would henceforth be the 'Parish of St. Paul with St. Luke, Bow Common'. Key to this back story is the Vicar who came to the Parish in 1951 - the **Revd. Reginald Gresham Kirkby** who stayed there for 43 years until 1994 and was succeeded by myself in 1995. Fr. Kirkby was a remarkable man, a single-minded visionary who took no hostages! He described himself as a 'Socialist anarchist' and it was his radical political outlook which also inspired his liturgical vision. [*In the full account * see section A, p 11 onwards*]

For centuries, the layout of western churches had continued unchanged. They were essentially axial buildings with a progression along an east-west axis with the 'power' very powerfully and visibly invested in the chancel/sanctuary at the east end of the church with the people very clearly kept in their place to the west. In the sanctuary was the High Altar and also the clergy who, alone, presided in the place of 'power'. This hierarchical arrangement still continues in many (perhaps most?) church buildings globally. After the 2nd World War much was changing in society and institutions such as the Church were no longer to hold the kind of preferred status which they had held until then. It would be unthinkable in today's climate for Government funds to be spent on rebuilding churches, for instance. With the defeat of fascism and the passing of the 'old order' ideologies such as those held by Fr. Kirkby were not only more present but began to influence such things as how church architecture also reflected the 'power structures' within the Church.

But long before the War there had been early stirrings of this in the 'Liturgical Movement' [*in the full account * see section A, p 27 onwards*]. There had also been cautious expressions of this architecturally. The Judges who awarded the church the National Churches Trust Diamond Jubilee Award for the UK's "Best modern (post-1953) church" had made the significant comment that the building has been '*the embodiment of the ground swell of ideas about Christian worship, loosely termed the Liturgical Movement, which swept Europe and the United States after the Second World War.*'

In fact, the origins of this Movement can be found as early as 1832 in the Roman Catholic Church in the French Benedictine community of Solesmes where liturgical scholarship began to lead to liturgical change, aiming to restore Roman liturgy to its medieval form. In 1903 Pope Pius X convened a conference in Mechelen in Belgium, now regarded as launching the Liturgical Movement. Liturgy was to be the means of instructing the people in Christian faith and life. To enable this the Mass should be translated into the vernacular to promote active participation of the faithful. It was argued that worship was the common action of the people of God and not solely performed by the priest - a very significant 'political' implication for a very stratified and hierarchical church governance. In Germany, by the mid-twenties, the debate about church building was already being drawn into a wider debate concerning the Church itself, its

nature, its structure, the worship that is its distinctive activity, and its function in the modern world. This was beginning to provide the radical theological thinking that was so desperately needed by church architects and church architecture was beginning to be related to theology and it was becoming clear, that in order to understand the purpose of the 'domus ecclesiae' (literally, 'the house of the church', the first churches were, indeed, 'domestic' – in people's homes), one must first seek to understand the purpose of the 'ecclesia' (the church) itself: that the first necessity for church builders was to forget all about architecture and to study the anatomy of Christ's body, the structure of the temple built of living stones.

This idea of liturgy as an inclusive activity, subversive of individualism, while exciting to some, also raised anxieties at the Centre. In 1947 Pope Pius XII warned of false innovations and radical changes, fearing 'protestantising' influences within the liturgical movement.

But it was in the rebuilt St. Paul's, Bow Common that this was first fully and radically expressed in a parish church in Britain and it was Gresham Kirkby's vision and stubborn persistence which led to this. After his arrival in the parish and knowing that there was to be a new church built he toured Europe to explore what was being built in post-War modernist churches which resonated with his own vision, but he returned unimpressed!

Not far away in Limehouse is still situated the Royal Foundation of St. Katharine. Now an excellent conference centre, retreat house and community resource its roots lie in the C12 as a foundation of Queen Matilda. Just after the War it was relocated to the site of the bombed out St. James, Ratcliffe and its first Master on that site was another remarkable East End priest, radical and social reformer, **Fr. St. John Groser**. He and Fr. Kirkby shared a great deal in outlook and Gresham was a constant visitor at St. Katharine's. In 1952 materials and funds were scarce and a very simple, minimalist and spacious new chapel was built at St. Katherine's, designed by Roderic Enthoven. Two years later Fr. Groser launched a competition to find a designer to fit out the new chapel. It was won by an untried young artist and designer called **Keith Murray**, aged only 26 with no previous commissions under his belt. Thus it was that Fr. Kirkby first encountered a church design which resonated with his vision for his own future parish church. Just two years earlier Keith Murray had met an equally untried young architect, **Robert Maguire**. Bob Maguire himself wrote this: *'Keith and I met in 1952 inadvertently at the flat of a mutual friend and we immediately found an absolutely fundamental common cause in liturgical reform (which then seemed a far distant hope) and its implications for the design of churches and everything in them.'*

Thus it was that Fr. Kirkby met Robert Maguire and Keith Murray and a meeting of minds and a common liturgical and architectural vision was forged which led to the design and building of St. Paul's, Bow Common from 1958 – late 1959 and consecrated on 30th April 1960. This early view of 1965 shows how unsparing the design was – a composition of lines and planes and not the slightest decoration or embellishment beyond the bold statement around the porch entrance in lettering by Ralph Beyer, who also designed certain features of St. Katharine's Foundation Chapel.



Again, a full account of all this can be found in *pages 17 – 161 following the link <http://www.stpaulsbowcommon.org.uk/heritage/detailed-history/>*. Such a thing as Rose Finn-Kelcey's Angel emblazoned across that western expanse of brick facing would have been beyond imagination back in those days!

In 1965 this interior view was also taken and the same spare surfaces of brick and raw concrete can be seen inside as well as outside. The only (and beautiful) concession to this complete lack of decoration or embellishment was the remarkable mosaic frieze by Charles Lutyens and in this view it is in the process of being created. [*An account of Lutyens' 'Heavenly Host' can be found on pages 126-142 of the full account.*]



And this remained very solidly the order of the day, that the pristine minimalism of the building, without and within, should be maintained uncompromisingly from then right through to the end of Fr. Kirkby's time as Vicar in 1994 and was even more solidly maintained when his successor arrived!

I did not arrive at the church with any ideas in my head to violate this order or to disrespect the remarkable building whose care was now in my hands. The next two views show the building, virtually unchanged, as it appeared when I came on the scene in 1995.



Some frank comments, now. For all its iconic nature, the church and parish were struggling by the time Fr. Kirkby left in 1994. It was quite unable to fully pay its way and had the smallest church electoral roll in the Diocese of London. It was the 4th poorest parish in the Diocese on a scale of urban multiple deprivation and Sunday congregations were mostly in single figures and certainly less than a couple of dozen at absolute maximum. In my opening remarks in the major written account referenced above, I make the point that for all the national and even global admiration of the building, locally it is still a bit of a puzzle! That part of the East End of London has long been deeply traditional & people knew what churches were 'meant' to look like and some remembered what the previous church had looked like until its destruction in World War II. This new building defied such notions and was neither seen as a 'proper' church nor as an object of local pride!

In the face of such fragility and vulnerability, what I inherited in 1995 was a small group of people who had rallied around Fr. Kirkby – some from the early days of the new building – and who were indomitable! There were little in the way of resources and the building was already in need of repair. The great storms of October 1987 had caused upper level damage to the lantern and roof but English Heritage made it possible to repair these in 1991. Nevertheless, weaknesses in design and materials still continue to cause problems with water penetration and it was my task in the years which followed to address many of these and my successor, Mthr. Bernadette Hegarty, continues to do this admirably.

It is very natural and human that when one feels vulnerable and even under threat (the future of church and parish was by no means assured when I arrived, such was its fragility), that one guards what one has ever more closely and novelty & innovation are avoided rigorously. One of the features of life at St. Paul's, Bow Common which I inherited was the form of worship practised there. As a church very much in the Catholic tradition, under Fr. Kirkby the modern Roman Catholic liturgies were regarded with much sympathy. Indeed they appeared in contemporary language before new Anglican forms of worship and were the only form of liturgy in 'modern' language in the early years of this new building. Thus it was that Gresham adopted the modern Roman Missal as a modern rite for a modern building and it was the established norm when I came to the parish. However, by then there were authorised forms of service in contemporary language for the Church of England but these were spurned by the church and, strictly speaking, Bow Common was irregular (and probably even illegal) in its use of unauthorised forms of worship.

Fr. Kirkby always had a strong rationale for doing what he did, even if it did not accord with what was expected of him even by the Church! It could easily be mistaken for stubbornness or being just plain awkward but there was considerably more to him intellectually than that! In many ways I had taken on a church which had excluded itself in a number of ways from due compliance of many kinds and which was (in my view) at risk of being so out on a limb, with such few resources and such little assurance materially or numerically for the future, that it's future was at risk. But I was convinced that it had a very valuable future and a great deal to offer that community & beyond. Having accepted the offer of the incumbency I raised a question about whether the church might return to offering modern Anglican forms of worship instead of Roman Catholic, without lessening or losing any of the catholic ritual that went with worship. Red lights flashed & bells rang and, unfortunately, this immediately defined me as a revisionist who might even have been sent as a 'lackey' of the system to sweep away decades of precious & deeply considered tradition!

This sounds more than ridiculous when stated as baldly as this but it truly was the way in which I began to be regarded with suspicion by the core group of leadership of the church and started some very difficult times for us all. There was never any personal attack in either direction and discussion was always respectful but vigorous and uncompromising in defence of the status quo.

If I was to go to St. Paul's, Bow Common it was made clear that it would be only on the basis of what had been established as the norm on all fronts during the previous 40+ years. However, I had also discovered how remarkably that same small feisty group of people had advocated the 'little people' in that community as well as others who were marginalised, in small but courageous and significant ways. I admired that and my instinct was to join them and journey together, even with my hands tied and no support from the 'powers that be.' Fear and fragility can produce a spirit of defensiveness but from what I had learned of these people I sensed that they had courage and a deep concern for those disregarded by society. That church had few resources either material or human but what they did have was a remarkable and increasingly noteworthy building and this was being fiercely guarded against potential innovators such as myself!

However, they soon discovered, when I arrived as Incumbent in October 1995, that they had nothing to fear in their new man! I had begun my ministry in the next door parish which had a medieval church and then had cared for a huge Bodley building in Hackney for 11 years and was in no danger of ruining this modernist shrine! I had learned a lot about the constraints and also the opportunities presented and respect demanded, by such remarkable buildings. Mutual affection grew rapidly but even so I was closely watched, just in case! A phrase was even invented (neither Maguire nor Murray had used this phrase and smiled when I asked them about it) to ward me off the novelty of putting up a poster on the walls for Lent and any other 'outrages' which I might subsequently dream up to violate the pristine bleakness of all that brick! I was reminded regularly to be mindful of '*the integrity of the walls*'!

None of us could have imagined back then, least of all myself, where things were to go three years

Shamiana: The Mughal Tent
26 June - 14 September 1997

Recorded Information
General: 0171-938 8441
Current exhibitions: 0171-938 8349
<http://www.vam.ac.uk>

Exhibition Open
Monday 12.00-17.30, Tuesday to Sunday 10.00-17.30

The Nehru Gallery will be closed from 4-17 August for a re-display of objects. The Mughal Tent will be closed on 21 July and 18 August to allow for a further selection of panels to be displayed.

In bad weather the tent may not be open. If in doubt, please call 0171-938 8500 before visiting.

Admission
The Museum price includes admission to Shamiana: The Mughal Tent. Full price £5.00, senior citizens £3.00. V&A Annual Season Ticket £15.00, £9.00 senior citizens. Admission is free for those under 18, students, pre-booked education groups, registered disabled people with a carer, the unwaged, V&A Friends, Patrons and American and International Friends. Entry is free between 16.30 and 17.50.

How to reach the V&A
Underground: South Kensington
Buses C1, 14 and 74 stop outside the Museum.

Most of the Museum is accessible to wheelchair users. Please use the Exhibition Road Entrance or telephone the Education Department on 0171-938 8638 for further information or to make special arrangements.

The Victoria and Albert Museum,
Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL
Telephone: 0171-938 8500

V&A The National Museum of Art and Design

later, nor how something as outrageous and unthinkable as 'Angel' could find a home at St. Paul's, Bow Common nine years later! And it all began, not because of the visionary genius of the Vicar but by pure *accident*! I had a priest friend who worked at the Victoria and Albert Museum and one day in 1997 he gave me a free ticket to an exhibition being held there. I had no idea what the title of the exhibition could mean – it was called, '*Shamiana, The Mughal Tent*,' and I simply had no time to trek across to West London to take time out to see it. This was in the autumn of 1997 and I had begun to be very busy in the parish. I was soon to meet up with my friend at the V&A, however, and it was sheer embarrassment and guilt which drove me to take an afternoon out to go and see the exhibition so that I could tell him I had been to see it! I remember being very grumpy going there and irritated that I couldn't find it in the main body of

the building. I found the installation was housed in a large tent – representing the kind of grand tent (called a 'Shamiana') in which the Mughal emperors would tour their territories in India up to the early C18.

It was a total puzzle! The walls of the tent were bedecked with the most beautiful textile panels all of like format but created by women from around the world, all based on the theme of the 'Tree of Life'. As I explored them I was completely taken aback to discover that this project had begun in the first parish in which I had served, in Stepney, East London! A remarkable community worker I had known and worked alongside, Shireen Akbar, had left Stepney and had gone to work at the Nehru Gallery at the V&A with its extraordinary collection of art from South Asia.

Shireen had then discovered that the last people ever to visit the V&A were the population back in the East End whose art was celebrated here, and especially the many Bengali women we had both known, stuck in their homes, often with quite controlling husbands and little freedom. I myself was born in Calcutta (once East Bengal) and had come to East London at the age of 8 as an immigrant and, along with most of these women, had no awareness of the enormous cultural heritage which was ours.

Shireen then came back to the East End to visit the Bengali women she had known, to get them out of their homes, to travel on buses and the Underground and eventually to enter the vastness of the V&A Museum, none of which they had ever done before. It was vastly challenging for them but when they explored the treasures around them they were astonished to discover that they had such a remarkable heritage and could lay claim to it. And so there on the floor of the Nehru Gallery, inspired by what they saw, and led by Shireen, they created 8 textile panels depicting their own stories and aspirations. These were shown at the V&A and was a huge sensation, inspiring women all around the world to come together in their communities to create a total of 56 such tent panels depicting their own lives and aspirations and now, in batches of a dozen or so at a time, these were being displayed in the Shamiana tent at the V&A. As an immigrant, to be honest, even after 40 years I still felt that really I was no more than a bit of an unwelcome nuisance in Britain and, like those Bengali women, had no idea that behind my brown skin lay such an extraordinary history and culture. I was truly shocked and Shamiana touched me deeply as I wept my way around the tent. The Shamiana principle of art inspiring art was being enacted on the floor of the tent with large numbers of school children, inspired by the tent panels, making small textile pieces themselves.

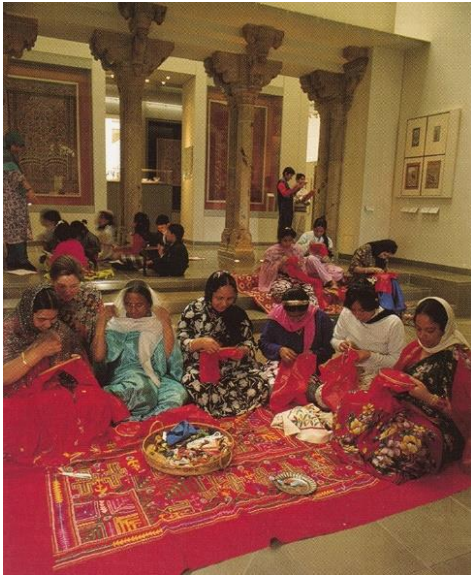


Shireen Akbar

I returned home deeply moved by the exhibition, but also deeply frustrated. Very sadly, Shireen Akbar who had inspired and led the project to the point of the first exhibition of those original 8 panels, had died just 3 months before the major exhibition had opened and this was all meant to be a tribute to her. Most Londoners, including most who live in our area of the East End, never go anywhere near the great Museums in their own city. I knew that people in our area were extremely unlikely to get to see it and that this was almost to negate the very principle which Shireen was trying to enable. In fact I was furious and wrote a frustrated letter to the Director of the Nehru Gallery. With extraordinary spirit and courage, the remarkable Dr. Deborah Swallow asked an alarming question, which was 'what did I want to do about that?!' Without any planning or forethought I replied with the fatal words, 'I have a Tent!' St. Paul's, Bow Common had never been described with that word but I realised that it was, indeed, a huge brick Tent! To my astonishment she agreed to my unfolding idea of transferring the whole exhibition from the grandeur of the Victoria & Albert to an unknown parish church in the heart of London's East End, to be shown in the church – in fact, to show more than they had space to show in the V&A tent.

Brave lady! One of the core lessons which the Shamiana idea demonstrated so powerfully is that art & creativity are not some elitist activity but are part of the potential of every human being – in our case many of our South Asian women initially, and then ordinary (but extraordinary) women all over the world. For me, Shamiana also demonstrated that art can inspire and elicit art from whoever encounters it. Thus, having been impressed and amazed by beautiful expressions of their own culture, of which they had never known very much, on the very floor of the V&A, women sat in the presence of that art and created their own art (as seen below).

Not only was I asking for the church to become gallery space for this exhibition but also for it to honour the 'Shamiana principle' of art inspiring art and for it to be possible for visitors, having seen the Shamiana panels to be able to create their own art in the church before they left. That would mean having textile artist tutors present throughout the duration of the event with quality materials available. A lot of funding would need to be raised! What on earth had I done?! The image below shows the original East London Shamiana artists creating the first panels on the floor of the Nehru Gallery in the V&A.



The prospect was terrifying and at first sight was in violation of all the strictures which had been laid upon me by the 'old guard' core members of the church. So what chance did I stand of filling the church walls with 30 beautiful textile panels? But, it felt so right and, in a very unexpected way, was solidly aligned with the views and ideas about the people of the parish which Fr. Kirkby had held and was now shared by those who succeeded him, about the 'ordinary' members of a community who are seldom celebrated or credited with having much to offer, yet who may have enormous creative potential.

The church was not mine, however, and without the agreement of ALL church members I would not go ahead, on principle. However, in the spirit of Fr. Kirkby, being radicals and fully understanding the importance of the 'local' in our

church life and purpose, they took a deep breath - but they fully understood what I was saying and they 'got it'. They went with me to the V&A and were also deeply moved but also deeply challenged by what they saw. They agreed that such a creative project which was born in our own area - people's art of high quality and not an elitist exhibition - and started among our immigrant community, *had* to be seen in our area and not just in London's 'Museum Land', and where better than in our church? Remarkably, as a building it was superbly and unintentionally ideal as a large exhibition space, though no-one had ever seen it in that way before!



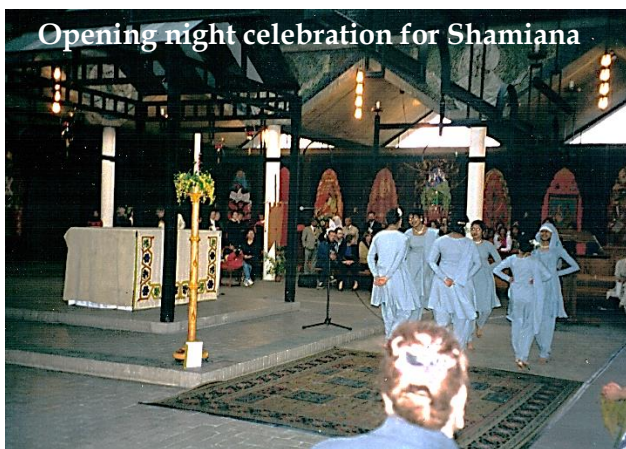
To cut a long story short the whole church backed my invitation to the V&A to transfer an enlarged edition of Shamiana to our church. With this came several other considerations, all of which were costly! Around the time there were right-wing racist groups coming to the fore and one had even presented a candidate then elected onto Tower Hamlets Council. There was an increase in racist attacks on innocent Bengali residents and here was a church with the only Asian immigrant Vicar around inviting


art into his church which celebrated these 'unwanted' immigrants (as well as a lot of other communities in reality!).



Even worse there were to be large banners adorning the outside of the church (see above) some with Bengali lettering! What on earth was this church up to? The largest part of the funds I raise was to hire in two security men to be present at all times, just in case there was any kind of incident. In the event, apart from a stolen mobile phone there was absolutely no trouble! And they were two lovely men! Also, it was now an essential ingredient to buy in the services of two excellent textile artists to be there every day, along with the best silk and other materials. Making art was an extremely important element of the event.

In 1998 raising a sum like £10,000 was an enormous challenge but (I really do not know how, now!) this was achieved. We did not take a penny from the V&A but, in fact, raised money for them from sales of their postcards! To the delight and amazement especially of the 'old guard' who had so protected the building, 30 beautiful panels were displayed in the church from 7th – 31st May 1998 and hundreds of people attended – many could not take it all in and returned again. It was a huge success and even Fr. Kirkby thoroughly approved! The images below show the opening night, the church walls and a workshop in progress.





EXHIBITION TOUR VENUES

Shamiana: The Mughal Tent

Exhibition Tour Venues (from June 1997 until December 2000)

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM Cromwell Road, LONDON <i>Tent and 56 panels</i>	26 June – 14 September 1997
ROYAL MUSEUM OF SCOTLAND Chambers Street, EDINBURGH <i>14 panels</i>	10 October – 8 December 1997
RAGGED SCHOOL MUSEUM 46-50 Copperfield Road, LONDON <i>4 panels</i>	14 January – 26 March 1998
WORLD TRADE CENTRE DUBAI, United Arab Emirates <i>30 panels</i>	17 March – 25 March 1998
ST PAUL'S CHURCH Bow Common, LONDON <i>30 panels</i>	7 May – 31 May 1998
ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM Kelvingrove, GLASGOW <i>40 panels</i>	9 October 1998 – 4 January 1999
SLOUGH MUSEUM 278/286 High Street, SLOUGH <i>12 panels</i>	1 March – 30 April 1999



Shamiana was planned to visit 13 exhibition spaces in the UK and abroad. It was Bow Common and Dubai that showed the second largest number of panels (30) together in one place! Even in the tent at the V & A they had to cycle through all 56 panels.

I have chosen to describe the Shamiana event in such detail because without this crucial turnabout in long-held fixed attitudes to the use of the church, installations such as Angel could never have taken place and, indeed, art would not have found a very fine space and setting in a local area of East London which had never hosted art. The greatest thing about Shamiana, for me, was the courageous journey of that little church community into new and uncharted waters. No other local church had stepped outside of their comfort zone in this way and I admired their courage. Arising directly out of Shamiana, other art projects and other uses of the main church space followed and an account can be followed on *the link, as above**, from pages 331 – 347 including enthusiastic responses on such use by Robert Maguire who, with Keith Murray, designed the church.

Angel

And so, fast forward 5 years to 2003.



By then Shamiana, Stitches in Time and the Millennium Art Trail had found an ideal home at St. Paul's, Bow Common and the general mind set of the church was now one which was more open than ever to new possibilities – even risky possibilities! Every new use of the church felt risky and caused me much personal anxiety behind the scenes! This was all such new and untried territory – what if it all backfired and the church proved to be a bad fit for every next installation and we looked ridiculous? With hindsight I needn't have been anxious because it soon became clear what a hugely 'generous' internal space we had which not only allowed works to be displayed well but the huge neutral expanse of brick was often also an excellent context in which to display such works. None of this had been designed in at all consciously and yet there is a genius about the building and those who created it which readily enhanced such unforeseen usage.

Little did I realise, then, how whole new levels of anxiety and risk would surface when Angel started to become a reality! By now I had an instinct for how remarkably versatile the *interior* space was but never had I envisaged ever putting the externals of the building to such creative use! It took Rose Finn-Kelcey to lead us, completely unexpectedly, in that new direction. So far, from Shamiana onwards, we had a good idea of what was to be installed in the church and could at least guess at how it might look in that setting. Even this certainty was completely absent when I first met Rose and her curator, Rachel Steward from Artwise in mid-2003. I hadn't realised that in the previous 5 years St. Paul's, Bow Common had become firmly established as an interesting and welcoming art venue and it was this reputation, and also our gritty East End urban setting which brought Rose and Rachel to explore our church as a possible setting for a site-specific installation.

In June of 2003 I had a brief telephone conversation, out of the blue, with Rev. Keith Elford. I didn't know him but he was the Project Director for ASP (Art in Sacred Places), an independent Art Trust which was formed five years previously 'to promote the interaction between religion and art.' Keith had already written this: *'The relationship between church and the visual arts is an old one and lies behind some of our society's greatest cultural achievements. Art and Sacred Places (ASP) works to reinterpret the relationship within the 21st century. We are interested in what art and church have to say to each other and in making new connections in a society that increasingly divides us into isolated communities of interest.'*

To be honest, fourteen years later I remember no details at all of what we discussed but, having been at this point with other art projects, I recognised something of an exploratory tone about the possibility of a temporary site-specific installation being considered for St. Paul's, Bow Common. There were no particulars and this truly was an exploration with a completely blank slate and the artist concerned was one **Rose Finn-Kelcey**. She was working with a curator from Artwise Curators Ltd. (who offered contemporary art consultancy and curation) who was **Rachel Steward** and, of course, I was very happy to meet them at the church.

I now began to realise that the church was on a wider landscape than I had imagined because of Shamiana and what had followed and that it was considered an 'interesting place' for temporary installations of art beyond our immediate area and it was solely this reputation that had brought about the contact with ASP and nothing at all to do with the iconic nature of the architecture per se., which until now had been the only reputation which drew interest to the church. Every such conversation was worth having and so I met with Rose and Rachel in the church on 8th July 2003 and I do remember that very clearly indeed. The letter below was our introduction:

Dear Father Ross

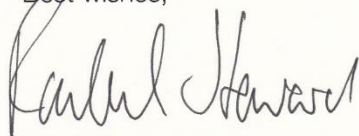
I believe the Rev. Keith Elford has talked with you briefly about Art and Sacred Places (ASP) and the possibility of an ASP site specific temporary commission at St Paul's. I have just left a message on your answer phone and hopefully will have talked to you before you receive this, but in the event that we haven't managed to speak, I was hoping to be able to organise a meeting with you on the morning of Tuesday 8th of July (something like 10.30am would be good, but really whenever suits you). Rose Finn-Kelcey, the artist on this project, and myself, as project curator, would very much like to discuss the possibility of a siting this ASP project at St Paul's.

As Keith may well have explained on the phone we have all been working toward the project being realised at Southwark Cathedral, however for various reasons this is not now going to be possible. Hence we are currently in the position of having nearly all elements in place, including funding, for a potentially wonderful site specific commission. What is need is a partner in terms of a sacred building and the community that this entails. We feel that St Paul's could be a wonderful partner in this project.

As a fuller introduction I enclose a document detailing who we all are, the proposal as we envisaged it for Southwark Cathedral, and an introduction to Rose's work. As you will see from the document, Rose is an artist who has exhibited on an international level with many commissions, including for the Millennium Dome, and whose work is in many important collections. As an artist she approaches her often complex subject matter with a refreshing wit, her proposal for the ASP commission demonstrated this superbly.

While a new project would be very much rooted in the research Rose has been doing during the past months, she would also investigate the new site and think through the commission very much in relation to this. Rose has written "like the Gargoyle Project a further idea would also centre around my response to a particular architectural feature on the exterior of a church, for example a section of gable, a window surround, a doorway, or a porch roof." I think the main thing that would remain the same would be working with the architecture of the outside of the building. However, we should discuss this fully with you when we meet.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Steward', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rachel Steward

Rachel and Rose had a remarkable capacity to listen and to be open and sensitive to where we were as a small church in a challenging area and also to take on board a resistant past but now a brave new spirit which seemed to have been liberated, to push the boundaries of what had been a savagely guarded architectural space for over 40 years but which was now revealing a new genius in the building. They stayed and spoke and listened for two hours and there was a deep and solid trust and understanding built in that time which was to underpin everything that followed. None of us had any idea at all of what might emerge from this engagement but I had a strong instinct to trust Rose and Rachel wherever this might lead. Having said that, I could not have listened closely enough or read the letter carefully enough because the only possibilities I was envisaging were for another use of the *inside* of the church! I never thought seriously an *external* installation! And I could *never ever* have foreseen 85,000 **shimmer discs** as the chosen medium for this work! I was in for a lot of surprises in the months to come!

I discovered that ASP was well advanced in its ambitious programme for 2003 with site-specific works installed in two cathedrals and one very well-known parish church in Brighton. The artist Nathan Coley (Curator, Gavin Wade) had created a work called 'Tabernacle' which was being installed in Portsmouth Cathedral in July of that year. St. Peter's, Brighton was hosting Lithuanian artist Deimantas Narkevicius' commission of a film set as part of the Brighton Photo Biennial in October 2003, with curators Teresa Gleadowe and Paul Barratt. And in January of 2004 it would be the turn of Southwark Cathedral to host two works to be created by Rose Finn-Kelcey, with Rachel Steward as curator. Rose had been working on this commission since 2002.

However, things had not worked out as hoped and even though the two installations were well advanced in concept for Southwark Cathedral, very regrettably this was not now going to take place. However, everything was in place, including funding and a new site had to be found at very short notice. I later discovered that Rose and Rachel had researched four alternative sites, including places in King's Cross and Kensington but ours gave her the greatest scope. Being site-specific there could be no idea of what was planned until a site was chosen and, sadly, Rose's proposed external installations for Southwark Cathedral would never come to pass.

However, in the document sent to me by Rachel in July 2003 it is very revealing to see how Rose's thinking evolved when faced with a physical site for her works. What follows are extracts from that document and a brief glimpse at how Rose had proposed to engage with the physicality of an essentially medieval building such as Southwark Cathedral and then would so brilliantly switch all her energies to produce a huge work which would sit with what is now regarded as a jewel of post-war modern church architecture.

'The Artist:

Rose Finn-Kelcey's work is recognisable for its unpredictability. Coming to prominence in the 1970's as a performance artist, she is now -recognised as a seminal figure in the contemporary art scene having expanded her practice to time based media, sculpture and sound. Her international -reputation is demonstrated with installations, exhibitions and performances across Europe, in Australia, America, Mexico and Korea. Her messages are oblique and thought-provoking, often disarmingly witty.

In a recent work It Pays to Pray commissioned for the Millennium Dome Project she customised chocolate vending machines to produce, on payment of 20p, prayers instead of chocolate! Bounty, Starbar, Timeout, Wispa - are taken as titles for prayers. The idea of indulging our craving for comfort but receiving instead a prayer gives us food for thought. The prayers are delivered digitally by the machines L.E.D. screens. With a final twist and after the prayer is consumed, the 20p coin is then returned to the purchaser.

Finn-Kelcey's work can be found in major collections including the Welkunst Foundation, Bernard Starkman, the Tate Gallery and Arts Council of England.

The Commission: *Working closely with Artwise and the Cathedral, Finn-Kelcey has developed two proposals for the outside of the building to be exhibited simultaneously.*

Gargoyles

I plan to 're-animate' three gargoyles on the south facade of Southwark Cathedral. Replica casts of the gargoyles each covered with thousands of LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes), will be positioned on top of the original stone carvings, creating illuminated, 3-dimensional video screens. This technology will create brilliantly coloured illuminated gargoyles, which can pull faces, stick out tongues, devour, grin, scowl, and wink with a fairground appeal.

Gargoyles were traditionally used to ward off evil, using demons to ward off demons in order to protect the sanctity of the temple or church. Many of the original gargoyles were painted and gilded, often using reds, oranges, and greens, how dramatic and emphatic the effect must have been!



Every gargoyle had a didactic as well as a decorative function and these images of horned or flying creatures, beak headed monsters and screaming demons found on the waterspouts of mediaeval cathedrals may have had their birth in the religious art of the Indian subcontinent. Gargoyles are hybrid creatures transgressing human and animal, thereby inverting and perverting laws of nature, and signaling physical and spiritual disorder. They establish physical, spiritual and moral boundaries on the facade of churches and cathedrals, while breaching those very boundaries with their demonic and mischievous expressions, signaling misrule.

Is it possible for fear and amusement to occupy the same space without nullifying the other? By aligning the gargoyles with computer animation, computer games, carnival, fairgrounds and Halloween is it possible for the public to question their original function as well as be entertained?

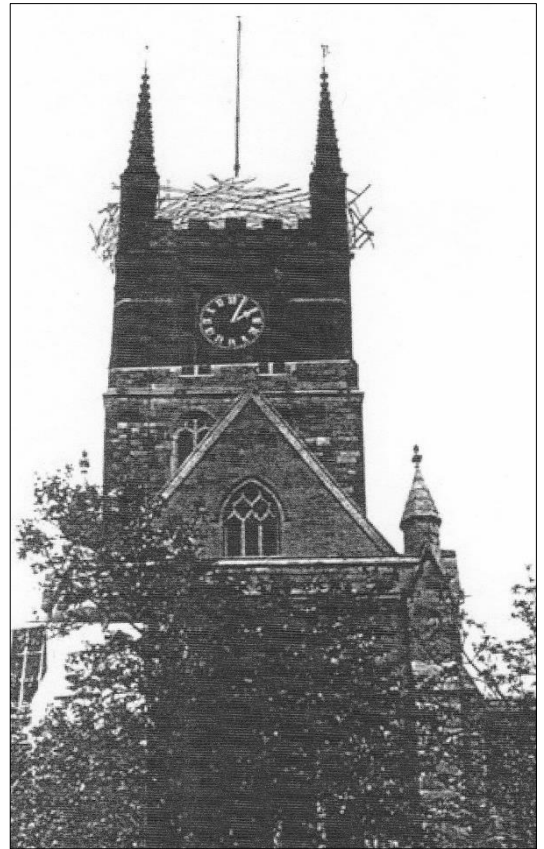
Nest of Light

Inspired by the position of the cathedral which appears to be nestling in a basin surrounded by railway tracks, roads, markets, warehouses and office blocks of varying heights, a mixture of styles and periods of architecture all vying for attention, and all man made. The nest speaks of another kind of architecture/dwelling, a loosely woven natural structure, it would be a wonderful contrast, aptly positioned on top of the tower. The nest also references myths, legends and the tradition of birds in towers. There is both a sophistication and humour in the structure being conceived on such a large scale and also made out of light. It has a logic and an absurdity. It can be read on many levels.

The piece will be made from illuminated frosted polycarbonate tubing using either halogen lights, side-emitting fibre-optic cables of L.E.D's. ... The nest will be constructed out of hundreds of 2m length tubes ... This sculptural installation has to read convincingly as a nest of light from many different locations; from the river, the bridge, the train, the street below, the sky above ...

Absurdly large relative to its host, the nest proposes the existence of a bird the size of a helicopter. The woven and intersecting lines of sharp white light would have a distinctly urban look but at the same time allude to the immaterial, suggesting a more ethereal resident than would otherwise be expected. The nest is essentially architecture of birds.

(Rose Finn-Kelcey 2002)'



This is essentially the story of how what was to become perhaps the largest piece of public art in London (if not in Britain) at 850 sq ft (80 m²), came to find a home in the middle of a very mixed East End community and on the upper west front of a very notable modern church building which was the home of a small but courageous Christian community. Having journeyed from resistance to even a poster on a wall just two years earlier, amazingly the people of this church took an extraordinary risk in welcoming this huge but mysterious statement hovering on high for all to see. We could have been a focus for derision and mockery and none of us had any idea what this would actually look like until it was too late! It was my people's church and without their complete consent and agreement I was not going ahead. In the sections that follow I trace the Minutes of Parochial Church Council meetings (PCC) and also my own unedited preparatory notes (DR) which I made before each meeting, from the time that Rose and Rachel first came to meet the church 2 months later and to present their proposal, right through to the end of the project at Bow Common. In those two months a lot of ground work had been done as well as Rose working hard.

DR Notes for 7th Sept 2003 Item 4)

'I'd like to welcome two people from the Project 'Art and Sacred Places'. All will be revealed! Rachel Steward who is from Artwise (what that is will be explained by her) and Rose Finn-Kelcey, an artist whose work is extraordinarily widely varied, stimulating, thought-provoking and challenging.

Her work has appeared in London, Mexico City, South Korea - from Nottingham Castle, Battersea power Station and alongside the Millennium Dome to the Chisenhale Gallery just down the road in Bow! I also saw her work featured on channel 5 last week in a series on modern art by Lloyd Grossman!

Rachel and Rose had spotted our church and on the day they came to look at it one of our Tuesday sales was on and so they were able to come in to the church and were very struck by it, both outside and in. *(For decades every Tuesday a great Matriarch of the church has had a major sale of goods inside the church with the main west doors wide open. It still continues and has been a major point of contact with local people of every faith and persuasion).* They then contacted me and on 8th July we spent a long while sharing the story of this place. And they came to make a proposal which sounded like a really great idea. I shared this with the churchwardens of the time and with their full support we encouraged Rachel and Rose to pursue their proposal. The signs have been encouraging both from the church authorities and from LBTH (*London Borough of Tower Hamlets*) Conservation Dept. So I asked them to come here today and to share their idea with the PCC and - hopefully - to receive your support and encouragement.

We have a growing use of this church for community art and contemporary art - Shamiana, Stitches in Time, Art in Sacred Places (Sokari Douglas Camp) - so this is something we already enjoy doing. It also gives us a profile which I think this church deserves and which, to be honest, it needs if we are to attract supporters and funders.'

PCC Minutes: 7th Sept 2003 Item 4):

'Duncan introduced Rachel Steward from "Art and Sacred Places" and artist Rose Finn-Kelcey. They recently approached Duncan with an idea for a temporary display of artwork on the outside of the church.

"Art and Sacred Places" is a grant-funded organisation that is currently commissioning new art projects commissioned for specific buildings. So far, St Peter's Church in Brighton, Guildford Cathedral, Salisbury Cathedral, Portsmouth Cathedral and Winchester Cathedral have all been used to display specifically commissioned works of art. If the church agrees to proceed with the proposal our church would be the first London-based project. Rose Finn-Kelcey is an artist whose works have been displayed internationally. She has worked on projects in the London area, including work shown in the Chisenhale Gallery in Bow, and alongside the Millennium Dome.

She has suggested using the long outside wall of the church at upper level (and possibly part of the adjoining wall) to display a piece of art that she will create using small shimmer discs. She will talk to members of the congregation and local residents before deciding on a final design, ensuring that the piece reflects local life.

The Vicar and churchwardens have already lent their support to this project and, with the support of the PCC, the Archdeacon of Hackney will grant a licence for use of the church in this way. Planning permission for the display will also need to be obtained from the Council. The work will be displayed for approximately three months, from February 2004. There will be no cost to the church as the project will be completely funded by "Art and Sacred Places" through grants raised by them, as would a catalogue publication and a 'launch' party.

Melanie proposed and Lorna seconded that the PCC welcomes the initiative of 'Art and Sacred Places to undertake this project at our church. **The PCC agreed unanimously & enthusiastically.'**

As seen above, following my meeting with Rose and Rachel on 8th July 2003 I shared all their information with my two churchwardens and together we encouraged them to explore the next steps. If the project was acceptable to the various bodies from whom permission was needed, then it would be worth taking for consideration by the PCC and then getting serious about this if the Church Council was agreeable. That is what we did on 7th September 2003.

Below is Rachel's submission to Tower Hamlets Council's Planning Dept. on 27th August 2003.

The Planning Service
Tower Hamlets Planning Department

Date | 27.8.03

To whom it may concern:

I have spoken both to Mrs. Harris and Danny Aiano regarding this procedure and as advised I am submitting an application for General Planning Permission including Form 10 - notice 1, an Agricultural Holdings Certificate, plus additional material (app 1 - 4).

In this cover letter I would just briefly like to describe the project and the process of permission that has, and will be sought as the project moves closer to completion.

This is an application for planning permission for the temporary installation of a contemporary art commission on two outside walls of the parish church of St. Paul's, Burdett Road, E3. The project is planned to be installed in February 2003 for a period of three months. It will then be deinstalled and the walls made good. The work itself is a new commission and has not yet been fully visualised. As described in the Permission Summery (appendix Two) the work will be developed after a short period of research and the final proposal will be presented to the Parochial Church Council for approval. The procedure has been approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee, the church Architects and Jane Hamilton of Tower Hamlets Conservation Office. Likewise all developments are being discussed with the parish priest Father Duncan Ross, and we are meeting with the PCC on 7th September.

The artwork is commissioned by the charity Art ad Sacred Places (ASP) which works to develop a dialogue between contemporary art and contemporary religion. There are three such commissions this year, the other two are at Portsmouth Cathedral and St. Peter's parish church in Brighton. ASP has been working in this way since 1998. The main funder for the project is the Arts Council of England. The commission at St. Paul's is by artist Rose Finn-Kelcey who is probably most widely known for her Millennium Dome commission. She has exhibited internationally and has work in many major collections including the Tate Gallery and Arts Council of England. The project is being curated and managed by Artwise Curators Ltd. We have extensive experience working with many site specific projects, most notably perhaps working with Neils Torp on two commissions within his building in Harmondsworth for British Airways. There are further details on all of the above in Appendix Four.

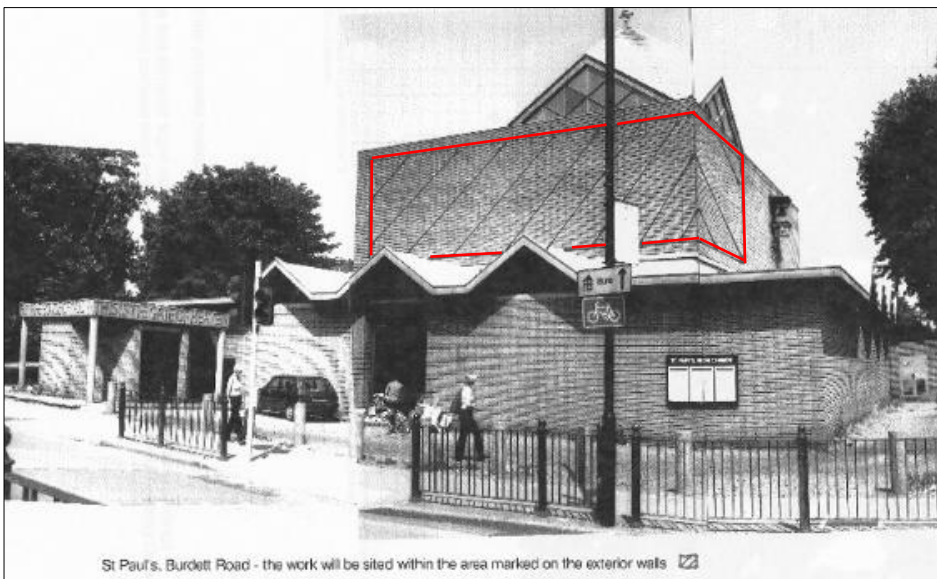
At St. Paul's the artist proposes to create the work (in mural of sorts) using shimmer discs. I enclose details of this material (Appendix One). The artwork will be installed within the area marked in red on the photocopies supplies (Appendix One).

Unfortunately we don't as yet have full plans and elevations from the architect's office, but hope that given the temporary nature of the project, what we have supplied is sufficient.

We are working in the belief that this temporary commission will bring benefit to the church and to the local community in Tower Hamlets, not least in that throughout February and March 2003 there will be access and education events to stimulate discussion and debate about whatever issues arise in response to the new commission.

Yours sincerely,

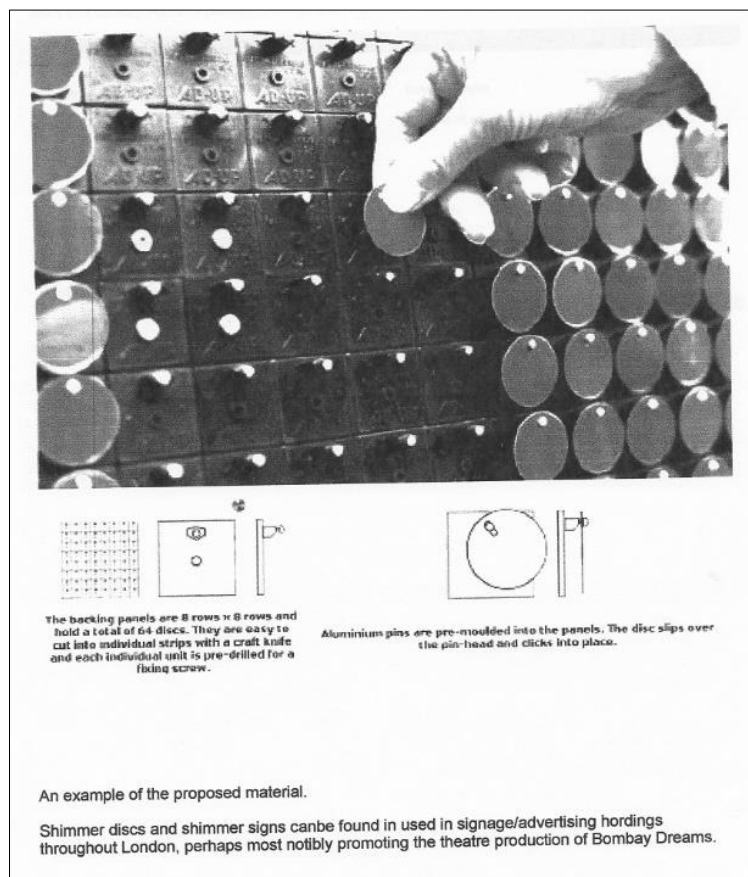
Rachel Steward



From this planning application and from an early site drawing we can see that Rose was initially envisaging a shimmer-disc installation which wrapped itself around the south west corner of the upper elevation of the west front (as shown by the red line) and which would also have a brick border around it. At this stage we do not think there was any version of the final design yet being considered.

This close up detail also shows how shimmer disc panels 'work.'

It also hints at the vast amount of work and application which would be necessary to execute a huge shimmer disk creation such as was being considered for the west front of the church.



When the Church Council met again on 12th October 2003, some three months after my initial meeting with Rose and Rachel, a final design had not yet emerged in Rose's head. Even so, a Notice under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1995 had been posted on the church notice board on 30th September regarding the principle of such an installation and all neighbouring properties notified, with a cut-off date for objection or comment of 21st October 2003. If a more detailed proposal had not been provided for submission to the Council by 28th October then the process would slip by another eight weeks.

These extracts which follow are from my own notes prior to the PCC meeting and a portion of the Minutes of the Meeting itself:

DR Notes for 12th October 2003

'Art & Sacred Places: The highways department had concerns about possible distraction by such an expanse of shimmer discs to passing traffic at what is already an accident blackspot.

Rose has researched 4 sites in central London - Kings Cross and Kensington among them - and ours would offer one of the largest areas for use of such a medium.

The planners may restrict Rose and say no silver discs should be used - they have already said no small wording was to be used in case vehicles slowed down to read them.

Rose will start her research but I have urged her not to force herself to produce something in time for 28 October even if it costs us another 8 weeks or not.

If the funding is not date-stamped it could afford to slip a month or two. A huge amount of work will be involved in fixing all those disks and this should not be rushed. To cover a vast surface like ours Rose thinks that day and night she could do it in 2 weeks.'

PCC Minutes: 12th October 2003 Art in Sacred Places.

'Rose Finn-Kelcey, the artist who is working on the artwork that will be displayed on the outside of the Church for three months next year, brought three panels of shimmer discs for a representative from the Highways Authority to look at, as well as general information about the installation.

The church 'planning' authorities have given support to the display, and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Conservation Department and Planning authorities are considering an application. The Highways Authority however is worried about the possibility of a distracting display causing more traffic accidents in an already accident blackspot.

It had been suggested that obtaining accident statistics from an area where similar displays have been on show might aid the application and this is now being worked on.

In the meantime Rose Finn-Kelcey has begun her research for the project and will be visiting schools, community groups and church members and individuals in the parish. If she is unable to provide enough information about what the final piece of work will look like before 28th October the next planning application would be considered 8 weeks later.'

One of the things which so impressed me about Rose at this stage was the way in which she thoroughly embedded herself in this East End community - both within and way beyond the church. It became very clear that this was not just going to be some clever demonstration of what a great artist Rose was, but a genuinely contextual work arising out of the kind of area and people and community that we were and especially that we included a large proportion of Muslim people in the parish whom we in the church regarded very much as close neighbours and there to be served and 'included in' as much as anyone else. By the time of the next PCC meeting on 7th December, Rose's extensive researches had led her to choosing 'Angel' as the right subject for such a major installation.

Just five days after this meeting the Archdeacon of Hackney gave permission and a Licence for Angel to be installed – for technical purposes this was seen as a ‘temporary re-ordering’ of the church!

This Licence and the accompanying conditions are shown below:

7 Form No 7 Rule 9	
Permission for temporary reordering	
In the Consistory Court of the Diocese of <u>LONDON</u>	
The Venerable <u>DR LYLE DUNN</u>	
Archdeacon of <u>HACKNEY</u>	
Parish of <u>ST. PETER WITH ST. JAMES, BOLDINGHAM</u>	
Church of <u>ST. PETER, BOLDINGHAM</u>	
To the Reverend <u>FR. BENEDICT DUNN</u>	
You have requested permission to carry out temporary minor reordering, and have satisfied me that you have the support of a majority of the Parochial Church Council and that it is expedient to grant your request.	
I NOW give you my LICENCE	
(a) for the following works or proposals,	
(b) for the period expiring on the date given below (which cannot exceed 15 months from the date of this licence),	
(c) subject to the conditions set out overleaf (including conditions as to how the minor reordering is to be carried out and the safeguarding and storing of any item moved as a result of the reordering).	
WORKS OR PROPOSALS <u>as attached</u>	
DATE OF EXPIRY OF LICENCE	<u>16 January</u> 20 <u>25</u>
Notes	
(a) If you desire to extend the above period, with or without changes, you should NOT LATER than two months before the expiry of the above period consult the Diocesan Advisory Committee and submit to the Diocesan Registrar a petition for a Faculty describing fully the works or proposals including any changes, AND ALSO PROCEED TO DISPLAY A PUBLIC NOTICE in accordance with rule 6 of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000.	
(b) If such a petition is submitted then the period of authorization given by this licence set out above will continue in force until determination of your petition.	
(c) If no such petition is submitted, you must immediately after expiry of the period set out above, cause the position as it existed before the grant of the licence to be restored.	
CONDITIONS TO BE COMPLIED WITH ON CARRYING OUT OF WORKS OR PROPOSALS	
<u>as attached</u>	Signed <u>[Signature]</u>
	Date <u>17 Oct 2023</u> 20 <u>23</u>
Copy to Diocesan Registrar and to Secretary of Diocesan Advisory Committee	

St. Paul, Bow Common
Permission for temporary re-ordering

Works or proposals

The project: A temporary commission on the outside wall of St. Paul's Church, February – April 2004.

Commissioning body: Art and Sacred Spaces

Curators: Artwise.

Artist: Rose Finn-Keleey

The proposal: The final artwork will be the outcome of a short period of research.

Materials:

- The final images would be made largely from Shimmer Discs as well as a small amount of acrylic, and wood.
- Shimmers discs are used to create large images out of thousands of circular coloured mirror discs suspended on a special blackboard, allowing them to move in the lightest wind, creating a sparing shimmering sea of colour.
- The discs have been specifically designed for use on billboards and they are made from a fireproof material.

Installation:

- A conservation installer would be used to install and deinstall the work.
- The images would be fixed to the wall using size 8/10 frame fixer screws.
- This would mean drilling into the wall at selected points that correspond to the mortar areas making sure to avoid the brick work.
- The mortar dust would be collected as it is drilled; it will then be used to plug the holes during the making good period, once the work has been removed.
- A final site visit (6 months – tbc) after deinstallation will be scheduled to check the condition of the making good and adjust any colour change.

Lighting:

- A light source is required as the shimmer discs look particularly spectacular at night. The artist proposes trough lighting, as found at the top of billboards.
- These would also be fixed by drilling into the mortar, the same making good conditions would also apply in this instance.
- The power supply would be fed from the inside of the church. Details to be discussed with the church architect.

Local authority consent:

Permission is also being sought from Tower Hamlets Planning Department.

Conditions to be complied with on carrying out of works or proposals

Making good to be carried out as per details above.

The sensitivity of an art work of this size (and its physical installation) impacting on such a major public elevation of such a highly significant post-War church building is underlined in such requirements as:

'The mortar dust would be collected as it is drilled; it will then be used to plug the holes during the making good period, once the work has been removed.'

Also the condition that *'A final site visit (6 months – tbc) after deinstallation will be scheduled to check the condition of the making good and adjust any colour change.'*

What follow is **Rose's own account** of all this: (late November 2003?)

'A brief indication of where my research has taken me

- Visits to local schools.
- Talking to people from the North Poplar Education project and the Pan Partnership.
- Walking around the parish looking at shops, houses, playgrounds, parks, go karting.
- Considering the fact that as well as a Christian community there is also importantly a large Muslim community.
- I have talked to members of the congregation.
- Joined in the Sunday services and helped with the Jumble sale.
- Participated in the Sunday school and at one point got involved in making poppies.
- I have thought about the architectural features both inside and outside of the building, particularly the Byzantine geometry and the concept of having the altar in the middle.
- I looked at a mass of decorative imagery ranging from alter cloth design to Islamic pattern making.
- I considered the fact that the church is significantly at a crossroads I read some of the Sunday School books
- Looked at billboard posters and the school murals.

But the more I thought about the project the more I felt the idea had to be simple and bold, an idea that was fresh and new, an idea that would communicate in different ways to many people particularly to young people and in a visual language that they would respond to.

I liked the directness and simplicity of the children's Sunday school drawings. Also while I was experimenting with the shimmer discs in my studio, I realised that the simpler the image the better it would work from a distance, that it was impossible to convey any complex message using that kind of material.

At the same time I was also wondering what traditionally you might find on that very plain but wonderfully proportioned expanse of church wall.

So on the basis of all these thoughts I decided to take a very familiar religious image, one that we frequently see, and re-present it in a new way that has both a religious and secular reading.

I chose the image of an angel.

You might expect to find the image of an angel high up on that front wall.

I plan to use the shape of an angel only this time instead of making it out of stone or wood the angel will be made from the components used to create a text message on a mobile phone — a capital 'O', colon, dash, bracket - a smiley face angel, the happy face on its side is easily seen although the 'O' or halo requires some thought.

It's a bit like a modern day Egyptian hieroglyphic or contemporary Pitman shorthand, and is also reminiscent of a logo, for some people it will read like a visual game. I really love the fact that the separate parts of the image come together to create the most dynamic and visually economic rendition of an angel, yet at first glance it looks mysterious (visual game puzzle). Angels are the messengers between here and the beyond they exist in both Christian and Muslim religions.

As a text message it would read - I am an angel, and also, I am innocent.

To a seasoned text message user it would come into the category of Emoticons and would be read firstly as an angel, but also as an innocent soul, for innocent remarks.

Really important to the final look is the fact that the wall will be a sparkling shimmering sea of movement created by the thousands of discs. The surface will move and sparkle in the wind and at night it will look particularly spectacular.

The design at this stage only gives you an idea of how the final work will look I have not yet resolved the background.

The title of the work is **'Angel'** and I thought we would put something about the work on the notice board outside.'

'Appropriateness' of Angel to existing themes in the building

**TRULY THIS IS NONE OTHER BUT THE HOUSE OF GOD +
THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN**

Once I met Rose we became personal close friends and spent a lot of time talking about the building and a lot more beside. Even so, I'm not sure at all that there was a conscious connection in her mind with the two major existing themes involving 'Angels' at St. Paul's, Bow Common and I didn't ever make these explicit to her. One 'Angelic theme' is not at all obvious but the other one is highly visible but, I don't think was any kind of major influence on Rose choosing to have an 'Angel' as her subject for the mural. Certainly, she never mentioned either theme to me and there is no reference to either in her notes above.

The Church Porch

The inscription above, in lettering by Ralph Beyer (1960 restored in 2010), is taken straight out of the Book Genesis in the Old Testament, *'Truly this is none other, But the House of God, This is the Gate of Heaven.'* It is a portion of the passage (NRSV) in Gen: 28: 10-17. This is the famous story of Jacob who, having usurped his twin brother Esau's inheritance, is on the run from him. One night he has a dream of what we have come to call 'Jacob's Ladder':

10 Jacob left Beer-sheba and went towards Haran. 11He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. 12And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and **the**



angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13And the Lord stood beside him and said, 'I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; 14and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. 15Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.' 16Then Jacob woke from his

sleep and said, *'Surely the Lord is in this place – and I did not know it!'* 17And he was afraid, and said, *'How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'*

That anonymous slice of wilderness was revealed to Jacob as being none other than the gate of heaven. Likewise, that perhaps enigmatic building which many still don't 'get' and many say doesn't look like a 'proper' church, mistaken variously as a warehouse, a factory or a library, nevertheless in reality *is* 'The House of God, the Gate of Heaven.' For Jacob, this was revealed by the revelation of the **Angels of God** ascending and descending a heavenly ladder. Not obvious at first but there is a strong but hidden theme of 'angels' in the very first entrance to the church.

The Heavenly Host [*see p. 126-142 of the full write-up online**]

The more explicit theme of angels is the remarkable mosaic mural by Charles Lutyens which circles



the interior of the church just above the colonnade. Executed single-handedly from 1963-68 this is very likely still the largest contemporary mosaic in the British Isles - interestingly having the same surface area of 850 sq ft (80m²) as did Angel!

From a very early stage the rationale was that if the porch is indeed the 'Gate of

Heaven' then within the gate we find the 'House of God,' the Heavenly Place wherein dwells the Almighty, the Lord of Hosts. In biblical imagery, the Divine Presence is guarded and surrounded by 'The Heavenly Host'. Strictly these are not 'angels' but a heavenly 'posse' whose sole job is to worship and adore the Divine Being, and to guard and protect. The word, 'angel' comes directly from the ordinary Greek word 'angellos' ('αγγελος') which means 'messenger'. These are the intermediaries between heaven and earth (either human or spiritual) and their sole mission is to travel and to bear the Divine message. The 'Heavenly Host' however travel nowhere! They are eternally surrounding the Divine Presence and very much stay put - they are therefore not strictly 'messengers'!

Keith Murray who designed the church was originally going to devise a scheme around the internal church lintels for the 'Heavenly Host.' Some of his initial sketches can be seen in the *full write up of the church** [on p 128-129]. In the event, the church had been built and he and Robert Maguire had formed the partnership of



Maguire and Murray and they had to move on to new commissions. Charles Lutyens was therefore given the commission (just as neither Maguire nor Murray had ever built a church, so Lutyens had never designed anything like a major mosaic!). When asked what he had in mind for the 'Heavenly Host,' he was very frank and said that he had never seen them and had no idea what form they could have! Lutyens said that angels can't be sent for but simply 'appear'! Keith Murray then asked him to 'appear' him an angel! And over the next five years Charles Lutyens painstakingly allowed ten of the Heavenly Host 'appear' in the church, refusing to contrive or invent but to allow, as best he could, these Beings to emerge from ideas or influences or to whatever he could lay himself open.

Interestingly they do not have what we would describe as wings as they have no need to travel but are each based on a common matrix of overlapping circles.

By the time of the next Church Council Meeting on 7th December 2003 Rose had finalised her design for Angel. This image (not wrapped around the upper face) was her final proposal.



DR Notes for meeting of 7th Dec 2003

'Item 6) Art & Sacred Places: Recapping on the story so far ...

It has been a long process but a very thorough and very rich one to make progress with this national Art Project. Art and Sacred Places - an independent Trust founded by Bishop John Gladwin who is its President - and others have long been convinced that art and religion have always had important things to say to one another.

'Art and Sacred Places' work is based on the conviction that art and religion share fundamental concerns and explore similar territory, albeit in significantly different ways.

ASP chooses a contemporary artist - not just for their ability but for their interest and awareness of the 'spiritual'. Since 2000 they have commissioned 8 different artists.

They also choose a venue: so far Guildford cathedral, Winchester cathedral, Portsmouth cathedral and, for a short while Southwark cathedral, and St. Peter's, Brighton.

Once ASP has the artist and the venue they then hand over to a 'curator'. This is an art organisation which puts the whole thing together, raises funds, manages and co-ordinates between artist, venue and ASP.

Earlier this year the 3rd part of the 2003 programme was to have been sited at Southwark cathedral. It was going so well and then became awkward and a bit demanding - everyone was very puzzled including Southwark. This was very sad and Southwark withdrew.

The artist was Rose Finn-Kelcey, curators were Artwise, but now with no venue. They came across us and heard about us. They came on a Tuesday - fell in love with the building and what they saw going on inside. Rose very taken by the position of the church on a crossroads and on all kinds of crossroads - cultural, race, docklands/ east-end, built up and green; roads, rail, canal, DLR.

She and Rachel Steward the Curator approached me, then PCC and the rest we know.

A lot of consultation has been going on: With us, with our architect; with the Archdeacon and church authorities; with the highways dept., possibly with TFL, and with the planning dept. of LBTH and others.

All these hurdles have been overcome - the final one being provisional planning permission, pending the final design to be displayed on the west face of our church at high level. The medium is to be shimmer discs.

Rose Finn-Kelcey's work has embraced an extraordinarily wide variety of media and styles including performance, sculpture, sound and most recently a series of works using LED technology. References to the spiritual. She is fascinated by modern means of communication - such as LED, fibre optics, also in the use of these with themes often explored in a public context by siting moving/ animated messages outdoors, in direct view of passersby. She challenges normal conventions to portray an entirely different message, usually with witty and ironic results. Her work is always surprising, unexpected, thought-provoking. It makes you think. It is always fun and never dull!

(Read Rose's research script and show her final image)

Angel stands in a long, long tradition of religious code. They appear in all religions. This is very interesting and challenging.

She stresses that the background will make the work come alive and what she shows is a suggestion. More work is to be done - but the basic design is fixed.

Could we pass a resolution to back her up?

I am meeting tomorrow here with her and Rachel and Revd. Keith Elford - Director of ASP.'

PCC Minutes: 7th December 2003 Item 6: Art in Sacred Places.

'Art in Sacred Places is an independent trust formed under the auspices of the Right Reverend John Gladwin, Bishop of Guildford, who is the charity's president.

Art in Sacred Places' work is based on the conviction that art and religion share fundamental concerns and explore similar territory, albeit in significantly different ways.

It works by commissioning contemporary artists to make work in sacred places.

The work is surprising, unexpected, thought provoking and always fun.

Our church, as one of the most significant post-war churches in Britain, has been chosen for their 2003/4 programme, with artist Rose Finn-Kelcey working on a large display for the outside of our church using shimmer discs as the medium.

Rose has spent a considerable amount of time in the community talking to local people, meeting local people, going in to local schools, looking at children's work and looking at Sunday school work. She has produced the image she plans to recreate using 'shimmer discs', which is to be called "Angel". The project is very striking and may well draw a lot of attention to our church.

We have recently crossed the final hurdle in principle in getting permission from the Local Authority planning department for our project.

Duncan will now meet with the director of Art in Sacred Places, Reverend Keith Elford, Rose (the artist) and Rachel from Artwise who are acting as curators for the project, and others.'

Once it became clear how striking such a huge shimmer-disc installation would be, especially in full sunlight or a stiff breeze with so much reflection, glitter and movement on such a large scale, the transport authorities had already rightly raised a question about safety and possible distraction to oncoming traffic earlier on in the previous autumn. They had ruled out the large scale use of silver discs and any small wording which might cause drivers to slow down to read.


Rose had complied with that but, even so, after mid-day as the sun began to move around the corner of the church building onto the west face of the church, increasingly the sun would shine more and more directly onto the face of the installation. By sunset, especially for traffic heading east along Turners Rd. /St. Paul's Way towards the west front of the church, Angel would, indeed, present a dazzling sight. The crossroads outside the church was also a known blackspot for accidents. Rose and I were particularly anxious that this could prevent the project progressing any further and if, for reasons of human safety, this was all called to a halt we felt that we would have to accede to such a judgement. Human safety was paramount.

There was to be an opening event – the equivalent of a 'Private View' so probably the least private such event ever! This was to be held on 21st February just 3 days after installation was completed.

ROSE FINN-KELCEY'S *Angel* is a response not only to the minimal architecture of this 1960s listed Anglican church located as it is at a busy crossroads, but also to the diverse communities of extraordinary individuals within St Paul's and its immediate neighbourhood. Finn-Kelcey's choice of material is innovative and absolutely integral to the piece. The wall above the main entrance (a site customarily associated with sacred figures depicted in stone, glass or wood) will be transformed into a sparkling sea of movement and colour using thousands of billboard shimmer discs. As wind and light play upon this shimmering wall, cryptic symbols appear and, in the words of the artist, "when the separate parts of the image come together they create the most dynamic and visually economic rendition of an angel".

Angel is the third and final project in the current series of commissions by Art and Sacred Places. It follows Nathan Coley's *Black Tent* at Portsmouth Cathedral and Deimantas Narkevičius' *The Role of a Lifetime* at Brighton Parish Church of St Peter. Art and Sacred Places promotes interaction between religion and art, largely by siting contemporary art in sacred places. It engages new audiences by exploring the relationship between art and spirituality, encouraging debate and understanding.

Commissioned by Art and Sacred Places (www.artandsacredplaces.org)
Curated by Artwise Curators
For further information about *Angel* contact Artwise on 020 8563 9495

 THE LONDON INSTITUTE CHELSEA COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN CAMBERWELL COLLEGE OF ARTS CENTRAL SAINT MARTINS COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION LONDON COLLEGE OF PRINTING

The Henry Moore Foundation

Rose Finn-Kelcey

ANGEL

A new site-specific work
commissioned by Art and Sacred Places
hosted by St Paul's Church, Bow Common, London E3

Opening event: Saturday 21st February 4.30 – 6.30pm
February 22nd – May 23rd 2004
24 hours a day (situated on an outside wall and illuminated at night)
St Paul's is on the corner of Burdett Road and St Paul's Way
Nearest tube Mile End: bus 277, D7, D6, 309

Rose and I rather nervously patrolled the streets outside in those days trying to gauge any possible distracting effects of Angel on drivers of vehicles going past. There was nothing noticeable but, to our dismay, just the evening before the Opening Event a man was knocked down on the crossroads!

He was crossing the western arm of the crossroad, across St. Paul's Way on the opposite side of Burdett Rd. to the church, heading north. Most importantly, he was not seriously injured and was able to walk away. Our fear, though, was that Angel had distracted the driver of the car. We managed to find out that evening that he simply had not been looking as he crossed the road and Angel was nothing to do with this mishap!



During the following seven weeks before the next Church Council meeting a lot of progress and planning was put in place. Rose was solidly embedded in our church life and also our parish life. She joined in and helped out with church events such as our Christmas Bazaar and was a member of the Sunday congregation. There was a great deal of affection and respect for her.

This was such a remarkable commitment and engagement of an artist with her client group. When we had a display of textile panels in the church in October 2003 organised by Stitches in Time (work

created by community groups and individuals in Tower Hamlets) Rose was there, as seen in this image on the left. This other image on the right was taken in 2007, long after Angel was no more than a memory and Rose was still a part of the church community.



Latest progress was reported to the Church Council a month after Christmas and just 3 weeks or so before Angel was to be physically installed on 16th and 17th February.

DR Notes for meeting of 25th January 2004 Item 6) A S P

'Rose Finn Kelcey has now been several times to church and we've all had a chance to speak with her about her huge new work which will cover the whole upper west front of the church. It has been a rollercoaster ride! Her shimmer-disk supplier has let her down and they are all now coming now from Japan. We hope! Rose is impressed with the quality and reflective sensitivity of the Japanese discs with much more sophisticated thin film techniques used in laying down the colours on every disc.

Rose has been working closely with our architect and a structural engineer. She has had permission from Church authorities and LBTH (local authority) and is allowed to carefully fix the whole structure to the wall. However, she has come up with a scheme which does not use a single hole being made in the brick wall! The whole framework will hang from brackets which will wrap over the upper parapet and be held down by weights - ¾ ton of them! A few gentle floodlights at night will focus attention on the work rather than illuminate it. We will be reimbursed for electricity used. Invitations are coming back from the printers soon. There will be a Press release after that. Angel will possibly draw a lot of attention and will be very striking.

Abseilers will put it all up on 16th and 17th Feb. I'll be coming back from my few days away on retreat on 16th Feb. so Rose will let the men in and they will assemble all the boards and sections. I'll leave her keys and contact no's. The opening is on Saturday 21st February from 4.30 - 6.30 pm with us all invited and some refreshments and - we hope - a warm church for the first time!

The final day will be on 23rd May. Once the display is under way the Educational programme will unroll. Our own school and Burdett Centre will be involved. Also possibly St. Paul's Way and Stebon Schools. The question was raised at Stebon (a local primary school with some 90% Muslim pupils) of this being a church based project and ASP and Rose are working with the head and a Muslim artist to be aware of the areas of sensitivity for a majority other-faith school.

From the very beginning Rose and ASP have been aware that there are troublesome people around and this may all prove too much of a temptation not to interfere with. We'll have to take it as it comes.'

PCC Minutes: 25th January 2004 Item 6: Update on Art in Sacred Places.

'Rose Finn-Kelcey is currently awaiting a delivery of shimmer discs to complete the artwork after her original supplier let her down. She has been working with our architect and a structural engineer on the fitting of the display.

Frames of discs will be mounted on wood panels which will be attached onto a huge wooden framework. Rose has found a way to hang the display on metal straps at the top, held down by $\frac{3}{4}$ ton of weights on the church roof, so that screws and bolts into the wall can be avoided.

There will be no cost to the church for the mounting and display of the art.

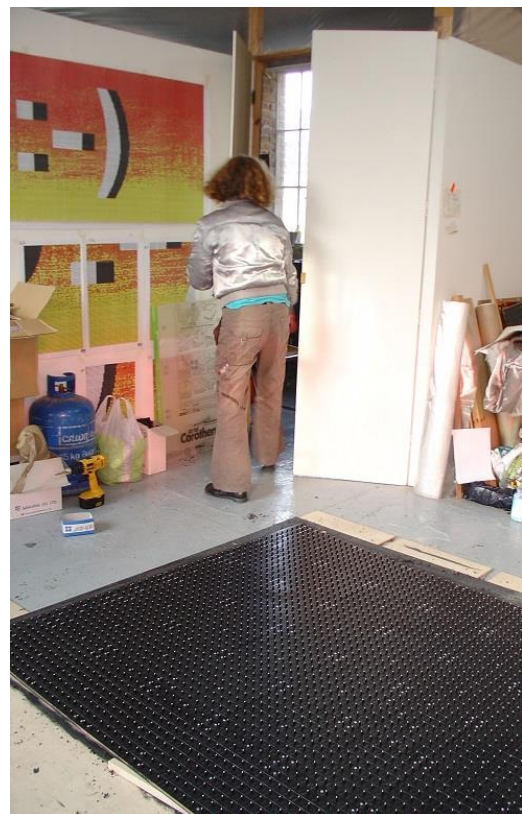
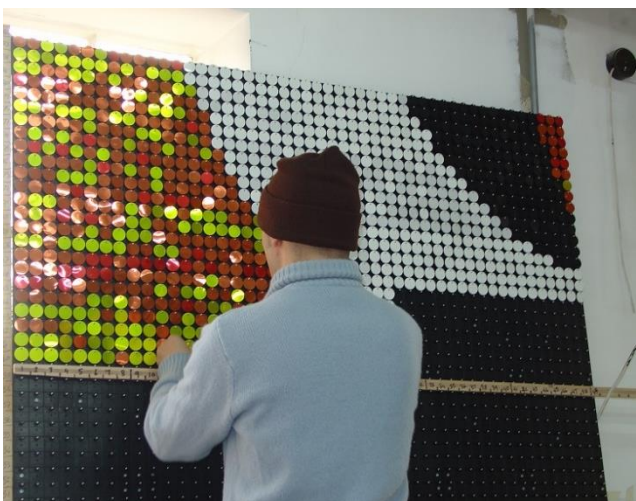
The display will be illuminated at night with 500 watt lamps.

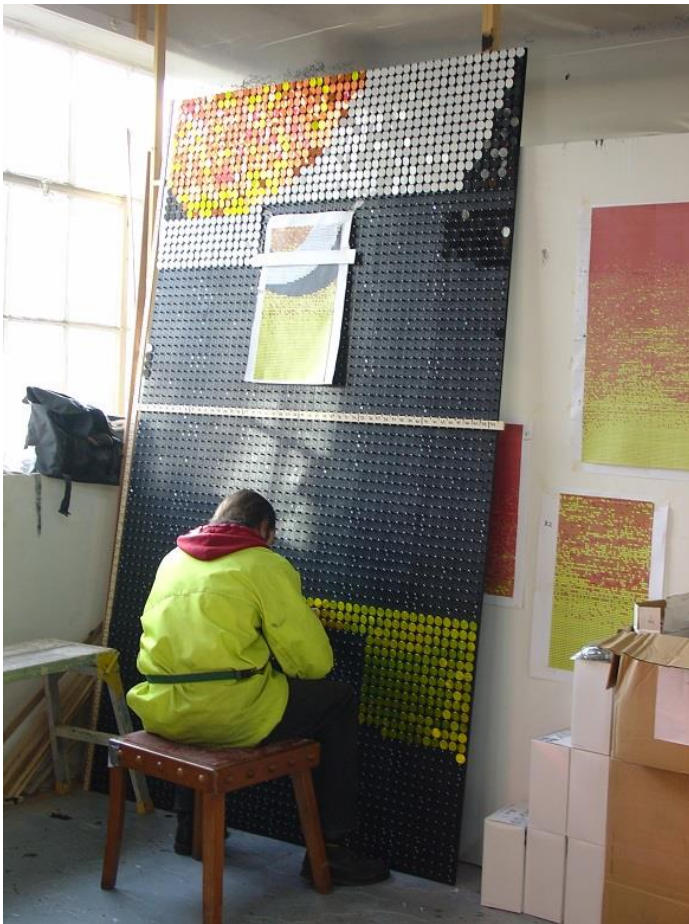
The opening/celebration of Art in Sacred Places 2004 display will take place in the church on Saturday February 21st at 4.30 until 6.30 pm.

The last day for the display will be on May 23rd. Before that time an educational programme will begin with St Paul with St Luke's and Stebon primary schools; with St. Paul's Way School and another local school and also the Burdett Centre. Rose has found female Muslim artists to work with the children in Stebon School as there was an issue there, in a majority Muslim school, of this appearing to be a Christian project. Art in Sacred places may consider further trialing the idea of working with artists in communities such as ours.'

Angel becomes a reality

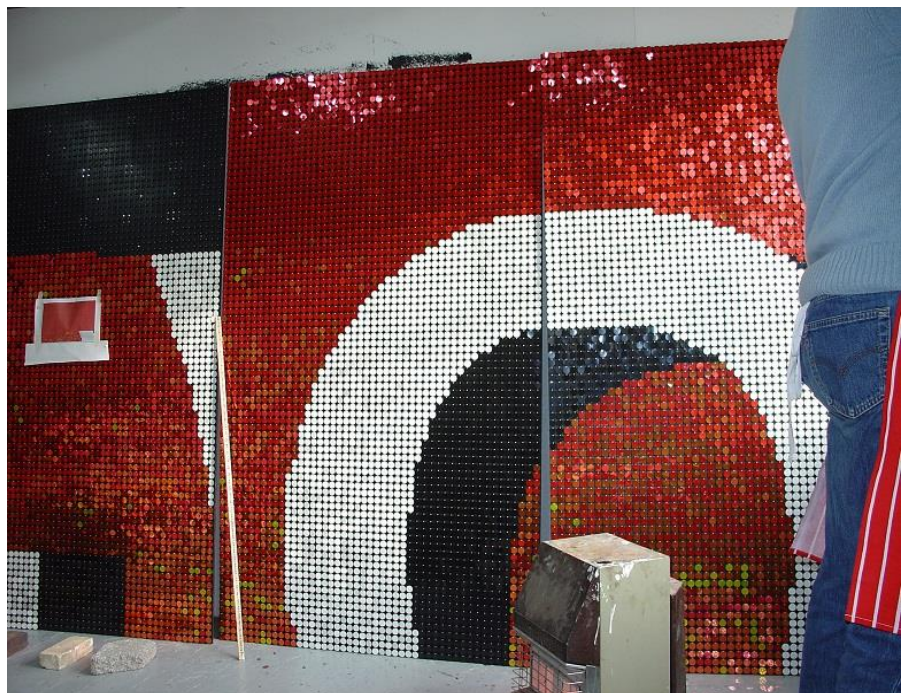
The shimmer discs arrived from Japan in vast numbers (some 85,000 of them!) and the process began of assembling the boards which would make up the final installation. I visited Rose's studio during those weeks while she and a small team were engaged in this major, painstaking work. These views give a glimpse of what they were engaged upon in assembling this huge work.





As can be seen from these views as the shimmer disc boards were assembled, every single disc had a prescribed place on Rose's detailed template from which her team worked meticulously.

Once the boards were all assembled on 17th Feb. they were transported to the church which had largely been cleared of seating so that boards could then be laid out on the church floor prior to being taken out and fixed to the huge wooden frame already on the external upper west face of the church.



In the views below we see Rose and Rachel carefully inspecting the boards as they were laid together on the church floor. They looked very striking but I remember my heart sinking more and more as I saw all this glitz and sparkle filling the church. I truly felt this was going to be a gigantic embarrassment – just a huge expanse of 'cheap bling' hanging there, a total puzzle to the neighbourhood. What on earth was that strange-looking church trying to do or say? And then I saw the abseilers take the first board outside and for the first time I saw the wind and the light catching hold of and stirring all those discs and immediately they 'came alive'!

The one thing I could not have imagined even in Rose's studio or on the church floor was the incredible dynamic force that Angel would be in the changing wind and light. I had only seen it close up and the individual discs dominated all that one saw. But up at that height and distance the whole mass of discs became an immense flowing, rippling, dazzling continuum. It was breathtaking! And SUCH a huge relief! I was never more aware of the huge risk we had all taken and of the huge trust we had rightly invested in Rose and Rachel!

The installation days slipped by a day and finally on 17th February 2004 all those components parts of the installation were transported to the church to be laid out on the church floor. Meanwhile high up on the upper west face of the church abseilers were putting up the frame on which Angel would hang in the months ahead. Life has to go on, however, and as can be seen in some of the views the usual Tuesday Community Sale was held as usual and the workmen had to carry the boards through racks and tables of clothing and bric-a-brac! The next day, when the church was not in use the actual installation took place and all the panels were hoisted up with the remarkable sight of experienced abseilers suspended from the church parapet and carefully coordinating efforts so that no join could be seen between the panels when in situ. The installation truly was a piece of performance art just in itself!

Angel arrives – in pieces!

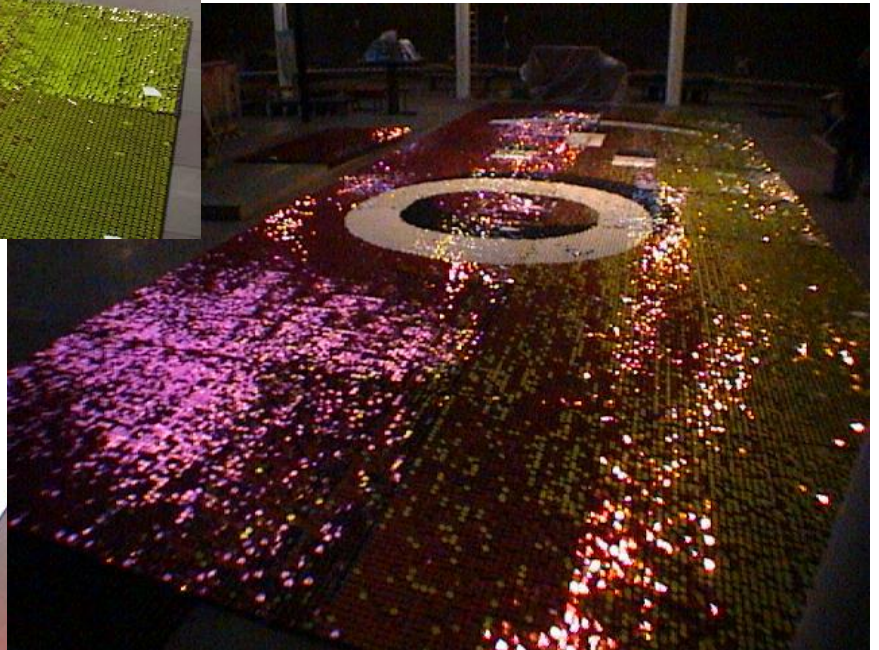


Angel panels are carried through racks of clothing! Rose supervises as her work comes together.



Rachel and Rose inspect the panels as Angel is assembled.

Angel fully comes together for the first time on the church floor.



Angel's reflected glory is seen for the first time – on the inside of the church ceiling!

Meanwhile, workmen and abseilers were busy on the different levels of the church roof assembling the great wooden framework on which the panels (now being laid out in the church) would be hoisted up and fixed the next day. Such was Rose's extraordinary instinct and respect for the building that she devised a method of suspension for the underlying support frame with panels affixed which involved only two small holes being drilled into the fabric of the building and once filled in post-the event remains invisible even today. No requests or instructions were given to Rose not to impact on the fabric of the building – this was solely her sensitivity and innovation.



The last view before work began



The first part of the timber frame goes up



The vertical members are all aloft



Abseilers fix the horizontal members of the frame



The frame support for Angel is now fully completed and secured to receive the 20 panels which would make up the completed work.

Rachel, myself (blue jacket) and Rose watch as the first panel is brought outside. It was at this point that I fully understood the genius of this medium of shimmer-discs when I saw the wind and the sunlight catch the discs and reveal a dynamic surface which would make Angel something which was alive, exciting & unpredictable!

Angel truly was a transitory being which was appearing in our midst and would leave no sign behind that it had ever been there, once its work was done! The whole weight of the installation – frame and panels fixed to it – literally hung up there, suspended over the edge of the church roof parapet, attached to metal straps which were held down by weights! No sign would remain that it had ever hung there for five months! (One of the views below shows how hands-on Rose was (red circle), even steadying ladders while others took photos!)



This was effectively a vast 80 m² sail hanging on the front of the upper church roof and if left to the mercy of a strong wind which managed to get behind it would have been ripped from its counterweights and shattered and scattered around the area, including hazardously onto the huge amount of passing traffic that flowed around the church!



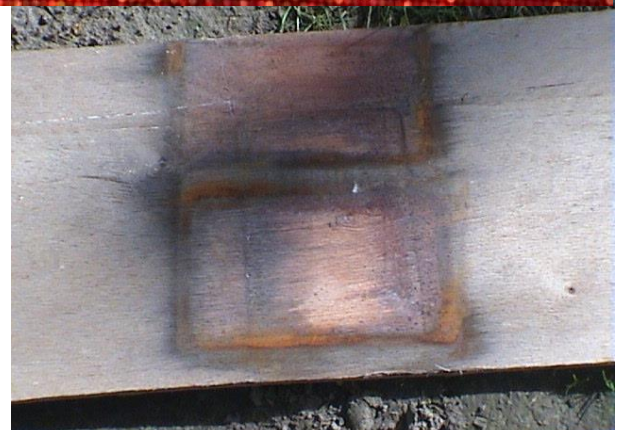


To prevent that, Rose ran a cable along the bottom of the frame and tied it off on each side to an eye embedded in the concrete lintel at the base of the upper brick face of the church. These were the only intrusions into the fabric of the building and once filled in and made good after de-installation left zero residual impact on the building. The several bodies who supervised this whole project from conception to completion and beyond, both within the Church structures and in the Local Authority, must have had complete confidence in Rose's complete proposed methodology as did our

excellent church architect, John Allan of Avanti Architects with whom Rose worked very closely.

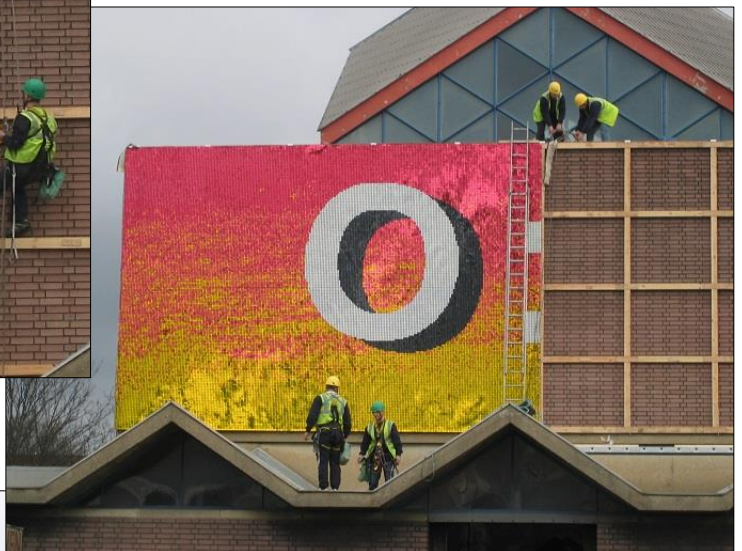
In fact, rather alarmingly, all of this was to be put to the test when a major gale blew up on the night of 19th – 20th March 2004! The main effects were felt in northern England I think but severe winds also hit London and lifted many of the large ply boards from under the heavy weights on the church roof and scattered them abroad!

Some landed in the vicarage garden as seen below and one view shows the corner of a board visible above the top of Angel. There must have been enormous forces on the installation but it held firm and unmoved and everything that had been disturbed was soon replaced!



And so Angel began to be put together – all of it a remarkable enterprise from conception to execution!



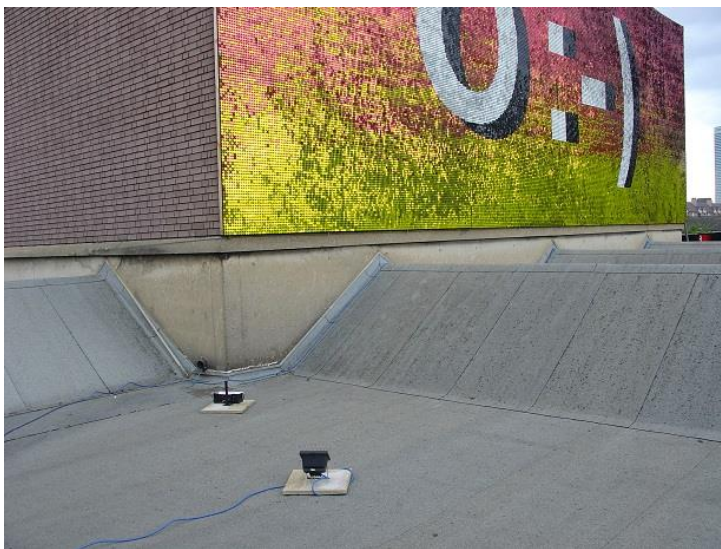


And finally, in the late afternoon of Wednesday 18th February 2003, Angel had fully and finally come to dwell among us for a while in Bow Common!



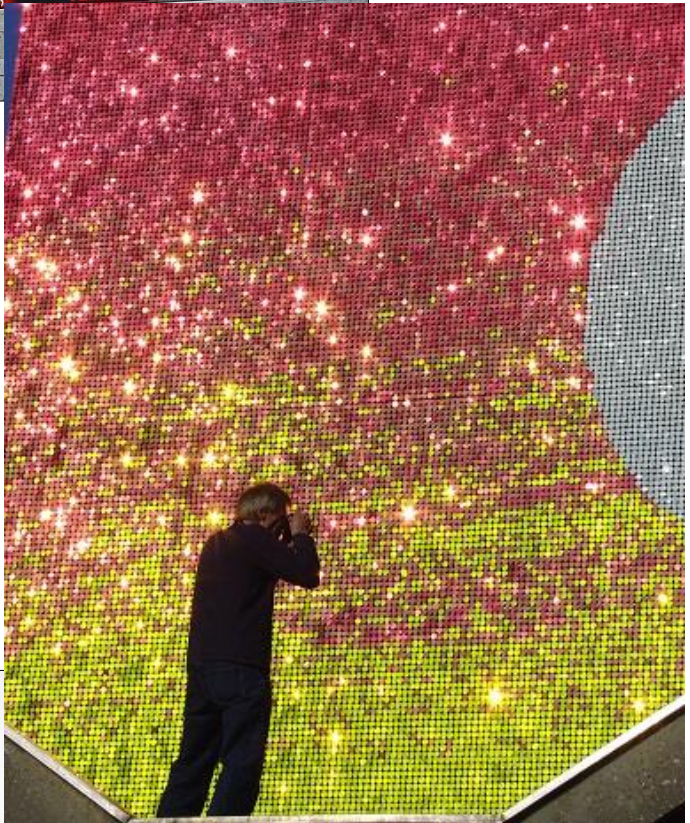
By day it changed moment by moment with even the slightest movement of wind or change of light or shifting of the sun which set directly opposite it in the west.

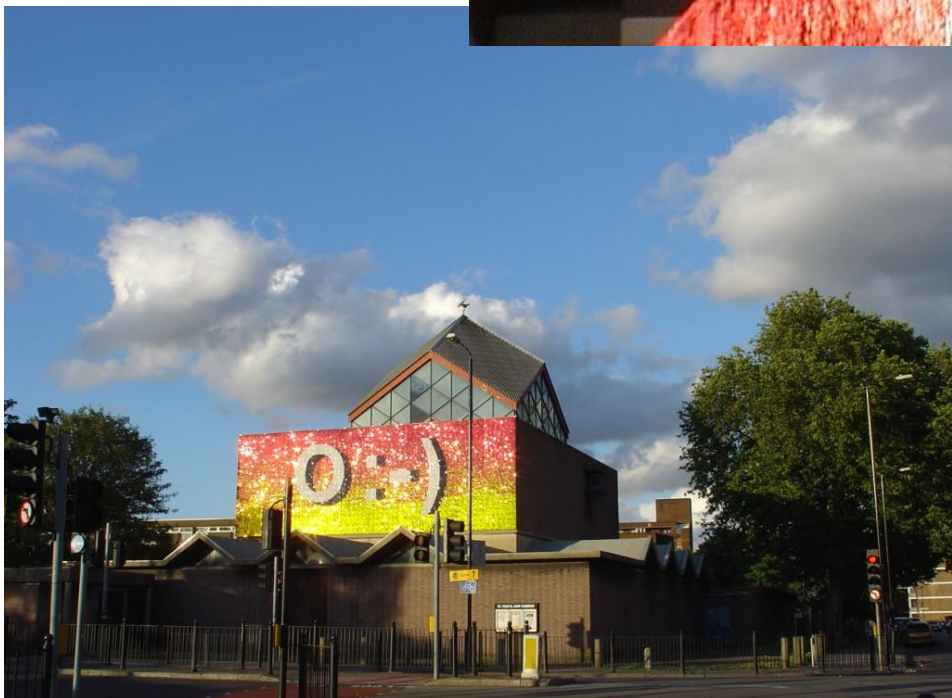
By night there was a gentle illumination from below with modest amounts of floodlighting, just to reveal that it was there.



Some views of Angel over the months which followed, including from quite a distant tower block where a friend of mine lived, showing a wonderful contrast with the gritty urban landscape in which our Angel dwelled and also the view that commuters had as they travelled across Burdett Rd. by train to or from Fenchurch Street, out to Essex or Kent.









As soon as Angel was installed there was a huge positive response locally. Far from being an embarrassment it was a big 'plus' for the church's reputation. There was a very definite generational split in understanding what on earth this was! One of the more exotic (and conspiratorial!) theories was that the church was advertising the Telecom company O2 and thereby raking in a huge pay-off! But I soon discovered that even if people had no idea what it represented the sheer beauty and every-changing dynamism of Angel was what attracted them – whatever it was! Other theories can be sampled in the 'RESPONSES' link on www.smsangel.org.uk.

Rose, through her close engagement with the community during her period of research, had seen that there was a large proportion of the parish population which was Bangladeshi in origin and a significant number of young people under 20 – perhaps mostly Bengali, too. Several times the church has hosted pre-nuptial Mendhi celebrations in the church hall and one of the cultural preferences was for a lot of colour and sparkle as we saw on such occasions. In fact, it led a few of the non-Bengali population to assume that my own origins (I was born in Calcutta which is a close neighbour of Bangladesh) had inspired so much sparkle and 'bling'! Almost all young people also virtually ran their lives on their mobile phones and the symbolic language of 'emoticons' was 2nd nature to many of them and here, in gigantic form, was a huge emoticon which they would immediately be able to read!

In the early days of Angel, Rose and I would hang around the bus stop opposite the church and watch the reactions of people. Time and again it was young people who on seeing it would cock their heads sideways and say (almost universally!) 'Angel, innit?!' They would without fail then text their friends and tell them they must come down to Burdett Rd. to see this huge Angel! Often, I came across parents whose journey with their young children to one of the many local primary schools would not usually take them past the church. But they and their children diverted both to and from their schools to go past the church to see what the wind and light were doing to this spectacular object at different times of day.

Rose had predicted that the 'Art World' would largely disregard this art work as it was not in a proper gallery and there was no familiar category into which to fit her work. She was quite correct and the very few reviews we received appear later. Most importantly, the church – I think without exception and very much including those who once forbade me even to put a poster on the church wall – was delighted with Angel and genuinely proud to have it on the outside of the church. The next Church Council Meeting took place after Angel had been up for just over 5 weeks and all my feelings about their response to it were proved correct.

DR Notes for Meeting of 28th March 2004 Item 6) ASP

'Angel is here and has been welcomed in an extraordinary way by people who are nothing to do with the church.

It is proving amazingly popular and is being much enjoyed. Rose is delighted. The press has kept away!

Angel has had an accident: It has had an intruder: It was in danger from flying boards I have had many people say they would love to see it stay up longer - say over the summer. It is otherwise due to come down on 23rd May.

Rose is not unhappy about this - but considerations are – financial (whether Artwise and ASP can keep it going) also getting extensions of permissions from the Church and the local Council.

Rose is happy to pursue this but I'd like to give a clear signal that this is what we want - or not. Rose is, of course, a wonder!'

PCC Minutes of 28th March 2004: Item 6: Update on Art in Sacred Places.

“Angel” has arrived. The art has been welcomed enthusiastically and comments have been positive. Artist, Rose Finn-Kelcey is a highly-regarded artist and has become a regular member of our church community.

In the first week, an intruder was on the roof and a cable was pulled out of the transformer for the lighting. However, he didn't get any further and there have been no other security incidents.

There was however an incident in the recent high winds when the huge boards underneath the support system on the roof were blown into the road. Thankfully the fire brigade came to the rescue and recovered the boards, tied them up and weighted them down until the original fitters could come and make them safe again.

Many people have suggested that Angel should stay a while longer.

The PCC agreed unanimously to ask if Angel could stay beyond its due date for de-installation of 23rd May until the end of the summer.'

This was the letter then sent to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets:

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, BOW COMMON

ST. PAUL'S VICARAGE, LEOPOLD STREET, LONDON E3 4LA

TEL/FAX: 020 7987 4941

FROM: THE VICAR: PREBENDARY DUNCAN ROSS

London Borough of Tower Hamlets Planning Service

To Whom it May Concern

I am writing, as Vicar of St. Paul's, Bow Common, and on behalf of the churchwardens and Parochial Church Council (PCC) of this church, to express our serious desire for an extension of the period of installation of Rose Finn-Kelcey's outstanding work, 'Angel', sited on the external upper west wall of St. Paul's Church, Bow Common.

At a meeting of the PCC held on 28th March 2004 a motion was carried unanimously, to request Art in Sacred Places to consider an extension being granted for the display of this work. This was in response, not only to our own church community's sheer delight in this extraordinary work, but also as a reflection of the increasingly widespread positive response to this work, not only in our parish but also, as we discover, well beyond our neighbourhood and area. The degree of enthusiasm for this work has far exceeded our expectations and, as awareness of its presence here grows, more and more people are either returning to see it in the constantly changing conditions of wind or illumination, or are recommending others to do so. A desire for a longer period in which to enjoy 'Angel' is constantly expressed, both by strangers to this church & area as well as by many, many local people.

An enormous investment has also been made, over much of the past year, of time and energy in research, envisioning and execution of this work, by Rose Finn-Kelcey and her team and we feel very much that this, too, justifies an extension of the period of display, for a fuller opportunity for this unique and impressive installation to be enjoyed.

We sincerely hope that our request might be supported by all concerned, for an extension of display, to enable an even wider appreciation which this unique work most surely merits.

Prebendary Duncan Ross
(pp. Vicar, churchwardens and PCC of St. Paul's, Bow Common)

DR Notes for PCC Meeting of 19th May 2004

Item 7) Stitches in Time & A S P

'Stitches in Time is here - good launch - V & A have been reminded we are here and Lottery Heritage, too. Peter / May? To speak

We have good reason to believe that we can extend Angel until end of July.

Hope there are no cost implications for ASP - extra funding obtained

NO launch of catalogue but website with moving images.

An article is in draft - but could go anywhere.'

PCC Minutes of 19th May 2004: Item 7: Stitches in Time, Art in Sacred Places.

'Another set of Stitches in Time panels are now on display in the church. This event is being stewarded but we still need more volunteers.

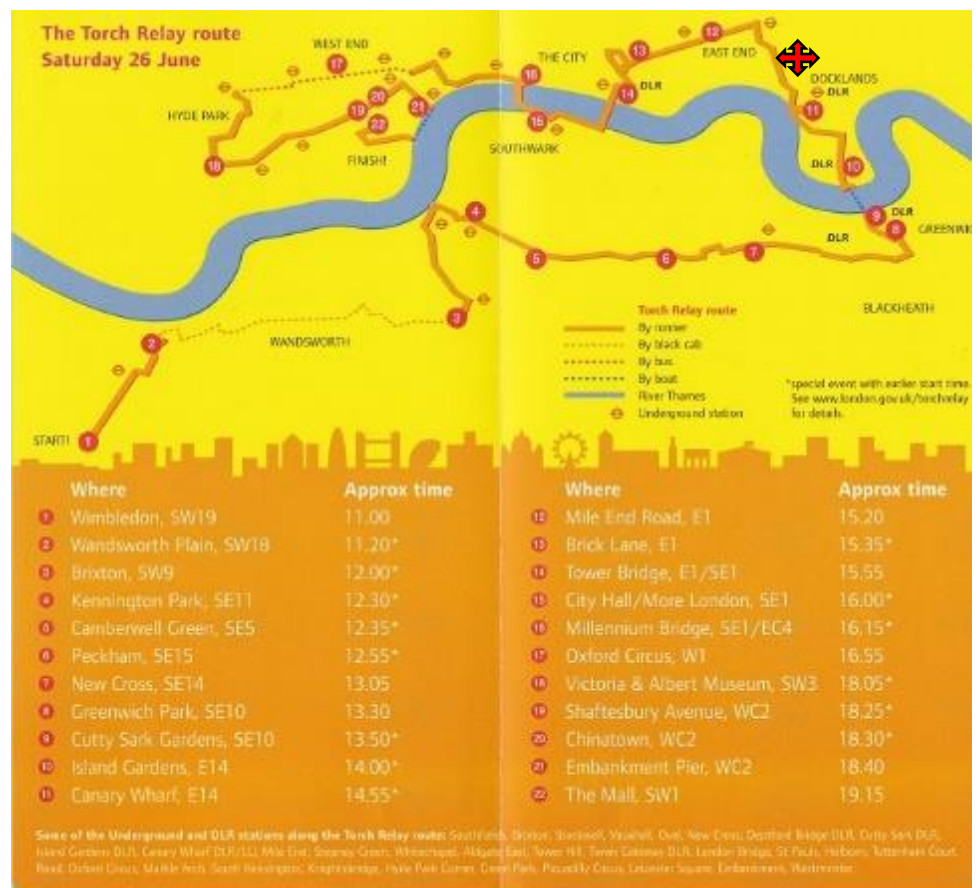
Debbie Swallow, curator of the Nehru Gallery in the Victoria and Albert museum was at the launch and she said she was very glad to be reminded of the huge potential of our building for art. We worked very closely with her on the Shamiana Project here in 1998.

Also, a representative from the Lottery Heritage Fund came to give a speech. She was very impressed with our church and said she'd be reporting back to her team suggesting they offer support for building projects such as ours.

"Angel" was intended to be de-installed next Sunday. The display has received huge support, positive comments and interest. We have asked if the display may now be removed at the end of July. There will be no cost implications to leave it longer. A permanent website is being planned.'

2004 Olympics

Not only was 2004 the 'Year of Angel' in Bow Common but on the global stage it was also the Year of the XXVIII Olympiad in Athens! Because Angel's display period had been extended this meant that when the Olympic Torch Relay made its way through London and northwards up Burdett Rd., it was carried past Angel and the view below makes it look as if it was raised in tribute to one of the most remarkable sights it will have seen on its entire journey! (Church = red cross on map)



The views below show people gathering outside the church to see the Olympic Torch go by on Saturday 26th June 2004; then the torch bearer and entourage as he approaches the church running north from Limehouse; and then the classic view of Angel being 'saluted' by the Olympic flame!



Three weeks later the next Church Council Meeting took place:

DR Notes for PCC Meeting of 11th July 2004 Angel

'Angel is now in its last 3 weeks of life - 4th August is a provisional de-installation day. It is also beginning to show signs of wear - some warping of boards now visible.

Angel is now a proper East End Angel and has had her first mugging! White disks stuck together - and one missing. A wonderful friend Tony climbed all over the church roofs and discovered that Angel had been egged! Three eggs have been hurled at the bull's eye of the halo! Angel's first mugging - a real Eastender!

I am away from 21 July - 9 August and a date of 4th August was chosen so that I would be spared having to see it come down - so that is in hand. But I don't know if Angel may be allowed to just stay up a little bit longer. Would PCC support that? Clearly it is coming to the end of its time, but just in case it can stay a bit longer, the PCC needs to express its support for a final extension. Just for cover could we give an open-ended mandate for any possible extension? The website is well underway. Meanwhile - some recent views (on overhead projector).'

PCC Minutes of 11th July 2004: AOB Item C)

'August 4th has been set as a provisional date for "Angel" to be removed. Some of the boards that the shimmer discs are mounted on have started to warp because of wet weather and the display is beginning to show signs of wear and tear as it was designed to last only for three months. Having "Angel" on display has helped our fundraising case and Duncan said he'd like it to stay as long as possible. The PCC voted unanimously to offer an open-ended invitation for "Angel" to remain on display, should this be a possibility.'

We could never have guessed when Rose and Rachel came to see me with their proposal almost exactly a year before this either what would evolve out of Rose's incredibly creative mind or what a huge success it would be. As the summer wore on and the ply boards were soaked by rain Rose began to be concerned for the safety of the installation and even more so for the safety of passers-by and the building itself if the boards began to separate. They had done their job admirably during the intended three month duration of the installation but a further three months was taking its toll.

I remember Rose saying that had we guessed at how hugely popular Angel was going to be she would have mounted the shimmer discs on marine ply. In the even she was very clear that the work had to be taken down as soon as possible to prevent damage either to passers-by or to the church building. This took place two weeks before the planned extension period and once removed it was hard to believe that it had ever been there.

For a final time the Minutes of the Church Council Meetings and my own preparatory notes made mention of Angel.

DR Notes for PCC Meeting of 19th September 2004 Item 3) Matters Arising

'Angel came down quickly and early (July 22nd). As said last time we noticed it was beginning to detach from its supports. But once inspected Rose decided it needed to come down immediately.

We had a major article in Church Times (show) and the website is now well advanced and will be launched probably late this month or in October.

It was a major success and has gone very cleanly, just two holes in the cement, both of which have been filled and can't be seen. The roof has been examined and is totally unaffected.'

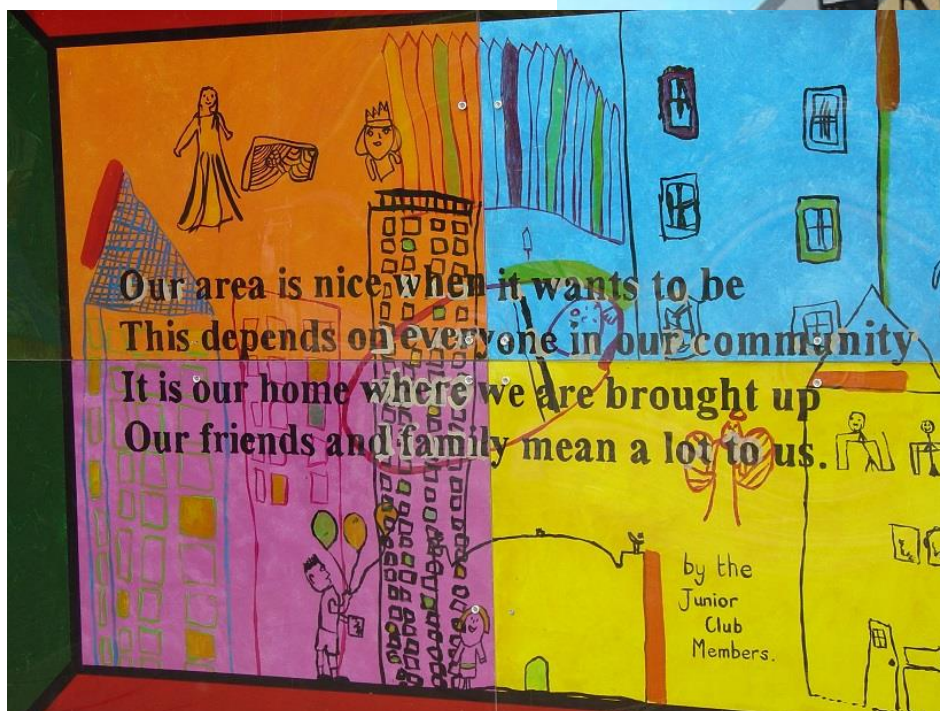
PCC Minutes of 19th September 2004: Item 3: Matters Arising.

'Angel', our Art in Sacred Places display, came down quickly and early because it was beginning to detach from its supports. There was an excellent full page article in the Church Times which has brought very wide attention to Angel and to the church and a website is currently being developed, dedicated to "Angel", which will be launched in September/October.

Removal was carried out with absolute attention to making good the very little effect that the installation had on the building and there are no signs that the display was ever there.'

What follows are a witness to what others had thought of Angel. As already noted, the art world largely disregarded this as it defied the normal categories of art which merited review and critique. What mattered more to us what the impact had been on the local community and this we knew in abundance from frequent and enthusiastic comments. I received a lot of serious questioning when Angel did come down and disappointment that it would not be seen again.

In September young people in a local community youth group – almost entirely young people of Bengali origin – created a public mural celebrating our area of Bow and what was good about it. Even though it was no longer there it was a great tribute to Angel that it appeared as part of the mural!



Farewell Angel

These are two of the final views which I took of Angel on 17th July 2004 just five days before it was taken down. It may seem 'over the top' to admit that I found the departure of Angel so difficult that I avoided it by making sure I was away when that happened and went on holiday on 21st July, the day before Angel was deinstalled. It had touched me deeply both aesthetically and spiritually. Its presence brought a deep joy which is impossible to describe.



Press Reviews of Angel

Artist Rose's Angel delights

THE exterior of a Bow church is to be transformed into a sea of movement and colour in a new art commission by Rose Finn-Kelcey. The artist will attach panels of shimmer discs bearing cryptic and religious messages onto the west-facing wall of St Paul's Church in Bow Common, which, as wind and light play across the façade, will create the rendition of an angel. Finn-Kelcey's unpredictable work has been exhibited across Europe, America, Mexico and Korea as well as the Tate Gallery in London. She has also exhibited both at Chisenhale Gallery and Matt's Gallery in Bow. The artwork, Angel, is on display between February 22-May 23.

'East End Life' was a free newspaper issued to all residents of Tower Hamlets by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets for many years.

This was a brief press release in the issue of 16-22 February 2004 which came out just before Angel will installed. It is wonderfully vague, for instance in describing the end result as 'the rendition of an angel'! But 'cryptic' it certainly was!

It was 'The Guardian' events magazine, 'The Guide' which revealed the first real images of Angel just days after the installation.



Rose Finn-Kelcey LONDON

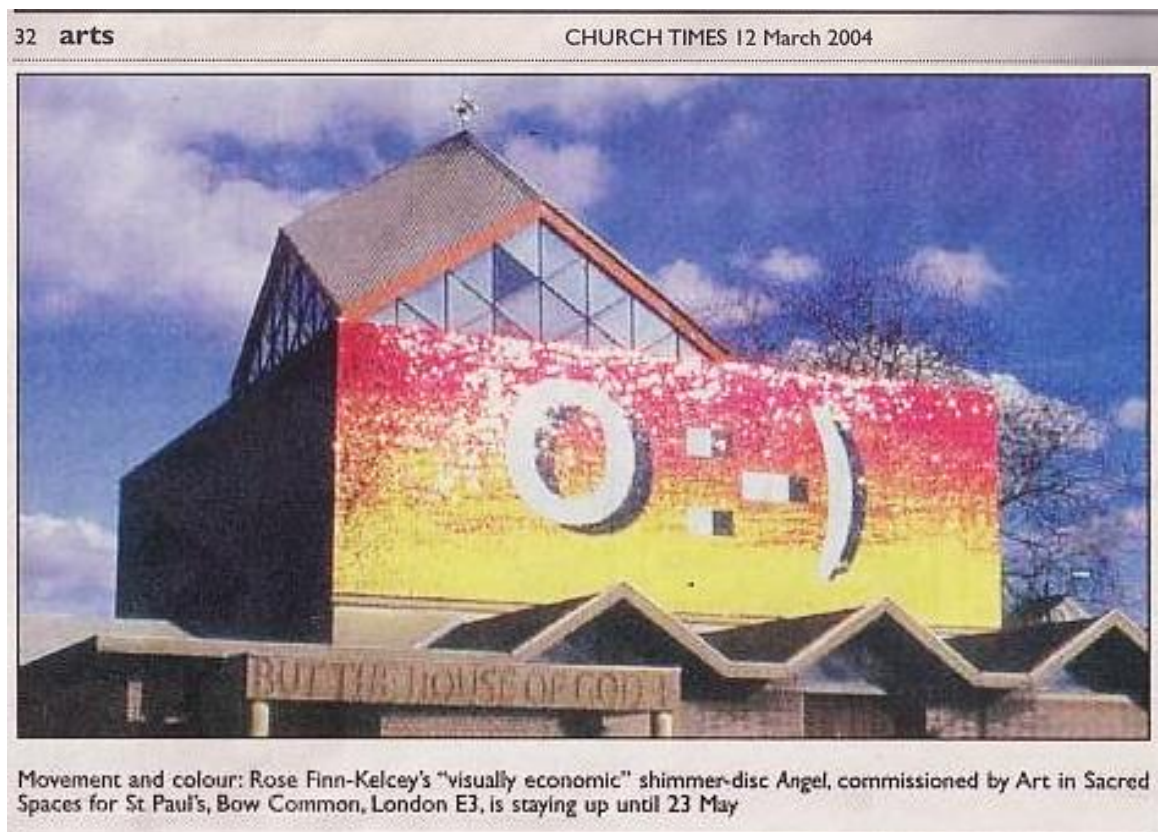
It is easy to miss St Paul's Parish Church in Bow Common, tucked off Mile End Road in east London. A large 1960s building based on the Byzantine temple structure, the exotic facade appears a little out of place among the terraces. But from next week it will be covered in thousands of shimmer discs, the kind used on billboards. The



installation is by the artist Rose Finn-Kelcey, who creates witty, spiritually aware artworks that challenge our increasingly secular society. In

Goodwood Sculpture Park she installed a wish-o-meter. Visitors were invited to slot money into a vending machine and it flashed up a series of answers. Her new composition is an angel constructed from symbols used in text messaging set against a dark apocalyptic background. **JL**
St Paul's Parish Church, E3, to May 23

In March the 'Church Times' made mention of it:



The local newspaper, 'The East London Advertiser' included this image and brief article a few days later on 18th March





In April Angel also appeared in 'HARCA Life,' another free publication circulated in our area of Tower Hamlets.

In July 'ACE (Art & Christianity Explored)' also featured Angel and very helpfully advertised the extended period of display.



Angel by Rose Finn-Kelcey

Kelcey says, the most "visually economic rendition of an angel" — read 0:-) on its side and you have it. Spelt out in black across a background of some 83,000 pink-through-to-yellow shimmer discs *Angel* attracts and interacts with the diverse human traffic at this busy junction. It both contrasts and resonates with the architecture of St Paul's whose entrance carries a modest inscription

from Genesis 28:17: "This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven." Finn-Kelcey's "rendition", working on various levels of connection and specificity, could be said to be a contemporary translation of Jacob's utterance as he envisioned angels and also of Charles Lutyens' mosaic of angels that adorns the interior of St Paul's. Alternatively, *Angel* is an unassuming open-ended motif of popular optimism.

As the Revd Duncan Ross, incumbent at St Paul's, has witnessed, *Angel's* local popularity has been immense. Proselytizing indiscriminately between art and religion the work remains respectfully ambivalent in an area with a forty-eight per cent Muslim population. Deftly, it also appeals across the generations as much as it does cultures, both harking back to the days of disco and signalling to the younger generation in an immediately recognisable code.

Finn-Kelcey, in a manner and wit which is now arguably her trademark, concurrently raises sophisticated questions about the efficacy and point of public art. *Angel*, I would wager, would win hands down against any of the monumental and so-called tasteful concoctions that pepper the financial sector just a mile away. And in a city of seemingly unfettered signage, Finn-Kelcey's endeavour is both competitive and relevant.

- Commissioned by Art and Sacred Places (www.artandsacredplaces.org)
- Curated by Artwise Curators
- Funded by Arts Council of England, The Henry Moore Foundation, The London Institute, Chelsea College of Art and Design

The piece is intended to remain in place to the end of July.

Laura Moffatt

Rose Finn-Kelcey's *Angel* at St Paul's, Bow Common

In its latest intervention Art and Sacred Places has ventured into the capital, commissioning Rose Finn-Kelcey to make a work for St Paul's, Bow Common, a paradigm of post war church architecture. Finn-Kelcey's *Angel* covers one side of the upper façade of the church overlooking a major feeder road to Canary Wharf and a go-karting centre to boot. The piece uses the culture-crossing language of mobile 'phone texting to signify, as Finn-

An extraordinarily aptly named Islington-based local free magazine called 'ANGEL' also featured Rose's great work in July 2004. There are interesting **brief personal comments from Rose** in this interview which I have not seen noted anywhere else.



Getting a message across

Mark Kebble speaks to Rose Finn-Kelcey about her work and the fantastically named 'Angel', which is brightening up the East End sky.

In the modern day world, where a lot of communication is done via busy fingers texting on a mobile phone, Rose Finn-Kelcey's current work is certainly up with the times. "I wanted to re-present a very familiar image using a new visual language that is also secular," reveals the chatty artist of her 'Angel' that adorns the exterior of St Paul's Church in Bow, a piece of work that has recently been granted a time extension until the end of July.

An 'emoticon' text message, the capital 'C', colon, dash and bracket forms a symbol that is recognisable to many who live by their hand-held phones. "I knew, with this work, that the children would be the ones educating the parents!" laughs Rose delightedly. Commissioned by Arts and Sacred Places, she has re-scaled this icon of digital interaction into a blazing 80sq metre image, allowing the symbol to gain new interpretations far removed from its original source.

"Originally, what I responded to was the architecture of St Paul's," Rose says on the work's origins. "I wondered, if the church's wall hadn't been totally blank, what image the architects might have used - a cross, angel or some other religious symbol."

Rose also reveals that she "has never seen it the same", a statement

that derives from the fact the work responds to its surroundings. The 'mural' is made of spectacular shimmer-discs, which gives the work its ever-changing nature. Each disc moves independently and the whole surface mirrors the movement of local air currents with dramatic effect. The entire surface of 'Angel' is, in essence, digitalised, but conversely each disc or 'pixel' was positioned by hand working from a computer print-out. "It took around eight months," Rose says on the start to finish process.

Trying to get to the crux of her work, Rose admits that it's difficult to pinpoint her inspiration for each piece of work as it comes from such diverse sources, although she does say: "I want to put something out into the world that I would like to see in the world. Although each piece of work I do is different, there are strands that carry through, like the idea of messages." Some of you may recall her 'Here is a Gale Warning' piece at Alexandra Palace in the 70s - "People were calling in to the BBC asking if it was real!"

With a book on the horizon about her work, there are no immediate plans for a new message to hit the public just yet. For now, Rose is more than happy with how 'Angel' has responded to east London's passion for art. "I hadn't expected that," she says. "There has been a lot of interesting speculation as to what it might mean. People are taking a photo on their mobiles and sending it to their friends, returning the image to its original technological source!" **You can see 'Angel' at St Paul's Church, Burdett Road, E3. It is visible seven days a week, 24 hours a day, until July 31.**

In August 2004, long after Angel had left Bow Common, the 'Church Times' wrote the major article which follows, in which Rose and I were interviewed by Sarah Wedderburn, about the installation:

Behold, an angel in the east

The appearance of an angel in the East End of London recently caused a stir and raised questions about faith in action. Sarah Wedderburn reports

SWEEPING across the vast 78 square metres of façade above the door of St Paul's, Bow Common, in the East End of London, is a fiery vision — caused by 83,000 flimsy metallic discs, each about the size of a two-pence piece.

"Shimmer-discs", as they are called, were used in the '60s for advertising. Requiring no electricity to make them sparkle, they were attached to a board by pins that held them in place, but allowed them to move independently of one another, so that they caught the light and together made swirling patterns in the wind. Glamorous, gaudy and sensual, they were the stuff of Las Vegas glitz. These days, they remain a key part of the armoury of Bollywood, the context in which you're most likely to see them.

Shimmer-discs are also the chosen medium of artist Rose Finn-Kelcey for her temporary installation at St Paul's, Bow Common. Not very C of E, you might think, but the Bollywood reference is a reminder not only of the demographics of today's East End, but also of the historic values of this particular church. The Prebendary and Vicar of St Paul's since 1995 is the Revd Duncan Ross. When he first came to the parish he was told of an act of "godly civil disobedience", as he describes it, committed by members of the church in the 1970s.

At that time, the slogan "Keep Britain White" was appearing on walls around East London. One Sunday, the congregation left the church and went through the parish with their own paint tins, replacing the word "white" on the graffiti with "brotherly".

Mr Ross treasures this story. East London has been his home since he was eight, when his Anglo-Indian family fled Calcutta during Partition. He admits that, since his arrival in this country, he has had his own share of racist abuse. "I remember the silence in the taxi from Tilbury Dock," he recalls. "I had imagined we would live in a thatched cottage with hollyhocks in the garden — not that it would be Hackney, or that the motherland wouldn't want us here."

If the shimmer-discs have a special resonance for this place, and for the Calcutta child who became the Vicar of St Paul's, fans of Rose Finn-Kelcey's work will also know how deft her choice of subject will have been — however mysterious it may seem. For this piece is not just a glittering abstraction, but says something. Under a field of red, orange

and gold runs a sequence of signs, in black and white: a capital "O", followed by a colon, a dash and a closing bracket. It could be part of a mathematical formula, or an impenetrable ancient text — perhaps the writing on the wall.

The discs are like tongues of fire, so is it Pentecostal, or apocalyptic? One ordinand when visiting the church, thought it was a symbol for the Madonna. He read the "O" as the pagan representation of the feminine, and the single closing bracket as a way of declaring that, in the Madonna's case, the feminine had never been "opened" — an allusion to the Virgin Birth.

Negating none of the above, the "right" answer is simple. Young people understand it, older people tend not to — but they get it in the end, because their children or grandchildren explain it to them. In mobile phone "text-speak", this sequence is one of a large number

of everyday shorthand conventions.

It's an emoticon — a combination of letters and punctuation marks used to represent a facial expression and so to describe an emotional state. This one depicts a halo, a pair of eyes, a nose and a smiley mouth, all on their sides. It could be used to express gratitude, or could be a way of saying, "I'm innocent". It means "angel".

In this context, the emoticon also carries the scriptural idea of the angel as a messenger. Although Rose Finn-Kelcey is not a religious artist, this is not the first work she has made that plays on our notions of God and the hereafter. *God Kennel* (1993), for instance, was a stylised dog kennel attached, upside-down, to a ceiling; a tufted wool rug, *Jolly God* (1997), depicted God wearing an eye-patch on a pink Vatican stamp; and an outsize farm gate, perfectly finished in a smooth sheen of automobile paint, was entitled *Pearly Gate* (1997).

A series of vending machines called *It Pays to Pray* (2000), allowed you to choose from a series of non-denominational prayers written by the artist. To get your prayer, you put 20 pence in the slot, as if you were buying a chocolate bar. Indeed, the prayers had names like "Bounty" or "Wispa". Displayed on an animated LED display board (the kind of screen used on underground platforms to tell you when your train is coming), the prayers ran across the front of the machine. Once you had finished reading, you got your money back — it may pay to pray but, in the end, you don't have to pay to do it.

However playful, there is a seriousness, even a melancholy about these works. They seem to understand the human need to believe in something beyond the obvious, and to be seeking the numinous where it

may lurk, just out of reach, in puns, coincidences, leaps of faith and riddles.

ANGEL is a philosophical joke that works on many levels. In Christian terms, it's fitting that it's the children who can see it. But the population of this Tower Hamlets parish is almost 48-per-cent Muslim, and, as Mr Ross points out, angels carry messages in the Islamic faith, too.

To him, the work succeeds because it captures so many different aspects of the culture of this community: "Rose caught what this area is all about. She saw the kids wandering about with their mobile phones, communicating in the same way whether they were Muslim, Hindu or from any other background. *Angel* does not offend Muslims by being representational, but at the same time its Christian credentials are impeccable. The west wall facing the setting sun is typically where you have last judgements. It carries all the magnificence and solemnity of that idea."

With *Angel* installed a few weeks before Lent, this year angels were the focus for meditation during Sunday services throughout the 40 days. Mr Ross gave his congregation shimmer-discs with the angel emoticon printed on the back as Lent tokens. In her Easter Sunday sermon, the curate at St Paul's, the Revd Diane Webb, spoke of how the movement of the shimmer-discs, as the air rushes across them, reveals the presence of the angel. *Angel* seems to have pervaded the church.

The Chaplain of the nearby Raine's Foundation School and an assistant parish priest at St Paul's, the Revd Irena Czerniawska Edgumbe, has felt its influence and seen how it has touched the congregation: "It's the first time most of

us here have been confronted so closely with a work of contemporary art, and, though we don't necessarily have the language to explain our response, it's gone in deep. *Angel* has become an inspiration for us."

A self-employed embalmer who is also a church warden at St Paul's, Chris Morjan, was one of those whose approval allowed the work to go ahead, and who watched people puzzling over it in those early days. "You only had to stand out there and watch them coming past. People who couldn't work it out were desperate to know what it was. It had a phenomenal effect. And it even got to those who didn't like it, it seems. One man I met on the street said: 'I think it's rubbish. But it's an angel, I know it is. My daughter told me.' *Angel* invites contradiction and complex responses."

Angel responds to its location — to the position of the church and the corner it sits on, touched by light and wind; to its architecture; to the community that it inhabits and surrounds it; and to all the resonances that the artist discovered as she got to know the area and met some of its people.

Like the life that surrounds it, it is always changing. Photographs can't convey its moods and restlessness, and the way it seems to manifest forces of nature, as gusts of wind tear and spiral across its surface. Sometimes, when the wind is blowing hard, the façade above the church door looks angry with movement.

At night, when it is floodlit, yet more variations occur. At times, it is incandescent with the sunset.

WITH high summer, there is more change. *Angel*, to the sorrow of the congregation and of many local people, has been dismantled — the fate, in the end, of all temporary art installations. A cryptic, insistent presence that came and went, it has left behind a question: where do we find the spiritual in today's society, and who voices it? Perhaps it resides within the Muslim community that comprises almost half the population of this East End parish, or perhaps it lives with the vicar and congregation of a church, founded in a passionate political upsurge towards religious democracy 50 years ago, and today a model of compassion and openness. Or does it find its most universal expression in the lone, mischievous voice of an artist with no desire to proselytise, except in the name of mystery?

The *Angel* by Rose Finn-Kelcey was commissioned by Art in Sacred Places, a charity exploring the power of art in religious contexts.

The organisation commissions site-specific temporary installations by British artists, with the aim of creating a dialogue between the Church and the art world.

The charity believes in giving its artists open briefs in order to gauge how they see the Church rather than to commission artists simply to depict religious subjects.

www.artandsacredplaces.org



The artist, Rose Finn-Kelcey, and the Revd Duncan Ross provided the residents of East London with a "vision".
Photos Anthony Stokes

On-line there was a website being developed to be launched at the end of 2004 but while Angel was still visible the **website of the Diocese of London** had this short feature in April 2004:

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Angel at St Paul's Church, Bow Common

16/04/04

A spectacular shimmer disc 'mural' on the west wall of the church has become a talking point in Bow

'Angel' is a response to the minimal architecture of St Paul's, Bow Common, listed as one of the most important post-war churches in England. What the artist mischievously calls a 'mural', transforms the west wall above the entrance to the church. Designed to be decoded, and more boldly enigmatic than shocking, 'Angel' 'delivers' a simple text message consisting of a capital 'O', colon, dash and a bracket. Instantly recognisable to some as a smiley face on its side with a halo.

The mural changes minute by minute, depending on the prevailing wind and light. Each disc moves independently and the whole surface mirrors the movement of local air currents with dramatic effect.

'Angel' is a new work by Rose Finn-Kelcey and was commissioned by Art and Sacred Places. It will remain in situ until 23 May and possibly longer. It is visible 24 hours a day.



Bridget Smith

In January 2005 the **Website for Angel** was launched and is still online at:

www.smsangel.org.uk

Houldsworth Gallery and Artwise Curators
invite you to the launch of www.smsangel.org

A web based catalogue documenting Rose Finn-Kelcey's *Angel*

Published December 2004

6.30 – 8.30 pm, 19 January 2005

Houldsworth, 33-34 Cork Street, London W1S 3NQ

Angel, a spectacular shimmer-disc mural installation, was located on the exterior of St Paul's Church, Bow, East London for five months, February - July 2004. For this major project Rose Finn-Kelcey re-scaled an icon of digital interaction into a blazing 80 square metre image, allowing the symbol to gain new interpretations far removed from its original source. It transformed the west wall of the church into a visual celebration, recalling the striking intensity of Bollywood or the shimmering lights of Las Vegas. Passers-by took daily pleasure in monitoring the mood of *Angel*.

The mural changed minute by minute depending on the prevailing wind and light; as each disc moved independently the whole surface mirrored the movement of local air currents with dramatic effect.

On a windy day the work was apocalyptic and on a sunny evening a sparkling, retinal feast.

In order to capture the extraordinary quality of this commission, *Angel* was documented in real time in a specially commissioned short film. This is featured on the site together with a wide range of animated responses from artists, critics, and local residents.

www.smsangel.org.uk content:

- A short film by the artist in collaboration with Adnan Hadzi
- Photographic documentation of the work, its location and installation
- Texts by Kathy Battista, Keith Elford, Duncan Ross, Rachel Steward and Sarah Wedderburn
 - Responses from artists, critics and local residents
 - Biography and past work of Rose Finn-Kelcey

Website conceived of and edited by Rose Finn-Kelcey and Rachel Steward

Design by Secondary Modern/Platform 3

Angel was funded by The Henry Moore Foundation, Arts Council London, University of the Arts London, Abbey Harris Mural Fund, Harca Life and Artwise Curators.

www.smsangel.org is funded by Arts Council South East, The Jerusalem Trust and Abbey Harris Mural Fund and Artwise Curators.

Rose Finn-Kelcey's work in installation, sculpture, film and performance has previously embraced spirituality, digital technology and communication, alongside concerns with meteorology, architecture and transformation. Finn-Kelcey has exhibited internationally since the 1970s including *Documenta IX*,

Kassel, 1992; Chisenhale Gallery, London, 1992; Camden Arts Centre, London, 1997; Conventa X Teresa,

Mexico City, 2000; and Total Museum, Seoul, 2001. Commissioned work includes an installation for the Millennium Dome, 2000; and two works for The Multiple Store, 2001 & 2002. Her work was also shown in *A Century of Artists Film in Britain* at Tate Britain, 2003; and *Self Evident* at Tate Britain, 2002.

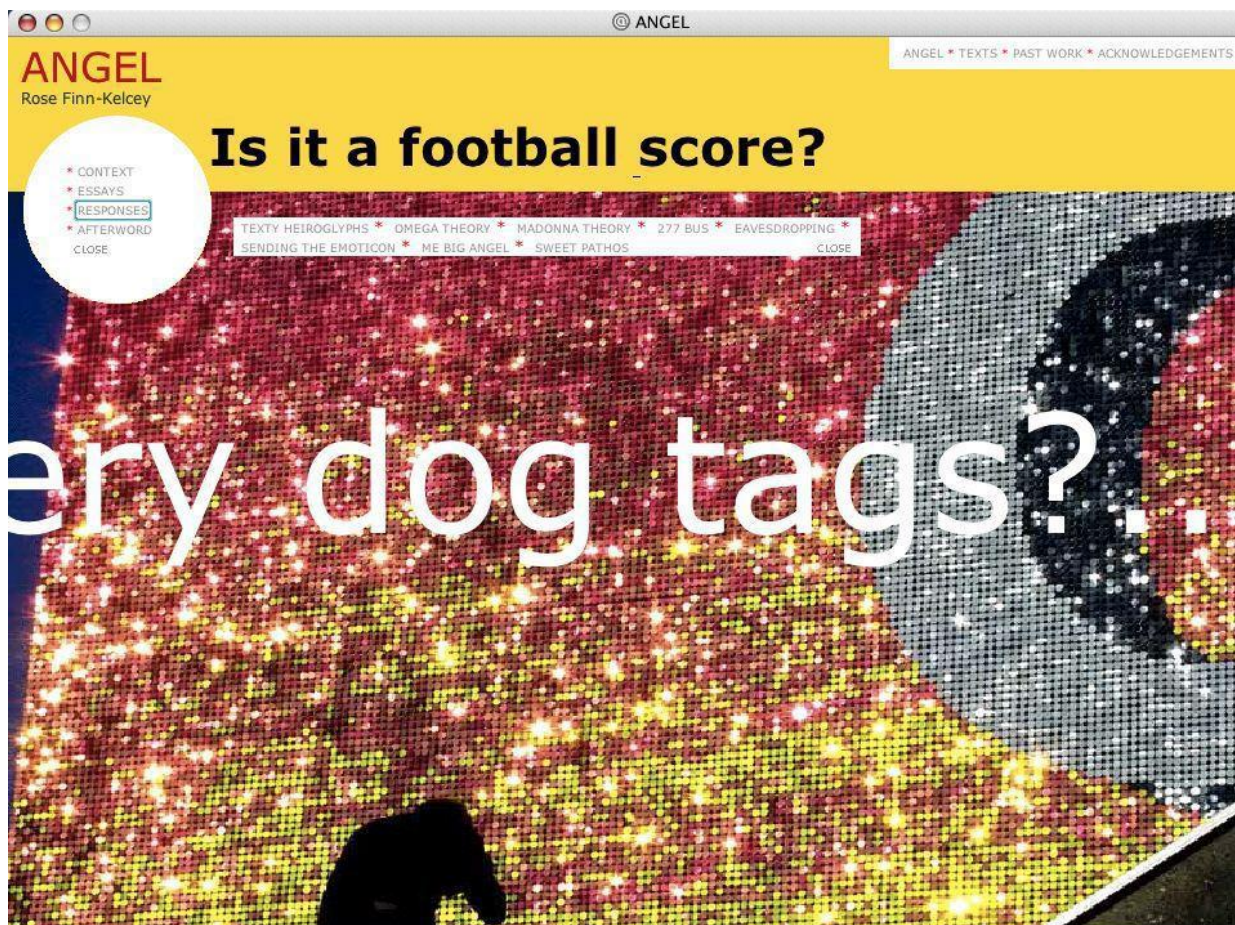
Angel was commissioned by Art and Sacred Places. ASP celebrates and encourages the interaction of art and religion by commissioning artists to make work for sacred places in the South East of England. www.artandsacredplaces.org

Curated by Artwise: Project Curator Rachel Steward

The launch of www.smsangel.org is a collaboration between Rose Finn-Kelcey, Houldsworth Gallery and Artwise Curators.

www.houldsworth.co.uk
www.artwisecurators.com

Below is a screen shot of one of the pages of the website ...



13th Sept. 2004
 Dear Isabel, Greetings from an Atlantic beach! Attended St Andrew's at 8.30 on Sunday Behind a white wall, in a large, green church yard; effusive greetings from Mustapha, verger. The priest detained the tiny congregation (11 a.m. is The Occasion) to say he wanted to change the image of the church (at the heart of a Tangier market) to be less "English cottage tea". He then produced the coloured illustration of St. Paul's in the Church Times, praising the innovation and the inclusiveness. (I should like to read the article.) Thought your congregation would like to know. Greet Duncan for me + love to you and John. Angela

TANGER (Maroc)
 Avenue d'Espagne
 RAÏSSOUNI IMAGE
 RAÏSSOUNI IMAGE
 (RECEIVED 900)
 2, rue de la Russie - Tél.: 039 42 02 - TANGIER

It was a constant surprise to discover how far Angel's 'fame' had spread! A member of our church received a postcard from Tangier in September 2004. Her friend had attended an Anglican church in Tangier where the parish priest had spoken to his congregation about Angel! This is what she wrote ...

'Dear Isabel,
 Greetings from an Atlantic Beach!
 Attended St. Andrew's at 8.30 on Sunday (established 1905). Behind a white wall, in a large, green churchyard; effusive greetings from Mustapha, verger.
 The priest detained the tiny congregation (11 a.m. is The Occasion) to say he wanted to change the image of the church (at the heart of a Tangier market) to be less "English Cottage Tea."
 He then produced the coloured illustration of St. Paul's in the Church Times, praising the innovation and the inclusiveness. (I should like to read the article.)
 Thought your congregation would like to know.
 Greet Duncan for me and love to you and John.
 Angela'

In January 2005, One of my churchwardens and I met with Art in Sacred Places (ASP) to evaluate how this event had gone. These are the notes of that meeting. This **a very helpful summary of the whole experience** for us and for ASP:

ART AND SACRED PLACES

Charity No: 1086739

MEETING WITH FR. DUNCAN ROSS AND CHRIS MORGAN

At St Paul's and St Luke's School 13.00 on 13th January 2005

Present: The Revd Keith Elford (**K**), Chris Morgan (**C**), Fr Duncan Ross (**D**) and Angela Peagram

Apologies: Angela Blackett

K: *Purpose: to get some direct feedback and to encourage reflection, in which we are involved, on the impact of the piece and working with Rose. We want to be in touch with how people responded and what it meant, because we work a lot with intermediaries. We would like to share what you say with other people.*

Interested in hearing something about how you felt about the project in the beginning, in prospect, when you first met Rachel and Helen. How that perspective has changed by the experience of the project.

C: I was unable to be at the PCC meeting when it was brought up.

D: No-one knew what it would be at the point of giving the go-ahead and we were not able to see other pieces of Rose's previous work. I warmed to the idea because it was thought provoking. When I saw the work initially I didn't get it. No matter how much I looked at it. But I got it as soon as Rose explained what it was. If people looked at it they said "I don't understand it". It made you think.

C: Came home Friday night and it was the first time I had seen it lit. In the darkness it was like a football stadium at a night game. Automatically picked up the 'phone and left a message with Artwise. We were so glad that we made the decision to go with it. Stunning, magical.

D: Huge risk. None of our art projects have been done on this scale before. All shaken down to relationships, networks and people. Rose and Rachel stumbled on a Jumble Sale. We have a life here. To many artists of a certain mind-set you might want to say "Get a life", but they bought some jumble, saw the building and had an intuitive idea of what it was about. It all hung on that interview, that conversation with Rose, Rachel and me. We never thought of an external installation. We have done textiles, hangings and performance. 48% of the population is Muslim. Everything we do has that as a framework. When the textiles were shown at the V & A we were asked why there were crescents, etc. in the work by a very small no. of more negatively-minded 'Christian' visitors.

That couple of hours and the potential of understanding where we are – we can very easily be used. I personally took the risk. It has been seamless. Rose soaked herself in this area. She went back and back. Christmas bazaar.

C: It was a whole year – one Christmas to the next.

D: She understood the community, took us as we are and respected us. I looked at the website and saw extraordinary things. An open ended response, a faith journey, a spiritual thing.

When the first tapestries went up it was a major move forward because up to then the church's 'old guard' had forbidden me to hang anything on the wall. These same people then wanted the battens used for the first installations to be left for the 'next' one.

As a Church you can be read or misread. I saw the boards on the Church floor on the day of installation, but when the first panel went up and started shimmering!

C: When the panels were going up an elderly member of the Muslim community asked for some disks for the front on his shop. Bollywood – suddenly there was a part of their culture on a Christian Church.

D: Rose was very good with people when they asked about a "copy" of her work she said 'no' in the nicest of ways! Restaurateurs and advertisers showed a lot of interest. Someone 'phoned from Switzerland following a visit to London on business.

If that initial conversation had not gone right..... Chris, Toni (Churchwardens) and I - carried the responsibility, shared with the Church Council. Saw a laptop version.

Not going to get a choice and that is it. Creative birth pains – a risk. Heart stopping times about the possibility of a road traffic accident. Horrendous winds. How people were not killed by the boards. Tapestries are conditional. 'Angel' could have been a billboard available to the whole world. Somebody from a tower block in the distance had been watching all morning. They had a son who was an artist.

K: *What did you make of it when it was up there?*

C: The contrast between the darkness and this mass of flames. I was hoping that someone from the Met Office would come down and see how wind behaves – mini-tornadoes. Impact and implications on the community were going to go on for a long while.

D: A community mural has gone up on one of the shops which includes Angel in one corner. Muslim kids got it. Got it on so many different levels. Most people never got it. What they did get is the atmosphere that could be read on it. Ugly when it rained. Had teeth missing – not nice. People wanted to know what it was – thought it was an advertisement for "Orange or O2 Mobiles!" It was the best thing around here. How dare you take it down?

D: Kids understood it. Bengali kids. People were touched. Didn't need to have an end result. Some people don't even know it is a Church.

K: *A couple I married saw it all the time. It was a major topic of conversation. What is it? What is it about? Independent, organic, alive, musical.*

C: The more you looked at it, the more you expected the eye to wink at you.

D: Last judgement sign. (Terrible conversation - back to grieving about it.) Didn't know what it was going to do next. Fantastic. Atmospheric movement. That pink in February did not appear again. Rose chose Japanese manufacturers because of the subtlety of the colours of the disks.

K: *What is the impact on the larger community?*

C: Went away to Selsey. At Church there I mentioned I was a Mile End boy. Vicar looked at me, knew the name of the Church. At the end of the service he said, "You have that artwork on your wall. I saw it on the back of the Church Times."

D: Beauty. Quite satisfying not knowing what it was. Angels are massively important to Muslims. Not representational. Bigger than Bollywood. On this scale it is a surface. A friend of a friend Went to the Parish Church of Tangier. Vicar at the end of the service said to the congregation. "Instead of being little Britain all the time we should have some energy". He showed them the Church Times article by Sarah Wedderburn as an example of an energetic community. 98% of the responses will never be known. Parents were setting off for school five minutes earlier to take their kids past it. Beauty does touch. It might be very savage and frightening and violent; very windy and dazzy; still and moody. Drawn to look at it.

An angel has a strong biblical burden. This looks interesting but no idea what it was. Mary pondering. Looking at the other installations ASP has done, ASP is knocking on the boundary in every possible way; provoking thought. No conclusion. Otherwise theory was fine. Negative comments from an evangelical church down the road. Black S...., "You have got that thing on your church just to please the Pakis." "Paki art"

Very high church priest, "I don't buy it, but it is fantastic."

The wonderful thing was that it was unconditional. It was facing outwards. Most humbling thing for our building to do – "Never mind me." Like Veronica's veil. I could hold it up to that. It was as if the building came alive; the building whirled around and said, "Look what I can do." That girl could dance as well as any.

There was concern for the integrity of the walls by the church's working party for Shamiana. "It must not make a difference to the integrity of the walls. They have been here longer than us" We nearly had to agree to save the dust to put back in the holes made by the battens. Afterwards they said, "Do you think they could leave that there for next time."

They didn't just accept Angel, they were proud of it.

Impact international. Pick it up as time goes on.

Rachel gave us little slips with the website address on. Terry went to this other church, "You go and look at this because our church is on there." I see someone having moved on... and their ownership. We have got lives. There was grieving when it was taken down.

C: Impact because used during Lent. The whole of Lent revolved around it. All got a shimmer disk and could say "I own a piece of it". I have still got mine and I still carry it. When I feel in my pocket – all the stuff that comes out – a shimmer disk falls out.

D: Lent was about who had been an angel in their lives: who had been a messenger. Lives touched unexpectedly by angels. God can use you as an angel. It gave rise to a reflection in the community and had a real impact and was very related to the spiritual journey which the individuals were on. Spin off for us from Angel which we never foresaw. Gift of God in that. So much angel dust came off it. Whole process was a spiritual one.

All our Bangladeshi population admired it. Someone wanted a small one for their front room. The school did a small shimmer disk project – long after Angel. Medium for our own spiritual journey. The spirit blows where it will.

K: *The two most important things we are after. I suppose we want - by bringing in an external artist, maybe not of a conventional faith - we want to bring a new perspective to the church; something which changes the church – gives them a new perspective. Sounds as if we have been successful.*

D: All your projects, from what I have seen on your website, are trying to do that. ASP has one foot in the Cathedral world. Good for ASP for taking a risk with us. We are very different. The Dean and Chapter make the decision in the Cathedral. We are a different social community and audience. Biggest gallery in the world - the Universe. On the question of what is a sacred place – that road became a sacred place.

Very Jesus thing. Educational project. Stebon School - 90% Muslim. Head has exaggerated the problems there. They are learning a different language.

Wonderful to be part of breaking into a new gallery space. Outside as well as in.

K: *People, not formally part of a Christian community were given the opportunity to access something spiritual in a different kind of way. A different possibility was opened up by the art work - for the artists themselves to see their work in a different light.*

D: All these things have emerged. Fans and candles inside would not have worked.

In the bad weather 8' x 4' boards fell off – missing my son and cat by inches. A board might have fallen through a car windscreen. One fell on the pavement alongside the church. Straightaway Rose was in a taxi coming. The police said, all they could do was clear up the mess. Rose rang the Fire Brigade. They weren't busy and came.

Angel was no pussy cat. I thought, "Angel is going to kill people." The first board fell by my gate as if the postman had delivered it. There were four or five very lucky escapes. Cosmic struggle. Sounds dramatic. The plane trees were heaving about. Angel did not budge, "I am in charge". Must emphasise the sense of "aliveness". She was on our side that night.

Quite unconditional art.

K: *That is why we give the artists a lot of freedom. We have a pre-disposition against images which will automatically say Christian because it does not draw people in in that unconditional way. Contemporary art, love it or hate it. People have strong prejudices against it. Has there been a change in the way contemporary art is seen or read, generally?*

C: People were canvassed side by side when it had no title. Over at St. Paul's there is an artist in residence. We just called it "Easter". How is that Easter? How can you do that when you are expecting people to say "How is that an angel?" Here on this panel – oranges and reds – but on the third day it says gold. I can understand that is Easter.

K: *There was a new willingness to look again at works you might have dismissed in the past.*

D: Telling people it is a work of art. Not trying to make a point. People were reading in "O2" or "Orange". Is the church raising money; making a point or having a pretty decoration?

C: The last thing that happened here, like this, was Rachel Whiteread's great house - ten years ago.

D: Most people would not go to galleries. Children now go to galleries and are expected to express themselves with new media.

C: The only pictures we could get of angels were by great Renaissance masters. There has been a big leap from those days to this.

The building is startling. People do not want to get married here because it is not a proper church. We were on the Millennium Art Trail. There was some Stephen Lawrence based work by Sokari Douglas-Camp. Some people just came to see the church, "Why is this place well known?" This is a remarkable space and a place of pilgrimage. We were on the map, not of how wonderful we are but as bearers of something interesting – not as having an answer.

It has not taught people to go to Tate Modern but rather to question what art is and what is not. People get very worked up about it. Because it is not framed they thought it was something other than art.

C: A definition of art – If it makes you think about something, it is doing its job.

D: I spent three hours in the Prado, in Madrid, and found a south american 2000 year old precedent for shimmer disks. Had to tell Rose.

D: The presence of the artist has been it. Willingness. Humility. Has to be in the art as well. Thoroughness. Sarah's partner went up there to release them when the dust had glued the disks together and it had formed a paste.

C: It looked like something had been thrown. They were actually stuck together. Thought it had been vandalised.

D: Young sometimes get up there, ring the church bell and scatter. So we put up dummy CCTV cameras. Thought it was going to be wrecked. It was at risk. It is an independent being. Very glad I was away on holiday when it was dismantled.

C: I saw the middle section come down [when it was being dismantled]. When it came to the [head] piece [I couldn't watch] I said, "I've got to go to work now."

D: More alive when it interconnected with people. Priest from Essex kept bringing people to see it.

"It must never come down." "We will pay you what you want for some of the disks." It touched their hearts but I don't know how. Friendly giant. Relating all the time. It fulfilled a view of an angel - big, impressive and frightening, very powerful, charged presence and yet welcoming and on your side. We are the church with angels – angels inside and on the porch. The resonances went on and on. We want something else up there. A projection. Something different to follow. Not a sacred cow. Not a set in marble statement. Funny surface to project on to.

The standard would be set, as one of challenge. Because the building itself challenges.

During the Shamiana exhibition, which was about women's experiences and expectations, we had some Islamic stuff in the Church – and two security guards. It is a personal journey for us that no-one will know about. Will a new Vicar have the courage when I retire?

K: *The project has not only had an impact on the people, in a way it has brought the building back to itself.*

D: In an unexpected way. Shamiana was in the V & A. The building was built to be enigmatic – giving nothing away.

C: Great service to the church. Some people have left it in the 60s but the rest of the world has moved on. Still flower power in a gentle way. Re-discovering and making it modern by the use of 2004 advertising medium. Held a conversation before about faith being stuck in a certain age.

D: It was not gimmicky. No-one accused us of being hippie. Easy responding to the thing it is, rather than to what your motives are. It became nothing to do with Duncan - and he had been worried.

C: When people came and spoke to me, "What is the angle?" Everyone expects you to have an angle. I expected more of a negative and cynical reaction. Most people didn't know it was a church.

There is a mural of all aspects of life in the area, in a local shop, and right in the corner is Angel. Everyone knows it was on the church. The kids nearby know it.

D: Whatever you have to do I hope you are hugely encouraged by taking a risk and engaging with us.

K: *For me it was the most successful project we have done: the best piece of work and the most satisfying on the level of engagement.*

D: How did you find out about us?

K: *We 'phoned Brian Cuthbertson in the Diocese. He mentioned you. Various permissions and considerations were needed. Respect for the building. It is extraordinary. English Heritage, East London people, raved about it.*

D: Fellow clergy – we are struggling hard in our own corner. So much to do to stand still. Have other people in the Diocese seen it?

K: *Other people we have worked with or come across have mentioned it. One or two people have been aware of it. Don't recall any particular comments. Colin Slee might have seen it. Very good site.*

Media had nothing to do with it. Media not interested in it. One to one. Ye who go by. Had to be there to see it. Shielded from the sun that reflected from it.

Feeling of Christ on the Cross and gazing down. We know what he was saying: but what is he seeing?

Angel's eye view of you. I never saw what Angel saw.

The Community is happy to work with you. You have been road tested for respect and sensitivity.

K: *Terrific and delighted that it has had that kind of impact and trust. One of the things we want to do – stepping up scale of interaction with other communities. We are at the moment pursuing two projects which are going to absorb our energies over the next year or two. It takes a long time to get these things to happen. The Angel project started as far back as 1998. The best things take a long time to gestate.*

If we start something – good to carry on. Can't pretend it has not happened. Muslim school children – try and engage with that community again. Trying to operate a bit more regularly. Hoping it would happen this year. New project – six sacred sites of different kinds – where we have partnerships with people who can help us. Partnerships where we can leverage in skills – skills we don't have. We are working with Portsmouth Cathedral, a Quaker Meeting House on the Isle of White. We are trying to get in touch with a Hindu and Muslim community. An ancient pagan site; a road side shrine and the scene of a shipwreck. There will be sensitivities and the work may be in an ante-room.

Also a project with Guildford Cathedral. About an artist helping them to re-define their relationship to the wider community.

I hope they will happen this year. They will continue into 2006 and onwards.

There have been both practical advantages and richness in working with St Paul's – our richest project.

In November 2006 the **Arts Council** produced a report on this project. This is a draft which I had. Again, **very useful information** about the project is contained here:

Angel, Rose Finn-Kelcey

Dates: February - July 2004

Location: St Paul's Church Bow, Tower Hamlets, E3

Budget:

Commissioner: Art and Sacred Places

Curator: Rachel Steward, Artwise

Funders: Arts Council England, Henry Moore Foundation, Chelsea College of Art and Design, Abbey Harris Mural Fund, The Jerusalem Trust and Poplar HARCA

Rose Finn-Kelcey

Rose Finn-Kelcey has been making installations in public places since the 1970s. Many of these have explored systems of language or communication, and have introduced the effects of chance produced by natural phenomena such as wind. In an important early series of works she printed short, bold messages on large flags, such as *Here is a Gale Warning* (1970) at Alexandra Palace, and *Power for the People* (1972) at Battersea and Bankside Power Stations, London. References to religion and the spiritual also recur in her work. In 1999 she was commissioned to develop a new project for the Millennium Dome. She produced *It Pays to Pray* (2000), a vending machine where prayers for different faiths could be bought instead of chocolate bars. Finn-Kelcey's work is held in a number of national and international collections, including the Wellkunst Foundation, Tate and the Arts Council England collections.

What

A glittering mural composed of over 85,000 coloured, metallic shimmer-discs was hung over the prominent west façade of St Paul's Church in East London. The image represents an angel, created using 'emoicons', or 'text speak' – the language of letters and punctuation marks used in mobile phone texting. In this case a colon, dash, bracket and zero formed a smiling face with a halo. Each shimmer-disc was hand mounted onto large advertising hoardings and left to move independently in the wind, causing the surface to ripple and move throughout the day. The artist has said that the shimmer discs reminded her of Bollywood imagery and, while making a mural for a Christian church, she wanted to make use of a visual language common to the wider local community of Bengalis and Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets. (*DR: It was floodlit and took on quite a different 'character' at night. Being 'on show' 24/7 was a significant feature of 'Angel'.*)

Why

Art and Sacred Places, a charity which promotes interaction between religion and art, commissions contemporary art in places of worship to explore the relationship between art and spirituality, continue the tradition of artistic patronage by the church, and to engage new audiences. In 2003 and 2004 they commissioned three artists to respond to three historic churches and their local communities in South East England. Artist Nathan Coley produced an installation for Portsmouth Cathedral, artist Deimantas Narkevicius developed work for St Peter's Brighton, and Rose Finn Kelcey, although originally commissioned to create a work for Southwark Cathedral, developed *Angel* with curator Rachel Steward for St Paul's Church in Bow.

Aims

- Investigate the connections between art, faith and spirituality
- Develop a dialogue between the Church and visual arts communities, in order to identify and explore common areas of interest
- Respond to the Grade II* Listed architecture of St Paul's Church
- Building Use a material that related directly to the community and to the building.
- Develop the artist's practice in exploring abbreviated systems of language and the visual representation of religious faiths

HOW

Commissioning

Art in Sacred Places commissioned artist Rose Finn-Kelcey to work with curator Rachel Steward, Artwise, to develop a work for a church in London.

Funding

Art and Sacred Places' programme of three art commissions was funded by Arts Council England, Henry Moore Foundation, Chelsea College of Art and Design, Abbey Harris Mural Fund, The Jerusalem Trust and Poplar HARCA. The work was granted a three month extension on the church façade, and an accompanying project website was produced, funded by a separate set of funding bids.

Partners

Reverend Duncan Ross at St Paul's was a strong advocate for the new work within his congregation, the community and the church. He took on the role of 'caretaker' for the work, checking the condition of the shimmer discs and documenting the project in photographs.

Project Manager

Curator Rachel Steward from Artwise, a small contemporary arts organisation, managed the project and worked closely with the artist, Reverend Duncan Ross, and the congregation.

Specialist Skills and Equipment

The artist and curator consulted seven different departments at Tower Hamlets Borough Council due to the sensitivity of working in a place of worship. They also gained permission for the project from the Bishop of Stepney who is responsible for parishes in Hackney, Islington and Tower Hamlets. The church is a Grade II* listed building which means that nothing can be fixed to the exterior walls. *[DR: Rose's means of installation was really an indication of her sensitivity to the integrity of the building and the complete 'reversibility' of any installation method, rather than an imposed constraint, as far as I was aware. Rose also worked closely with our architect, John Allan of Avanti Architects, to ensure a fully joined-up approach to all aspects of the installation. This kind of sensitivity and respect for the building and community was one of the very reasons why we trusted Rose so early on!]* A wooden frame had to be strapped to the building as the frame for the panels of shimmer discs. The panels were installed in strips by a team of abseilers.

Health and Safety

The shimmer-discs were highly reflective in bright sunlight and sometimes directed a lot of reflection to the crossroads opposite the Church, which already had a high accident rate. The artwork was permitted by the Transport and Parking department at Tower Hamlets Borough Council, with the understanding that should an accident occur during while the work was there, it would have to be removed.

Marketing and Publicity

A permanent website, www.smsangel.org.uk was produced by Art and Sacred Places, featuring texts by prominent art critics, artists and local residents, as well as photographs of the work and the installation process. People were seen photographing with mobile phones and sending the image to their friends, extending the audience for the work, while returning the image to its original technological source.

Education

Reverend Duncan Ross regularly updated his congregation about the installation of *Angel*, and displayed posters on church notice boards. He also used shimmer-discs printed with the emoticon as Lent tokens for the congregation. The artist attended services at the Church and some Sunday school classes to talk to people about the project.

Time Line

Art in Sacred Places commissioned Rose originally with a brief to develop a project for Southwark Cathedral. When this did not work out, Finn-Kelcey researched other venues and began to develop concrete plans for St Paul's from July to September in 2003. The installation took place in February 2004 and was displayed until July. The project was extended from May for a further two months due to its local popularity.

'I wanted to put an image on the church that was totally expected to be there, that of an angel. But I wanted to transform it and update it into a modern and common language.' *Rose Finn-Kelcey, artist*

'Historically, the Church has been a great supporter of the creative arts. The installation *Angel* at St. Paul's, Bow Common is an example of faith and spirituality coming together through a contemporary artist's work and appealing to people of all backgrounds in the neighbourhood. Wherever there is distress, poverty and need, let us hope that all will be protected by holy angels.'

The Venerable Dr Lyle Dennen, Archdeacon of Hackney

'Although it was a static work, it moved and changed when traffic passed by or with different types of weather.' *Susie Allen, Director, Artwise*

'I had deep trust for what was going to come out of this project, as Rose had engaged with us for six months; she actually came and helped out at jumble sales, did the Christmas Fair, and understood where we were coming from.' *Reverend Duncan Ross, St Paul's Church Bow Common*

'The Bible is endlessly interpreted and refigured for successive generations and this applies equally to the public face of the church. The instantaneous and playful shorthand for *Angel* allows the young to be more literate than their elders and they can pass on the Word.' *Mark Wallinger, artist*

'One of the fundamentals of this area of practice is ownership; where it lies and how you negotiate the territory around ownership; *Angel* had a very balanced sense of ownership.' *Rachel Steward, Curator*

IMPACT

- The work became a local landmark, changing the way the church was seen by the local community
- As older members of the community were unfamiliar with the symbolism, young people made a point of explaining it to them, encouraging a dialogue between younger and older generations
- Although the Church wanted to keep *Angel* as a permanent installation, the colour of the discs would have faded over time, and the artist wanted to preserve its nature as a temporary project in public space.
- There was a hope that this work might be re-installed in Prague in May 2006 at a disused radiator factory but this did not come about.

Find out more:

www.smsangel.org.uk

www.artwisecurators.com

www.artandsacredplaces.org

Launch of 'Art In The Open' at the Home Office

When something like *Angel* is literally so close to home, it is difficult to see it as others do. Three years after it had been deinstalled, never to be seen again, we learned that not only was it not forgotten locally but had been noted seriously on a far wider and more public stage. In 2007 not only was *Angel* entered into the Art and Christianity Explored (ACE) Biennial awards in October though not even there to be seen by the judges, but in May I was invited to speak about it at the **launch event of 'Art In The Open.'**

This body was founded to be London's advocacy and advisory board for art in the public realm. The Launch Event was to be held on May 17th 2007 at the huge and modern Home Office building in Marsham St., London and I was in the line up with people such as David Lammy MP (he was then Minister for Culture at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport)! It would be an understatement to say that this was one of the greater challenges of what has been a very straightforward and unglamorous parish ministry! But, certainly they were right, that this church could rightly be seen as an advocate of art in the public realm, actually on a very big scale.

The 'Art In The Open' current website has this ...

Art in the Open - Inspiring Creative Approaches for Town Centres

Benefits, Advocacy and Commissioning Guidance

Art in the Open was launched in May 2007 as London's advocacy and advisory body for art in the public realm. As part of Open House, it champions the contribution that artists, working with others, can make to an experience of place for Londoners and the city's visitors.

Art in the Open fosters better quality opportunities for London's art in the public realm; bringing together those involved in the commissioning process including artists and architects; local authorities and regeneration agencies; developers; statutory bodies and other public sector commissioners.

Art in the Open works strategically influencing London-wide issues, advising on places of development and providing guidance to commissioners. During 2008-10 its own advocacy projects are focused on the themes of lighting and commemoration. A dedicated Art in the Open website with advice and guidance for London will launch in April 2009.

For more information email [Louise Trodden](#), Head of Art in the Open.

Inspiring Creative Approaches for Town Centres - launched February 2009

Art in the Open's new toolkit for Town Centre Managers, Inspiring Creative Approaches for Town Centres, developed with support from Arts Council England, London, and in partnership with the Association of Town Centre Management and Arts & Business is now available.

Rose and Rachel were with me and that was a great support. This was not at all an environment in which the church was a natural contributor, but rather public bodies, civic authorities, art organisations and even business and industry. I managed to deliver my words with confidence and was well received, except for one objector who interrupted and heckled me near the end of my presentation, very critical of the Church being a part of such an enterprise. It did shock me but I was reassured by all there that his was a lone voice. These are my notes for the event:

'My church in the East End. Is called St. Paul's, Bow Common. It is widely regarded as the most significant post-war church in Britain - but, you'd never guess it! We sit on a shabby and busy crossroads on the way to Canary Wharf; faced by a petrol station on one corner and an electric go-kart track on the other. It's not the kind of place you'd expect an Angel to appear!

Yet, indeed, for a few months in 2004, 850 square feet of Angel DID, appear, not as some private apparition but exposed to the full glare of public scrutiny as well, as to wind, rain and sun. What could be more predictable than to depict an Angel on the front of a church? But Rose Finn-Kelcey assembled 85,000 reflective shimmer-discs into a vast 'emoticon'! The text message symbol for an 'Angel' on a scale which stunned and amazed with vast waves and flashes of colour, sparkling & billowing across the front of our church.

There was nothing private about this Angel. This was risky and **very** Public Art; art exposed not only to the elements but to the judgement of any or all of the thousands who pass us every day.

It was scarily risky - for the artist, for Art in Sacred Spaces who, thankfully, commissioned it and for us as a church. Public art always takes such risks.

Now three years later, it is still sorely missed. Total strangers now identify where I live by saying, 'Oh yes! You're from that church which had that amazing thing on the front! Couldn't work out what it was - but it was fantastic!' Our corner of Bow is no longer just somewhere you slog through in the rush hour. It is somewhere where something very beautiful once was seen.

I've pondered a lot on how - and why - this worked so well. And I think it rested on two things. On the integrity - and sheer quality - of the artist Rose Finn-Kelcey and also on the process by which this work came into being, a process followed both by the artist and by the curator, Rachel Steward. They showed a deep awareness that public art such as this does not exist in a vacuum. Sites for public art will almost always have a human context; a community being asked to embrace such art. Public art cannot help but enter into a community's story. 'Site-specific' is also often 'Community-specific'.

Over a period of several months Rose truly engaged with the life of our diverse community, both church & neighbourhood and with my church members. There was constant reference to us and discussion and dialogue and engagement with us. She came to understand what WE would be carrying on **her** behalf in hosting her work. She came not only authentically to discern our community's profile but also she was able to get behind it. And behind this profile she discerned and revealed in her work a vibrancy and a dynamism which many of us had lost touch with. Not only did she discover who we are and where we're coming from, but WE were enabled to re-connect with elements we had lost sight of.

I often think that art galleries are a bit like churches! Both are mostly visited by the 'usual suspects'! I am one of those myself - both in churches AND in galleries! However, most of the folk who make up our community are NOT the 'usual suspects'. They don't mind my church being there but they seldom think to enter or explore it - 'it's not my kind of thing' they might say. And, I pretty much know for sure that most of them are even less likely to enter too many of the excellent galleries which we have in the East End unless they too, started running christenings and putting on Bazaars with bargains to be found!

What public art did for us is what both church and art must constantly seek to do; to engage with those who are NOT the 'usual suspects' and to engage honestly and respectfully outside the safety of the sacred space - the sacred space of the gallery or of the church.

For once, people in our community felt that there was something affirming of them in their midst. A creative affirmation which only such a work of public art could convey. Many of our folk do not live hugely secure lives. They live risky lives. Maybe, you do, too. But where art is also able to risk and to lay itself open, there can be a resonance, both for individuals and for a community.

I think that in 'Open Space' we see remarkable examples of such resonance and enrichment and that with the launch of a resource such as 'Art in the Open', it seems to me that exciting possibilities are opened up in our city to any of you and the bodies which you represent offering you enablement in the form of expertise, guidance, best practice & advice; possibilities for YOU of engaging, through art with the many communities which each of you represents and which make up the rich and complex, human beauty of our city. Perhaps as never before, here is a real possibility being offered to enrich not only your built environment, but even more importantly, to enrich your human environment. My advice to you is 'Go for it!'

18 May 2007

Reverend Preb Duncan Ross
St Paul's – Bow Common
The Vicarage
Leopold Road
London
E3 4LA




Dear Reverend Duncan

I just wanted to drop you a line to thank you so much for giving such an inspirational, and moving speech. Every person I spoke to was touched by what you said, and valued enormously your leadership in promoting the benefits of art in the public realm.

We very much hope you will work with us again in promoting this campaign as you were so eloquent, and captured the public imagination.

With all best wishes, and many thanks


Sarah Wason
Head of Visual Arts

Arts Council England, London, 2 Pear Tree Court, London EC1R 0D
Phone: 0845 300 6200 Fax: 44 (0)20 7608 4100 Textphone: 44 (0)2
Arts Council England is the trading name for The Arts Council of England. Registered charity

After the event I was relieved and encouraged to receive genuine appreciation from many quarters for what Angel had exemplified, including these three letters.

ART IN THE OPEN

Monday 21st May 2007

The Rev Preb Duncan Ross
St Paul's Church – Bow Common
Burdett Road
Bow
London E3 4LA

4th Floor
297 Euston Road
London NW1 3AQ
Telephone 020 7383 0113
Fax 020 7380 1037
artintheopen@openhouse.org.uk
www.artintheopen.org.uk

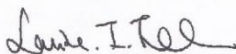
Dear Prebendary Ross,

I would like to thank you for your insightful speech and your very supportive words on the future work of Art on the Open. Your understanding of the commissioning process, and the effect that a public artwork can have and continue to have on communities, was an extremely welcome perspective. All those I have spoken to about the event, including local authority officers, artists and architects, have commented on your speech and how much they enjoyed hearing you talk about the *Angel* artwork.

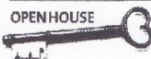
In my short time at Art in the Open, I have discovered that there are very few champions of public art, and I hope that you will continue to be a firm convert!

We shall shortly be uploading all the speeches onto the website, and have begun to transcribe them also.

Very best wishes,



Louise Trodden
Head of Art in the Open



ART IN THE OPEN is part of Open House,
the architecture education organisation.

Registered charity no. 1072801
www.openhouse.org.uk

The Revd Preb Duncan Ross
St Paul's Parish Church
Bow Common
Burdett Road
Tower Hamlets
London
E3

Thursday 24 May 2007



**Central London
Partnership**

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Duncan Ross

Open Space – Art in the Open, Launch 17 May 2007

Many thanks for your contribution to last week's launch event, *Open Space – Art in the Open*. Your entertaining and informative presentation was greatly appreciated by both ourselves at Central London Partnership and our guests. You painted a wonderful picture of how Rose Finn-Kelcey's installation impacted on you, your church and the local community.

We have received very positive feedback which also reflects the interest and commitment of those with a stake in London's public realm. I am only sorry your evening was affected by the inappropriate actions of one of the guests. I know from Suzel that you were initially concerned about speaking at the event but your speech was both passionate and informed, and so I hope you have come away from the event recognising your valuable contribution.

Thank you again for the time and support you have given both the book and the launch. I look forward to seeing you again soon.

Kind regards

Patricia Brown *Chief Executive*
Direct line 020 7478 8479 /pbrown@c-london.co.uk

Registered in England 4578526
Registered office as above

The Director and Trustees of
Art and Christianity Enquiry
warmly invite you to the presentation of the

ACE Awards 2007

Tuesday 23 October 2007 6-8pm
All Hallows on the Wall, 83 London Wall
London EC2M 5ND

The Awards will be presented at 6.45pm
by Sir John Tusa

rsvp tel 020 7374 0600 awards@acetrust.org
please bring this invitation with you

ACE Award 2007

To our great surprise, late in 2007, even though it had been taken down over three years previously, Angel was nominated for one of the biennial ACE Trust Awards. There are several categories under which such awards are given – ours was for **'Art in a Religious Context.'**

The ACE Award for Art in a Religious Context
Given in association with the Michael Marks Charitable Trust

Stephen Cox, *St Anselm's Altar*, Canterbury Cathedral
Rose Finn-Kelcey, *Angel*, St Paul's Bow Common
Kathleen Herbert, *Stable*, Gloucester Cathedral
Susanna Heron, *Still Point*, Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool
John Newling, *Chatham Vines*, St John's Church, Chatham, Kent
Rona Smith, *Power of Two*, St Mark's Church, Leeds

Art and Christianity Enquiry (ACE) promotes understanding of the links between religion and the visual arts & every two years features a variety of works. From the ACE website we learn that:

‘The ACE Awards were set up in 2003 to draw attention to standards in religious art and design. They are designed to celebrate the successes and diversity of artistic and architectural projects in religious buildings throughout Britain. ACE also has a biennial award for a book which explores the dialogue between the visual arts and religion. They are open to all faiths. Although the parameters for each faith have their own limits and constraints, the consistent factors of high aesthetic sense as well as sound theological interpretation are applied to each award by an independent judging panel.

Initially the ACE Awards were run biennially (once every two years) but we now have a cycle of four years. The Awards for Art and Architecture will next run in 2019, but the ACE/Mercers' Book Award (will continue to run biennially) will take place May-November 2017.’

On 23rd October 2007, Rose, Rachel and I attended the Award Ceremony at All Hallows, London Wall just very pleased that Angel was even in the running. At one point in the proceedings when there was a break, Rose suggested we retired to a nearby pub for refreshments. We had enjoyed the evening and there was no chance that Angel would win against stiff opposition, especially as our work was no longer visible for inspection! As time went on in the pub, Rachel and I prevailed, eventually, that at least for decency's sake and to be there to hear who had won, we needed to return to the church. When we did we crept in as the proceedings had already picked up and winners under the various categories were about to be announced.

It was with disbelief, then, that we heard when it came to the First Prize for the ACE Award for Art in a Religious Context that the judges had been so exceptionally impressed by all they had seen of Angel in images and video clips and on the website that a category was created for art which was temporary and no longer available to be viewed! More than that, Angel was to be awarded joint First Prize with Stephen Cox's St. Anselm's Altar at Canterbury Cathedral! That Altar was very much still there to be seen and some time later I went to see it! But Angel had flown!

So often even brilliant art can have something of a 'self-conscious' glory which, if not elitist, is in some way 'set apart' either in its setting or in its form. So many people from our part of the world might find such art difficult to apprehend or to have it 'speaking' to them – not because they had no aesthetic sense, but because such art would speak in a different 'language' which needed some previous knowledge or familiarity with genres which did not appear among us. But, somehow, Angel was both an extraordinary artistic creation and also 'spoke' in an extraordinary variety of artistic languages, readily accessible to such a variety of passers-by as those who saw it every day.

We were jubilant and our four years of friendship and journeying together were deepened even further. The prize was for the winners to have on display a remarkable art work – Colin Reid's glass 'Ichthys' Font. This would be displayed at St. Paul's, Bow Common from 17th March to 28th May 2008 and it would then be moved to Canterbury Cathedral (where I went to see it) from 29th May to 4th August 2008. I had considerable anxiety that our very lively children who often charged about the church might cause unthinkable chaos with such a large and precious piece of glass in the church – but, fortunately, I needn't have worried and my fears were totally unfulfilled!

The images which follow celebrate that period of display of Colin Reid's work in the church.



'Ichthys' Font

This font by Colin Reid is the prize for a biennial awards scheme for Art in a Religious Context, initiated in 2003 by the Art and Christianity Enquiry Trust (ACE). ACE promotes understanding of the links between religion and the visual arts, and celebrates contemporary artistic achievement in religious settings.

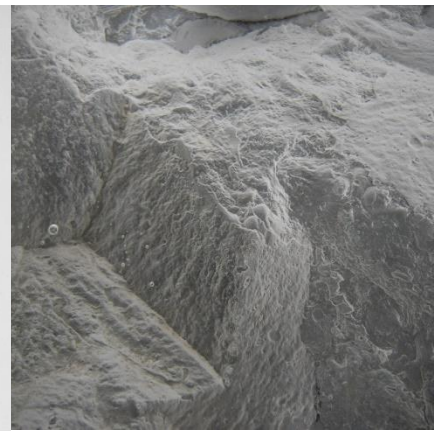
The design of the font recalls the Greek word for fish, *ichthys*, whose letters represent the words for 'Jesus Christ God Son Saviour'. The early Christians used the fish image to communicate their baptismal creed. It appears in the 1st-century catacombs in Rome and is still a potent sign of Christian faith today.

The font is usually shown in the Sacred Silver and Stained Glass gallery at the V&A, but it is lent for temporary display in the award winner's own sacred space every two years.

In October 2007, St Paul's Church, Bow Common, London, and Canterbury Cathedral won the award for *Angel* by Rose Finn-Kelcey and *St Anselm's Altar* by Stephen Cox, respectively. The font will be on display at St Paul's from 17 March to 28 May and at Canterbury from 29 May to 4 August 2008.

London, England, 2004–5; the glass by Colin Reid (born 1953); the plinth by Jim Partridge (born 1953)
Optical glass, cast and polished, and blackened oak

On loan from the Art and Christianity Enquiry Trust in association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; commissioned for the ACE Award for Art in a Religious Context



Angel took St. Paul's, Bow Common on a remarkable journey. Certainly there was an artistic journey but much more significantly for the life of that Christian community it took us on a journey which confirmed the risks those people had taken back in 1998 when that small community left behind the security of how their building should *NOT* be used to venture into new territory, untried and unforeseen, which would teach us so much about the genius of the place as a space not only for worship but for celebrating the art of people very much like ourselves. While the church doors were shut this was brave but hidden safely away! Angel in a very real sense 'outed' the risk and courage of those remarkable and brave people. Just as Shamiana had come about purely by accident, with the gift to me of a free ticket to an exhibition at the V&A, so too Angel had pivoted on a visit by Rose and Rachel to a Tuesday Community Sale where they immediately sensed the spirit of the people as well as the huge merits of the building. It was the remarkable sensitivity and openness of those two people to what they found in that place which was crucial to our deeper journey into a new courage and culture in that church.

My lengthy account* [<http://www.stpaulsbowcommon.org.uk/heritage/detailed-history/>] of the full story behind St. Paul's, Bow Common makes it clear that in its design as 'inclusive space' there was a strong 'intention' behind the organisation of space in that church and its use. Having risked taking the church so far from its pristine, protected from which I encountered when I went there as parish priest in 1995 I have had to live for a while with the possibility that maybe I had been no more than a 'wrecker' of its principles of foundation and primary purpose! It has been quite hard to wrestle with that possibility but I do think now, some 19 years after Shamiana began the process of expanding the uses and flexibility of that church, that really all of this has been in line with much of the fundamental thinking of Maguire and Murray who designed and built the place. (They had both applauded what we were doing in the church, which helped a great deal!).

Nearness to Need

In my major account of the church I noted the following:

*'Keith Murray had enrolled at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London, the design School co-founded by the Arts and Crafts architect **William Richard Lethaby** (1857-1931), who was to be influential for Maguire & Murray, and from whom their future practice's slogan '**nearness to need**' would derive. The values of Maguire and Murray were those of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England, with its respect for all kinds of proper making, informed by hand and eye, in the building trades as in pottery, textiles or lettering. The phrase '**nearness to need**' used by W. R. Lethaby became their motto, as Maguire explained in his lecture at the RIBA in 1971.'*

In 1971 in the article 'Nearness to Need' in the RIBA Journal of 1971, Robert Maguire said this: ***'We have an ordinary conviction that architecture is about people ... not merely that its purpose is to serve people at a high level of usefulness and comfort, plus some extra ingredient which makes it look nice. Architecture is concerned with human need. This then is what we have clarified as our basic conviction: that the primary object of the creative architectural process is to achieve – to use Lethaby's phrase – "nearness to need". We have established this as a kind of lifeline, by which we have found we can return to a point of reference & take our bearings again amid the confusion complexity of the architectural currents in which we have to work.'***

That one small area of East London had seen enormous changes since the middle of the C19, from countryside, to agricultural land, to urban sprawl, destroyed and then rebuilt post-War, not only had Bow Common changed unrecognisably but so had society. When the first St. Paul's, Bow Common was built and even through its short heyday, most people did not go to church. However, the church held a fixed status and function in society.

Each of the two World Wars brought a significant shake-up of society and after the Second World War the place of the church in society was radically changed, both through an increased secularisation of society and through a large incoming Muslim population – but nothing unusual about this as the East End had seen large numbers of incoming Irish and then Jewish people, followed by large numbers (including myself and my family) from the sub-continent. In my own time in Bow Common I noticed at bus stops that the early Sylheti conversations around me were steadily changing to Russian and Polish. One of the extraordinary things about the East End for me is the huge melting pot that it has become and what a rich diversity that is (but then I would say that as an immigrant!).

The ambient culture of the area had always been changing, once London's expanding population began to reach out to the 'east' and as has been seen, even with an incoming indigenous population spreading into this area there were great changes of social class. The 'nuisance' of industrial pollution, as well as general overcrowding, as already seen, pushed out the more prosperous citizens to more 'sympathetic' areas leaving a poorer population generally.

My 18 years as parish priest of Bow Common were a short period in that area against the wider background of its overall history, but even within that time there have been visible changes in the parish, not only of population but also of new housing and a new demographic beginning to establish itself, of people owning or even part-renting/part-owning their property.

The '**needs**,' therefore, even since the church was built, have changed greatly from the needs and practices observed by Maguire and Murray in the mid 1950's, first of all in that church hall with all the liturgical experimentation of a priest and his congregation without a church and around which they designed the remarkable building which still stands in that place.

Liturgically, the needs remain broadly similar to what they observed coming into being. But what has changed enormously since the church was built has been the rest of the life of the parish and, indeed, the world at large. The church was built very clearly and purely on what were then radical liturgical principles. Indeed, this remains the *primary* purpose of the church, to be the centre of the liturgical life of those who gather there week by week. Within that primary purpose it has been extraordinary how liturgically flexible the space has been and what it has made possible, certainly within my own experience.

However, whereas the churches had an independent and well-defined place in local communities for over a century, as they have lost the *status* they once held. In many ways churches have actually been freed up to work in greater partnership with others in the community, in addition to their primary liturgical function. One of the strengths of the way the Church of England works is that a parish church and its ministers and ministry are there not just to serve the congregation which worships in the building, but has a care and a 'cure of souls' which extends to the *whole parish* and to whoever lives within it, of any faith or none. Annually elected church officers and parish clergy and the people have (or should have!) a sense of responsibility and service and ministry to the *whole* parish. The life and the business of the parish and what goes on within it is recognised as being the business and the concern of the parish church and especially of its ministers and officers.'

As the needs of a much more diverse parish and city and world have changed so much in such a short time, the very openness of design of that remarkable building, to be able to offer a '**nearness to need**' as needs have changed so much, has meant that by serving the **aesthetic needs** of such a changed and changing community in imaginative ways has shown a faithfulness to a basic principle of its design and foundation. In so doing I truly believe that we have ministered to them in very real spiritual ways through the art celebrated there.

Rose Finn-Kelcey : 4th March 1945 – 13th February 2014

I retired from over 35 years of active ordained ministry and from my incumbency of 18 years at St. Paul's, Bow Common, on 1st November 2013. Angel dazzled us for five months in 2004 but the church continued to be used both for art and also other uses, such as conferences, community and school celebrations and even for a week as a wonderful indoor 'camping' ground for 71 Roman Catholic Vietnamese pilgrims attending a mission at our neighbouring Roman Catholic church!

Rose and I each progressed on our life journeys but didn't see much at all of each other. I knew, though, that she lived not too far away in Bethnal Green and latterly I was hearing that she had not been too well. Then, just a few months after I retired the message came through to me that Rose was seriously ill and was keen to see me. She lived in a lovely flat on the bank of the Regents Canal with wide open views of the canal and adjacent open land. She was being closely cared for by faithful long term friends whom I had met before. I learned that Rose had motor-neurone disease and I could see that she was now permanently bedbound and seriously ill, unable to communicate verbally, but still totally the remarkable person I had known and for whom I continued to hold a deep affection over the previous ten years.

Ever practical and real, and knowing that her life expectancy was now counted in a matter of a few months, Rose asked that her funeral should be held at our church and that I should conduct the service. Such a request is intensely double-edged – the intense privilege of being given such a request becomes hugely and heavily weighed against the deep, deep sorrow of what we knew now lay ahead. Never could any of us have imagined when Angel was being installed in February 2004 that almost exactly ten years later we would be planning Rose's funeral in that same church.

Though visibly limited more and more every time I saw her, through her smiles and nods and such responses as she could make, Rose was very clearly still intensely 'present' and not at all yet dwelling in the past tense. I have conducted so many funerals of people who could have no say in the planning of that final rite – most of us don't give that a thought, either because it is so inconceivably far off or because even in small ways we may be in denial. For Rose neither of these conditions applied and she was able to indicate (I think there was a large alphabet chart which she was able to use to communicate) what she wanted and who should take part in this final act. She made it clear to me that this was to be a celebration with no tones of regret – if anything, the very opposite.

I went to see her often and it was a deeply moving experience, for instance, to be there as she heard what her much loved great-niece Squidge Grayson was going to say about her. Also it was a powerful thing to hear some of the music Rose had chosen to be played at the funeral, played in her room, with her there listening to it and choosing tracks. It meant so much to know that all of this was exactly as Rose desired and for her to have been able to share in some of it. The dark weight rested on us all, though, of having to watch Rose being lost to us – and perhaps even to herself – over the weeks and months ahead, through the inexorable progress of her condition which, at some point would take the Rose we knew and loved away from us for good, even though her living form would still be there simply ticking on & more and more simply existing. When we reflected together on the utterly amazing, creative genius & vivacity of this remarkable person whose daily living spoke so much of life itself, it felt like the greatest irony and even cruelty to be facing the dissolution and cancellation, almost, of that unique life-force as we prepared to lose our beloved Rose on this final part of her journey.

It was shocking and unexpected, but also an honest relief, when her end came so much sooner than had been expected and I was called urgently to her bedside on 13th February 2014 but when I got there she had not long died. Rose – and those who loved her and watched and waited – had been spared the protracted agony of a long drawn out decline and fading and death. A date was set for her funeral and what more apt day than for it to be on the day on which she had been born 69 years earlier – on 4th March 2014 at 11.30 am. The service would, indeed, be held in St. Paul's, Bow Common as she had requested and which she had made her church for a number of years as well as the site of perhaps her greatest art installation, 'Angel'.



I worked closely with Rose's family and close friends to make the service as close as we could in tone and content to what Rose had been expressing in her final weeks. It was a deep privilege to serve Rose in this one final way after she had served so many countless people through her art throughout her life.

There was an appropriate and lovely token of a **shimmer disc** attached to every Order of Service – a glittering scale from the wings of Angel, whose company we felt in a very real way Rose was now sharing.

Rose's choice of opening music – 'Gracias A La Vida' set the tone for what was to follow – it is Spanish and translates as 'Thanks to Life' – 'Thanks to life which has given me so much,' the words can be read below.

All those who took part were special to Rose and chosen by her:

Guy Brett, art critic, curator and lecturer was a close friend:

Caroline Grayson was Rose's niece:

Squidge Grayson is Caroline's daughter:

Isabel Yellin had been a student of Rose in recent years:

The **Liversidge** brothers, **George** (age 8) and **Thomas** (age 5) were very, very important to Rose and were supported by their parents Cassie and Peter:

Harry Walton had been one of Rose's dearest friends and a constant support to her:

Also speaking at the service were artists **Andrée Cooke** and **Maryrose**, perhaps her closest and most faithful of friends who cared for her to the very end.

Order of Service

Opening music Mercedes Sosa – *Gracias A La Vida*

Translation of *Gracias A La Vida* – *Thanks to life*

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me two beams of light, that when opened,
Can perfectly distinguish black from white
And in the sky above, her starry backdrop,
And from within the multitude
The one[s] that I love.

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me an ear that, in all of its width
Records — night and day — crickets and canaries,
Hammers and turbines and bricks and storms,
And the tender voice of my beloved.

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me sound and the alphabet.
With them the words that I think and declare:
"Mother," "Friend," "Brother" and the light shining.
The route of the soul from which comes love.

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me the ability to walk with my tired feet.
With them I have traversed cities and puddles
Valleys and deserts, mountains and plains.
And your house, your street and your patio.

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me a heart, that causes my frame to shudder,
When I see the fruit of the human brain,
When I see good so far from bad,
When I see within the clarity of your eyes...

Thanks to life, which has given me so much.
It gave me laughter and it gave me longing.
With them I distinguish happiness and pain —
The two materials from which my songs are formed,
And your song, as well, which is the same song.
And everyone's song, which is my very song.

Thanks to life
Thanks to life
Thanks to life
Thanks to life

Opening prayers and welcome

Duncan Ross

Hymn

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy
Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labours, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Introducing 'Angel'

Duncan Ross

Eulogy

Guy Brett

About the Finn-Kelcey family

Caroline Grayson

Reading

For my aunt by Angie Flores

read by Squidge Grayson

The experience of being taught by Rose

RCA Student Isabel Yellin

'Why Rose is so special to us'

George (age 8) and Thomas (age 5) Liversidge

Reading

Extract from the Sculptor's Daughter by Tove Jansson

read by Harry Walton

Hymn

Jerusalem

William Blake (1757–1827)

And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

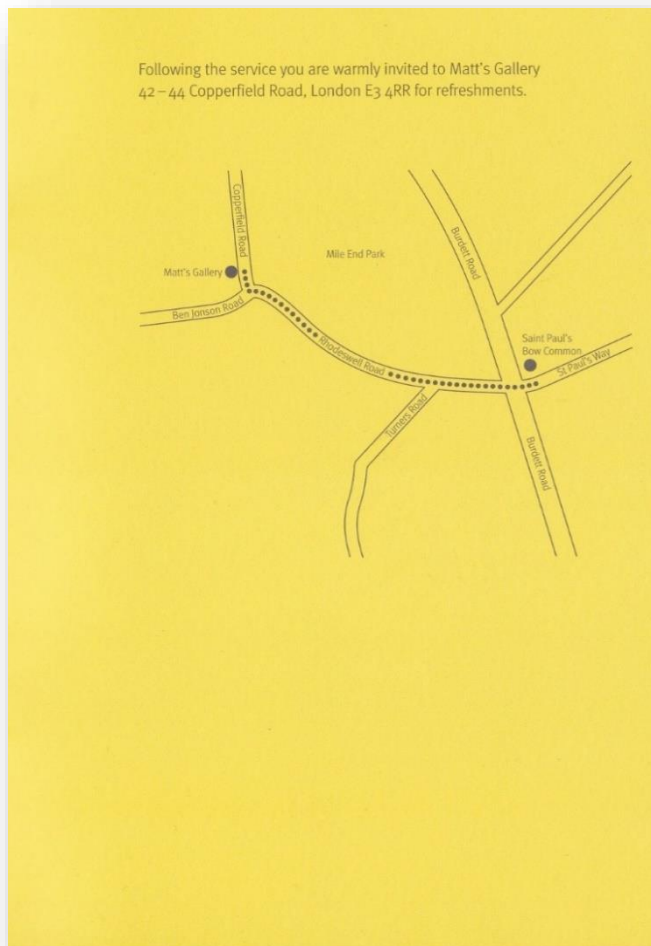
Prayers

Duncan Ross

Final prayers and blessing of Rose

Closing music

'Tientos' Cantaori by Pepe de la Matrona,
Gutaire-Roman el Granaino 1957



**Words Spoken at the Funeral of Rose Finn-Kelcey on Tuesday 4th March 2014
at St. Paul's Church, Bow Common
by Prebendary Duncan Ross (Vicar of the church from 1995-2013)**

'Rose left us very unexpectedly – but mercifully – given the awful affliction which she was bearing. Thankfully, there was enough time for her to express some of her wishes for this day when it came. One of these was for us to gather in *this* place, and so I can truly say – not only on behalf of Rose's Family and many friends – but on behalf of Rose **herself** that we welcome you to this place today.

When Rose asked me if I would lead this event here today I promised her that it would be first of all a celebration - I took her smiles and nods as her assent. And so to honour Rose today, albeit with a profound sense of loss, we **celebrate** this remarkable person on what is, indeed, her birthday.

When some of us met here a couple of weeks ago young Thomas spoke of this as being Rose's Birthday Party. And so it is - a loss and a sorrow, but borne up by **thanksgiving** for Rose - the woman, the artist, the family member, the friend, the colleague; someone who has left behind her a powerful legacy – both in her art and in our abiding memories of her.

In this our final time with Rose, a number of people will bear witness to that legacy for which we are grateful. Rose chose this place – this church – to be the place in which she wished for us to gather with her for a final time today for a very good reason. You can see that reason illustrated on the front cover of the very beautiful Order of Service which you will have been given.

It was late one afternoon in early July of 2003 that two visitors came to see me. Rose, commissioned by Art and Sacred Places, and Rachel Steward of Artwise, her curator. They had been working on a commission for Southwark Cathedral which had fallen through and were now touring likely church sites which might be suitable for a site specific work which would emerge once the site had been chosen. This church was the last place they visited on that day and Rose and Rachel literally appeared on the doorstep!

I remember that moment so clearly and for two hours they endured 'Trial by Duncan' in an outpouring of my enthusiasm for this community, this church, this area! They listened with rare attention to the stories I told about this part of London, about the amazing people we serve, about the social history of this small patch of earth, all of it I think pretty much unknown to them.

At the end of this outpouring I was aware of how intently they had been listening, that Rose had truly apprehended our context here; that it was not just art which might emerge out of all this but a genuine response and recognition and respect for what is here already – not just this extraordinary building but the community in which it is set.

Neither the church here nor I had the faintest idea what would emerge. But, what had been built in that short time was a total trust in Rose's integrity and sensitivity and extraordinary and unexpected creativity! I mean - shimmer disks? Who would have thought of that? And 85,000 of them to cover 850 sq feet of external church wall for all to see by day and by night?

And Rose set to work. First of all embedding herself in this community, visiting local schools, shops, homes, playgrounds, young people's projects. She helped with Jumble Sales, came to services, read the children's Sunday School books and got to know the congregation. She soon learned that the majority population in the parish are our Muslim neighbours with whom we have a good and creative relationship. And she let all of this feed into her extraordinary creative mind ... and from it all emerged ... 'Angel.'

In her own research notes Rose said how the directness of our children's Sunday School drawings had been an inspiration. They had inspired her to create a very familiar religious image, but in an imaginative way. I mean how 'trad' is that – an Angel on a Church? How many angels can be found on how many churches? But, this was to be an Angel unlike any other which had yet appeared in any church anywhere! Presented now in a new way which had both a religious and a secular reading. And in a language which had yet to be captured in art – the language of the mobile message – the language of Emoticons – as she said – a bit like modern day Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The risk the church took and the risk that Rose took were considerable. But, that early trust in her integrity proved to be sound and well-placed; in her integrity as an artist, as a person with enormous respect for this community, as a woman who deeply intuited the spiritual. We walked on common ground and we literally journeyed in trust and faith. And you can see on those service covers the dazzling outcome, using the power and energy of wind and light – as autonomous as any Angel could ever be. And proclaiming externally what these angels surrounding you on these church walls proclaim within – 800 sq feet of glass tesserae, by Charles Lutyens the largest contemporary mosaic in Britain with – matched for those 5 months, with the largest public art on show in London.

In the first weeks, Rose and I would cross the road in front of the church and loiter at the bus stop or among passers-by at the crossroads, intrigued to know what people's reactions were. Early on I realised she had crossed all kind of barriers, for instance, with our local young Bengali lads – not the easiest to reach! And, time and again we would see them stop, then tip their heads sideways (no adults had understood that you have to do that!) and with delight would say, 'Angel! Innit?!' They would then text their mates to come and see – no doubt using those very symbols which Rose had used to proclaim this dazzling heavenly appearance in the middle of Bow Common!

And Rose remained our friend and inspiration for years after. And it is a particular delight that though Angel left us in the summer of 2004, nevertheless on this day we are each offered a glittering scale from the Angel's wing – a shimmer disk – by which to celebrate and remember this remarkable spirit who maybe ... maybe is now freed to be most fully herself. Free. And now a part of that intangible but dazzling reality which she strove both to capture and to release in her art.'

~ ROSE FINN-KELCEY ~



(Googling Rose's name & going to www.rosefinnkelcey.com reveal a great deal more about her.)