

Request for Submissions from Artists



for mosaic work in the
Chapel of St Patrick
Westminster Cathedral



Westminster Cathedral

The Ongoing Mosaic Programme

Request for Submissions from Artists for Mosaic Designs

Westminster Cathedral seeks artists for mosaic decoration in the Chapel of St Patrick.

Artists are requested to submit examples of work they consider indicative of their suitability for a forthcoming commission.

Submissions are not expected to follow others stylistically, indeed the cathedral chapels exhibit work of many styles and dates, from its completion in the early years of the twentieth century to the present day, as described in the background briefing notes that follow. Nonetheless artists should recognize that their work will live in conjunction with that which precedes it.

Submissions should be made in the form of high resolution attachments, accompanied by the artist's c.v. and any other relevant information. Submissions should be restricted to six images or pages of text suitable for viewing or printing at A4.

Submissions should be sent to the Cathedral Administrator at elizabetharnot@rcdow.org.uk no later than mid-day on Monday 9th October 2017. They will be assessed by the Cathedral's Art & Architecture Committee and applicants will be advised following a formal meeting of the committee in March 2018.

Background briefing for artists

1. *Process*

Arts projects at Westminster Cathedral are procured through the Art & Architecture Committee and commissioned by the Cathedral Administrator or his agent, the Cathedral Architect. Projects are developed with advice from the Art and Architecture Committee (A&AC) who meet three times a year. Advice is sometimes offered out of committee to avoid significant delay. The A&AC is an advisory committee, applications for permanent alterations to the Grade I listed building being determined by the Westminster Historic Churches Committee (HCC). An application to HCC is made only when the A&AC is content. Applications must be advertised prior to the relevant committee date and copies of the application are held at Clergy House for viewing by interested members of the public during the consultation period. The HCC application is made by the Cathedral Administrator's office with input from the artist and from the Cathedral Architect where required. The architect often presents applications at HCC and the artist's presence can often be helpful too.

2. *The Art and Architecture Committee*

The Art and Architecture Committee advises the Cardinal on the fabric of the building, its maintenance and any proposed new work. The idea of an advisory committee on its decoration was first mooted while the Cathedral was building, but it was not until 1953 that the A&AC was formally re-established, following controversy over a recently installed mosaic. There was a revival of interest in commissioning mosaics following the Cathedral's centenary and the gradual process has continued since. Membership of the A&AC changes over time but consists of those experienced in the fields of art and architecture, the Cathedral Administrator and the Sub Administrator. The Cathedral Architect is in attendance. The Cathedral Administrator's PA acts as Secretary. It cares for the historic fabric and seeks to add new work to the Cathedral that is consistent with its historical character while also representing the abilities of artists today and maintaining the Cathedral's contemporary relevance.

3. *New mosaic and other works of art and design*

New work by artists in the Cathedral is sometimes stimulated by an offer of a commission from a potential donor. In other cases, the Cathedral seeks donors for particular locations. Some work is commemorative, e.g. the lettering at the west door marking the visit of Pope Benedict. The A&AC is usually responsible for the selection of artists for commissions, and for reviewing proposals and giving advice on their development. This takes place at the meetings held three times a year.

4. *Mosaic in relation to the history of the Cathedral*

The fabric of the Cathedral was completed in 1903, its architect, J. F. Bentley having died the year before. The interior was of bare brick with concrete vaults, and it was always intended to sheath it in a combination of marble and mosaic, after the manner

of the great Byzantine structures of the Roman and Eastern Orthodox churches. Byzantium was a subject of fascination for architects and artists in the 1890s, and other churches and some domestic interiors reflected this interest. This style was proposed to Bentley partly as a way of avoiding adverse comments had a classical or Gothic cathedral been erected at that time. The Byzantine style was also favoured because it was possible to build the whole structure at once and leave the task of decoration to be completed as funds were raised.

To date, most of the mosaic commissions have been in the side chapels, each of which carries a separate dedication. The artists employed since the 1990s have been:

Trevor Caley

Ivor Davies

Christopher Hobbs

Leonard McComb RA

Tom Phillips RA

5. *Iconography*

Catholics believe that in the act of worship, the faithful gathered with their Bishop are united with the heavenly liturgy, together with the Angels and the Saints. The Cross and Resurrection of Christ, reconciling them with the Father in the Holy Spirit, are made present. Artistic works in the Cathedral, therefore, should evoke this Presence, which is beyond history, time and space. Talking of pictorial art in church buildings, Joseph Ratzinger (later, Pope Benedict XVI) said “The point of the images is not to tell a story about something in the past, but to incorporate the events of history into the sacrament. ...The events themselves transcend the passing of time and become present in our midst through the sacramental action of the Church.”

Working within this context, the Cathedral decoration follows an iconographic programme. With side chapels, the assumption is that the mosaic will expand on the nature of the dedication in narrative and symbolic ways (the most recently decorated chapels are St. Joseph and St. George & the English Martyrs). Individual figures (recently St. Francis and St. Anthony in the narthex at the west end, St. David and St. Ambrose in the south aisle) are deemed appropriate by association or to inspire thoughts about different aspects of church history and theology. Iconography will govern the choice of clothing (reflecting the ecclesiastical rank of the subject), the holding of objects which identify the subject (croziers, books, etc.) and imagery in the background of a figure. The A&AC is particularly concerned about appropriate iconography. It may require several iterations of a design to achieve the right symbolic content and character.

6. *Style*

The A&AC is guided by a desire to maintain the overall architectural and artistic integrity of the Cathedral when considering new additions to the mosaics. They would usually suggest that the artist consider his work in relation to the qualities of gravity and relatively static composition found in Byzantine mosaics and icon painting, while at the same time avoiding pastiche. In the treatment of faces, for example, some

expressiveness and individuality is required, but should be balanced by a sufficiently hieratic quality. While it is not necessary to attempt a reconstruction of the face of a historical figure, it should nonetheless reflect in some way what is known or believed in relation to the person depicted. This can be a difficult line to tread. Artists are encouraged to look at the decorative work that has gone before, perhaps particularly at those such as the mosaics in the Chapel of the Holy Souls which are known to reflect Bentley's own aspirations. The chapters on mosaic in *Westminster Cathedral and its Architect* by Bentley's daughter, Winefride De L'Hopital are an invaluable source in this regard and may be downloaded at <https://archive.org/details/westminstercathe02lhop>. *Reflections: The Westminster Cathedral Mosaics*, Patrick Rogers, 2010, published by Oremus and available from the cathedral shop gives an excellent overview of mosaics completed to that date. On other aspects artists are encouraged to ask questions when working towards their design and should direct those questions to the A&AC through its Secretary, Elizabeth Arnot at elizabetharnot@rcdow.org.uk.

7. *Visual character*

The quality of design in a pictorial work within an architectural setting is an important consideration that has governed the development of western art and is essential for work in the Cathedral. Balance without rigidity, concentration of focal points within the field, colour and tonal contrast without disjunction are among the factors to bear in mind. The distance of the viewer from the mosaic varies from one location to another. It is important that during the eventual briefing process there should be a discussion of the expected viewing distance and lighting conditions of the piece, so that the artist can factor in considerations of legibility of individual features and of lettering. Artists should also bear in mind how their proposal will work in terms of colour, scale and emphasis in relation to other works with which it can be seen, and aim to respond in design terms.

8. *Lettering*

Mosaic design often includes lettering. The A&AC wishes to maintain a high standard of lettering, and recognizes that artists are not, in general, specialists in this field. Artists should therefore discuss their lettering ideas at an early stage with the Cathedral Architect and through him with the A&AC's consultant for lettering, to achieve letter forms consistent with the style of the design, legible and interesting in themselves.

9. *Making mosaics*

The A&AC is alert to the possibility of the artist being the actual maker of the mosaic, but recognizes that in most cases the artists they select will not have this technical background, and that the mosaic will therefore be made by specialists in collaboration with the artist. Where possible, mosaic makers in Britain are chosen. Even if the work is to be executed by others, artists making designs for the A&AC should learn as much as possible about mosaic technique and consider how their work is likely to translate into the medium. It could be said that the works in the Cathedral to date vary in this regard. Artists should form their own opinions on those that they consider successful and communicate their thoughts to the A&AC and executant mosaicist.

10. *Selection procedure*

In the past, the selection process has operated through members of the A&AC who have made recommendations of artists whose work is known to them or who are suggested to them by others of stature within the artistic community. The A&AC will continue to advise the Cardinal concerning submissions as described in paragraph 12 below.

11. *Briefing for artists*

Prospective artists are invited to visit the Cathedral which is open throughout the day. Artists selected for further consideration may be shown round the cathedral by the Administrator. Once an artist has been identified, the iconographic requirements will be discussed, following earlier discussion at A&AC.

12. *Review process for submissions*

Examples of work submitted for consideration will be assessed in the first instance by the A&AC. If successful, an artist may be approached for preliminary ideas as the first stage for discussion and it is important that the artist should make it clear if payment is required at this stage (see *payment* in section 13 below). These preliminary ideas should illustrate the way that it is intended to fill the space, the iconography, the colours, lettering style, etc. The A&AC will respond through the Administrator. They may then decide to offer a formal commission, call an end to the project, or make further suggestions for development. In the latter case, the artist should consider whether payment is required. The A&AC may reject the design at any point, either before or after a formal commission is agreed, if they feel that early promise remains unfulfilled. Alternatively they may continue to ask for further amendments, or proceed to a formal application for consent from HCC prior to the making and installation of the mosaic. In due course it is helpful, both for the artist, for the A&AC and for the HCC, if a digital photographic simulation of the design in its eventual position can be produced at this stage. If the artist does not do this during the design process, the architect will do so prior to submission to HCC.

13. *Payment*

It is important that an artist has a full understanding of the process before embarking upon it. The Cathedral Architect and the Administrator are happy to discuss this at any point. Artists are not normally offered payment for outline proposals. The cost of travel to the Cathedral for arranged meetings and some other out of pocket expenses will be available by prior agreement. A formal agreement covering fees for work will only be made when a commission is offered, at which stage the artist will be asked to suggest proposed stages at which payment might be expected, perhaps in terms of concept design, design development, final presentation design for consent, cartoon and implementation. Consideration should be given to the possibility of abortive work and terms regarding remuneration should a project remain unfulfilled.