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'Living, changing light': stained glass art and gendered creativity in the suburban church

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ABSTRACT

The creativity of religious art and practice is largely ignored in discussions of urban creativity. In this paper the importance of religious creativity in the making of suburban space is explored through a focus on the role of artists in two Christian churches in West London. Drawing on an analysis of two female stained glass artists, working in different time periods and religious contexts, this paper suggests the significance of churches as sites of creative innovation in suburban landscapes. The paper traces the negotiations and collaborations of the artists in relation to gendered expectations and institutional hierarchies and also considers the role of stained glass as a distinctive artistic medium in the creation of spiritually significant worship space for suburban congregations.

KEYWORDS Artists; stained glass; suburbs; creativity; gender

Introduction

'Not specifically a career for women ... physically tiring and heavy work. But for the enthusiast for light and colour, perhaps the most wonderful medium in the world.'¹ Uncovered in an undated note in her archives in the Victoria and Albert museum, these are the words of stained glass artist, Moira Forsyth, whose first formal commission was for two sets of windows for the new suburban church of St Thomas the Apostle Church in West London in 1933. Forsyth's beautifully executed windows for the children's chapel (see Figure 1) are worked in a restrained palette of yellows and gold and show animals and dancing children in a garden of Eden which seems relocated to 1930s suburbia. The window shows Forsyth's characteristically detailed draughtsmanship although her work usually makes much stronger use of colour. In this paper we discuss Forsyth's stained glass art and two other unknown female artists, Elisabeth Starling and Kathleen Roberts,

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Figure 1. Moira Forsyth, Stained Glass Window, Children's Chapel, St Thomas' Church, Hanwell. Photo: authors.

who worked in the same suburban church, alongside a contemporary female stained glass artist, Sophie D'Souza. D'Souza's creation of an innovative lightbox 'Resurrection window' for the Catholic church of our Lady and St Joseph's, was the centrepiece of the church's renovation in 2010. Both churches are located within half a mile of each other in suburban Hanwell, in the West London borough of Ealing, within an ordinary suburban landscape of parks, terraced houses and shopping parades and both are case studies of a wider academic project

which explores design, material culture and popular creativity within suburban faith communities.² In this paper we develop a detailed analysis of these two female stained glass artists to explore the hidden legacies of religious creativity in the suburbs and the distinctive contributions of such creative work. First, we suggest that both suburbs and faith communities are largely ignored in wider accounts of urban creativity. While our wider work has emphasised the creative significance of diverse multicultural new religious architecture in the suburbs (Shah, Dwyer, and Gilbert 2012; Dwyer et al. 2013, 2015; Dwyer 2015) here we argue that an untold story of the suburban expansion of London in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is the significance of religious art in the creation of new suburban landscapes. Religious stained glass is a particularly interesting example given its significance in domestic as well as religious art and architecture of this period. Second, our analysis suggests a hidden history of female creativity and explores the gendering of the creative partnerships and collaborations which underpinned the artistic work. It also probes the intersections between religious creativity and suburban domesticity. Third, our paper reflects on the distinctiveness of stained glass art as an artistic medium which shapes how religious artists engage with its properties, of light and colour, in the making of meaningful religious art and worship spaces. Our analysis complicates secular formulations of creative cities and places artistic engagement within the quotidian spaces of suburban faith communities. Religious art emerges both as a site of creative endeavour and innovation and as a means for believers to better imagine their relationship with the divine within the ordinary suburban geographies of everyday life.

In the next section of the paper, we offer a critique of existing formulations of creativity and the city arguing that these are dominated by a particular understanding of urban space which marginalizes the suburbs as being outside narratives of creative or artistic innovation. Such accounts are also resoundingly secular with little engagement with work on religious art and creativity. Drawing on a detailed analysis of Moira Forsyth's commissioning to work at St Thomas' Church in the 1930s and Sophie D'Souza's collaborative work on the stained glass lightbox window at St Joseph's the next two sections of the paper offer a detailed reading of religious creativity and its significance. We conclude by emphasising not only the significance of religious artists in shaping suburban space but also the distinctiveness of forms of creativity which engage faith communities and are shaped by spiritual practice.

Suburbia, creativity and religious art

The economic possibilities of regenerating urban space through creativity and urban art established through the work of Florida (2005) and others (Landry and Bianchini 1995; Landry 2000) are now mainstreamed in urban policy-making. However, it is a 'creativity-fix' (Peck 2007, 1) which is subject to wide-ranging

critique suggesting that such cultural activities serve corporate and neo-liberal agendas, concentrate resources on existing privileged groups and stimulate exclusion through gentrification (Peck 2005). While there is scope for urban artists to offer a more locally grounded or critical engagement (Harris 2012), critical, playful or 'edgy' art is often co-opted in the commodification of new 'bohemian enclaves' (Dickens 2008). This proliferation of work on urban art and the creative city is notable for its concentration on particular urban spaces – recently gentrified urban centres or bohemian cultural quarters. Continuing a long tradition in urban theory which depicts suburbs as the antithesis of creativity, characterised as monotonous, monolithic and mundane (Gilbert 2017), suburban locations are rarely featured in accounts of the creative city despite evidence not only of suburban vernacular creativity (Barker 2009; Huq 2013) but also of emerging creative industries in the suburbs (Bain 2013). A re-evaluation of the significance of suburbs in the context of global cities is also urged in recent work on 'global suburbanisms' (Keil 2013) which emphasises the demographic, spatial and social significance of suburbs.

Perhaps less surprisingly the literature on the creative city is overwhelmingly secular ignoring the contributions of religious art or the creative activities of faith communities. There is little intersection between urban geographies of the creative city and the history of church architectures and art, for example, unless it is in the creative reworking of former churches as new living spaces (Hackworth and Gullikson 2013; Lynch 2014), in which religious art is cast firmly into the category of 'heritage' confined to commodified and touristic spaces such as museums or cathedrals. While religious art may be recognised and celebrated in the building of spectacular new cathedrals such as Barcelona's La Sagrada Familia, the significance of religious creativity in the more everyday space of urban or suburban life is largely invisible.

Recent scholarship in religious architectural history has begun to re-evaluate the artistic significance and contribution of ordinary Anglican and Catholic churches in the interwar and post-war period in the UK, an intense period of building of new churches in the rapidly expanding suburbs, focusing particularly on the neglected significance of religious buildings within wider accounts of urban modernism (Proctor 2014; Connelly and Steele 2015). Within this work the focus is primarily on architects and institutional actors rather than the individual artists involved in creating worship spaces. In this paper we suggest that a focus on stained glass art offers a distinctive perspective on religious art given its specific intertwining with more secular creative histories. While the richness of medieval representational stained glass continues to offer inspiration to later stained glass artists, the Arts and Crafts movement in the UK was pivotal in the revival of stained glass art in the late nineteenth century which found expression in domestic, municipal and religious spaces (Cormack 2015). The values of the Arts and Crafts movement were highlighted in the decorative details of new suburban homes, including stained glass art in front doors and windows

(Oliver, Davis, and Bentley 1981) as well as in Art Deco inspired commercial and public buildings.

Through an analysis of the work of two female stained glass artists working in two neighbouring Christian churches, although at different time periods and through different institutional formations, in this paper we uncover the significance of religious artistic work in neglected sites like the suburbs and explore the creative partnerships and collaborations which underpin the work.

Artists and the new suburban church: St Thomas' Church

St Thomas the Apostle Church has a remarkable artistic and architectural heritage which is the legacy of its architect, Edward Maufe and his collaboration with a range of artists in the decorative detail of its design. Consecrated on 10 March 1934, St Thomas the Apostle Church was a product of the Middlesex Forty-Five Churches Fund, an initiative to build new churches in London suburbs in the interwar years. Funded by the sale and subsequent demolition of the Victorian church of St Thomas' Portman Square, the competition for its design was won by architect Edward Maufe. Maufe's design for this new suburban church was a miniature version of his more celebrated Guildford Cathedral which he began in the same period, although its construction was interrupted by the war and it was not dedicated until 1962. For Maufe, beauty and simplicity were key to his understanding of a church as a sacred space (Gilbert et al. 2015). Maufe was strongly influenced by the Arts and Crafts tradition and integral to his vision for the church was an emphasis on religious art and craftsmanship, although he remained committed to the role of the architect in ensuing 'the essential unity of the fabric' (Maufe 1934).

His budget enabled the commissioning of key emerging contemporary decorative religious artists to produce new work which was incorporated directly into the structure of the building. Most notably he commissioned Eric Gill's 'Calvary', a depiction of the crucifixion, whose cross forms the tracery of the Church's East window. Other artists included sculptor Vernon Hill, who carved the church's distinctive font and James Woodford who carved the chancel screen. However, the commissioning of Moira Forsyth, and the two other female artists who feature in the church was through the intervention of Prudence Maufe, Edward's wife. Prudence was the artistic director at the Heal's furniture and design store on Tottenham Court Road where she also directed Heal's Mansard gallery, an important new exhibition space for contemporary art during the 1930s. Prudence introduced Edward to the sculptor Vernon Hill, later buying his Madonna and Child statue as a gift to the Lady Chapel of St Thomas'. Prudence also recommended three female artists, Moira Forsyth, Kathleen Roberts and Elisabeth Starling, whose work she had encountered at Heals, for work at St Thomas'. Moira Forsyth was commissioned to make four small panels in the childrens' chapel and four at the West end above the font. In the Lady Chapel, Kathleen Roberts

undertook a ceiling mural, Christ as morning star, echoing the star motifs of the windows. In the small children's chapel Elisabeth Starling painted a version of the nativity relocated to suburban Hanwell (see Figure 2). Prudence was to play a key role in the decorative detail of the church and her artistic patronage suggests an important connection between contemporary commercial art and design and religious art. She was to oversee the ordering of high quality furniture and

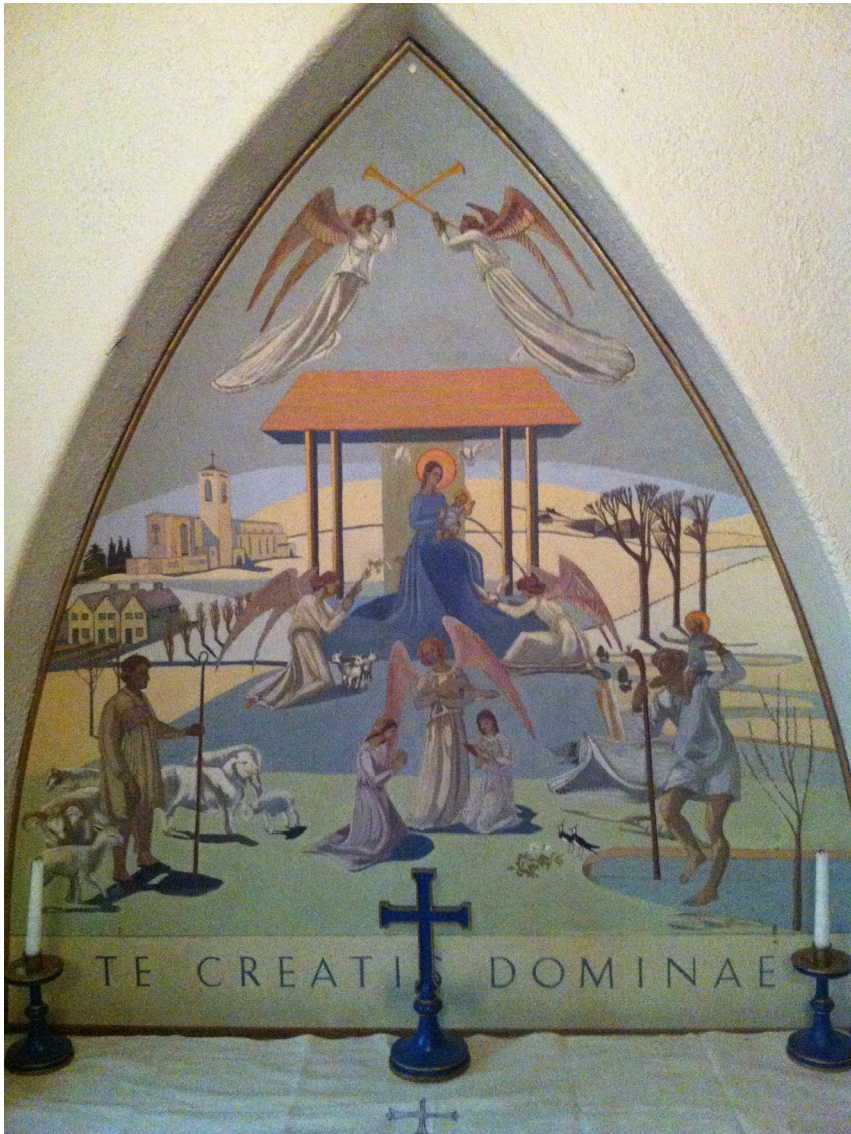


Figure 2. Elisabeth Starling, Nativity Altarpiece, St Thomas' Church, Hanwell. Photo: authors.

furnishings from Heals and the chancel carpet. While little is known about the latter two artists, the archive of Moira Forsyth, already an established artist who was to go on to become well known for religious stained glass, provides some insights into her work on the new church, her negotiations with the architect and the vicar and her own artistic sensibilities.

Moira Forsyth trained initially as a ceramicist at the Burslem School of Art in Staffordshire, where she was taught by her father, Gordon Forsyth.³ Her early success, including exhibiting at the White City Fair in 1925, was curtailed by the Depression. She retrained as a stained glass artist at the Royal College of Art and joined the Glass House Studio in Fulham. Established by pioneering Arts and Crafts stained glass artist Mary Lowndes, who also founded the Artists Suffrage League, the Glass House Studio supported the career of several leading female stained glass artists in the twentieth Century including Wilhelmina Geddes. Looking for work in 1930, Moira submitted her portfolio to Heal's where Prudence Maufe commissioned her to design their Christmas catalogue in September of the same year and recommended her to Edward Maufe.⁴ While Forsyth was to enjoy a long and mutually beneficial relationship with Maufe, who went on to commission her for the substantial Rose window at Guildford cathedral, their relationship at St Thomas', revealed in their letters, suggested a somewhat paternalist relationship between the architect and his more junior female artists. It is notable that the relatively inexperienced female artists Moira Forsyth, Kathleen Roberts and Elizabeth Starling were given the more playful, decorative space of the Lady Chapel and Children's Chapel unlike their male counterparts whose work was in the main church. Forsyth was also frustrated that her original designs for the stained glass windows were revised by the architect in line with his simple, austere aesthetic for the church.

Forsyth's windows reveal beautifully executed draughtsmanship with those in the Children's Chapel depicting biblical scenes from the Creation populated by dancing children and animals while those at the West End show images of Christ with children (see Figure 3). However, Forsyth's correspondence reveals a compromise between her own expectations and those of the architect. Her initial sketches for the windows show her revelling in the rich, jewelled tones that characterised Arts and Crafts stained glass.⁵ And yet, the windows of the children's chapel are notable in their absence of colour, using amber antique glass and silver stain, in a 'grisaille' monochrome technique. Correspondence reveals this was Maufe's request, citing both aesthetic reasons and the practical reasons of poor lighting.⁶ While there is some colour in the small windows at the West end of the church behind the baptismal font, there is considerably less colour than in Forsyth's original sketches. The rich green and red theme was replaced by cooler blues and yellows, presumably at the request of Maufe, since blues and yellows are predominant in the rest of the furnishings for the church. While they much better illuminated, facing west, than those in the children's chapel, they are dwarfed by the clear glass panes that stretch far above them. From even



Figure 3. Moira Forsyth, Stained Glass Window, West End, St Thomas' Church, Hanwell. Photo: authors.

a short distance, the exquisite detail is lost. Alongside Maufe's control over her work, Forsyth was also subject to the whims and fancies of the church's Vicar, Rev. Beck. Forsyth's letters reveal her frustrations at his requests for a theme for the windows in the Children's Chapel which she found excessively sentimental:

I hope the Vicar will not be disappointed in the non-appearance of 'Suffer little children'. Really, I tried very hard all week-end, but it simply would not do. I began to think I was working for Dr. Barnado's homes.⁷

Moira Forsyth's stained glass is extremely effective within the wider scheme for the church, and is much admired by contemporary parishioners. However, it is probably true that Forsyth herself was not fully satisfied with its realisation because of the limitations and constraints placed upon her. When reflecting on the pieces that meant most to her during her career, Hanwell did not feature, despite being her first work, and the work that cemented her change in career from ceramics artist to stained glass artist.⁸ A lecture later in her career included a candid aside about an architect who feared the inclusion of the colour red, which might be a mischievous allusion to Maufe.⁹ Instead she argued for a rebellion against

the timidity of the Ideal Home pastel shades of the day ... now we need colour, especially perhaps today when so many people have to live like battery hens! The emotional impact of colour is tremendous when it is activated by living, changing light.

Writing about her own faith and the role of stained glass she expressed the belief that ‘singing colour and symbolic majesty’ of medieval stained glass ‘I know of no medium, other than that of music, capable of saying more effectively “Sursum Corda” – lift up your hearts!’ (Forsyth 1943, 265). Moira Forsyth was to go on to make stained glass windows for Guildford and Norwich cathedrals and for Eton College Chapel and is now recognised as one of the most significant female stained glass artists emerging from the Glass House Studio at that period.

There is little archival trace of Moira Forsyth’s contemporary female artists. However, the church archive of St Thomas’ holds a photograph of Kathleen Roberts painting her Christ as Morning Star ceiling with the Reverend Beck looking on approvingly (See Figure 4). It is tempting to read into this image further evidence of a somewhat paternalistic gendered relationship particularly given its somewhat staged appearance but this is only conjecture. Certainly all three artists’ work is relegated to the more private, arguably more feminized spaces of the church and, particularly in the children’s chapel, there is a domestic and gendered aesthetic in the depiction of idealised blond-haired dancing children in Forsyth’s windows or Kathleen Starling’s annunciation and nativity scene restaged alongside the terraced houses and gardens of Hanwell. Yet while this may have dissatisfied Forsyth, with her caustic reference to the parochial aesthetics of ‘Ideal home interiors’ (Forsyth 1943, 267), contemporary worshippers find a spiritual as well as aesthetic quality to the artistic work. For the



Figure 4. Kathleen Roberts painting ‘Christ as Morning Star,’ St Thomas’ Church, Hanwell. Photo: St Thomas’ Church Archives.

current vicar of St Thomas's, Fr Robert Chapman, the annunciation and nativity painting in the children's chapel has a deep spiritual significance. Describing the painting as 'just a beautiful example of that period of English Art', he reflects on its powerful symbolism

the wonderfully tender domestic scene of Christ on his mother's knee but in the background you have a very small painting of St Thomas's Church, the little row of houses ... this vision of the suburban pastoral ideal. Right in the midst of it Christ is being incarnated in the ordinary and the familiar, but also in the slightly Other as well.¹⁰

Pieced together with fragments from the archives, this historical narrative of the role of Moira Forsyth and her contemporaries in the religious art of St Thomas' Church in the 1930s offers an insight into the hidden artistic legacies of suburban faith. What emerges from this account is the strong authorial role of the architect and how this shaped Forsyth's artistic work in the church. While at Burslem and in her later work she was able to regain greater artistic control, here Forsyth and her contemporaries were subject to a paternalistic, if benevolent, artistic control. This account also provides important evidence of the intertwining of religious and commercial art at this period through the patronage of Prudence Maufe and the links between artistic work for Heals, the celebrated site of domestic decorative interiors, and religious art. Gender plays out in contradictory ways in these accounts. If contemporary worshippers may find the decorative intimacy of the Children's and Lady's Chapel spiritually appealing, Forsyth resisted the scripting of her work to sentimental familial themes and was ambivalent about the ways in which suburban domesticity might be reproduced in the suburban church.

Artists and the redesign of a modern suburban church: Our Lady and St Joseph's

On 19 March 2010 the large new 'Resurrection' window was illuminated for the first time in front of a crowded church of parishioners. The window, which measured four metres in diameter, was completed by local stained glass artist, Sophie D'Souza who had worked in collaboration with an artist-parishioner to produce a new 'lightbox' window as part of the church's renovation. The window, lit artificially from behind, offers an abstract burst of colour, centred on one tiny red square, and echoing older stained glass in the church porch (see Figure 5). Located half a mile away from St Thomas', Our Lady and St Joseph's Church is a Roman Catholic Church which was built in 1967. The new church, built to replace a smaller Victorian church designed by Edward Pugin, is recognised as innovative in its original 1960s design with a very angular design with reinforced concrete framing of large window forms set in the roof (*Taking Stock*, 2005). However, the austere and dark architecture of the church was felt by both priest and parishioners to lack warmth and light. In the late 1990s, the incumbent priest,



Figure 5. Sophie D'Souza, Resurrection Window, Our Lady and St Joseph's Church, Hanwell. Photo: Laura Cuch.

Father Bernard Scholes, who was nearing retirement, initiated a comprehensive renovation of the church. In a statement of intent which was required of the Westminster Diocese Art and Architecture Committee, Scholes reflected on the 'grey-ness' of the building and how its architecture was an impediment to worship:

the overall impression of the church is of a dark and gloomy building, full of hard surfaces and sharp angles. Its critics say it gives no sense of joy; no uplifting of the spirits.¹¹

For Scholes himself the architecture of the building, and particularly the separation of the sanctuary, provided a barrier to his own ministry: 'the celebrant seems a long way from the people; there is no sense of intimacy in the celebration of the liturgy'. Our Lady and St Joseph's Parish Pastoral Council commissioned two artists to design an alternative to the existing sanctuary which was dominated by a wall-mounted 17ft cross, a gift to the church from the chapel of the neighbouring mental hospital where many of the Irish and Caribbean migrant members of the congregation were employed. The Parish Pastoral Council selected the design of their own parishioner, Martin Jarvis, who proposed the elevation of the original cross in front of a new 'Resurrection' window. A commercial mural artist, Jarvis drew on his own religious experience of the church where he had been a parishioner for more than thirty years and to which he had already contributed pieces of art. He summed up his theological approach:

One of my main ideas was to take that giant crucifix off the sanctuary wall. It always disturbed me that it was very much the dead Christ ... I felt that we needed to put it in context ... there needs to be resurrection there too.¹²

Inspired by Salvador Dali's Crucifixion painting, his design repositioned the crucifix suspended at an angle to the altar, with a new stained glass window behind it. The new stained glass window was described by Jarvis as representing 'a burst of light, an explosion ... full of mystery'. This burst of light echoed the original Goddard and Gibbs stained glass window in the narthex of the church, an abstract *valle de verre* design, which was part of the original 1960s design of the building. Jarvis's design offered a powerful theological and spiritual message, reflecting his own spiritual engagement with the space of the church, and a consistency and sympathy with the existing stained glass art in the church. The abstract design was seen to offer an effective means to engage the congregation in the mystery of the resurrection. The original intention was to cut a hole in the back wall tower of the church to produce a new stained glass window, however, this design was rejected by the diocese on the grounds of complexity and cost. Undeterred, Jarvis and Scholes decided to commission local stained glass artist Sophie D'Souza to design a 'lightbox' window to produce a similar effect, effectively bypassing the required Diocesan approval of the project.

Sophie D'Souza was a parishioner of a neighbouring Catholic Church of Saints Peter and Paul, where she had spent the previous ten years producing new stained glass windows for the parish church undertaken, like the work of Moira Forsyth in Burslem, at cost price as she learned her craft. D'Souza, originally trained as a stone mason, studied stained glass at Central St Martin's arts school, having first become interested in stained glass as she restored the windows of her own Victorian house. D'Souza's 'traditional' approach to stained glass, using original techniques of working with lead and stained glass, in church and domestic contexts, contrasted with many of her art school contemporaries whose commercial work involves printing onto toughened glass. D'Souza describes her own style as 'naïve, or more folk art, the graphic, I suppose' and cites the Irish stained glass artist Harry Clarke as an inspiration.¹³ D'Souza had already worked on several other neighbouring suburban Catholic churches in West London in Pinner, Ruislip and Edgware and reflecting a growing confidence in Catholic churches in commissioning new, abstract stained glass. Asked to reflect on how her own faith shapes her work she explained: 'it's the faith or the spirituality that's most important, because the theology is an intellectual thing ... I found it almost unrelated to my faith'. She provided the example of an abstract window commissioned in a church in Pinner for a church dedicated to St John the Evangelist where her design 'light coming out of darkness' is inspired by images based on the Hubble telescope.¹⁴ D'Souza was introduced to the parish council at Our Lady and St Joseph's by Chris Fanning, the Diocesan surveyor, who was sympathetic to the aspirations for the new window and keen to find a means to execute the design.¹⁵

Sophie D'Souza and Martin Jarvis worked closely together to design the lightbox window (see Figure 3). Using Martin's original design for the window, based on the original Goddard and Gibbs, D'Souza introduced the colours for the window which involved developing her own shades of yellow and blue. She also incorporated innovative striated blue glass whose swirls, according to Jarvis, perfectly captured his original conceptual ideas increasing 'the sense of mystery ... it intimates the idea of water, the genesis story of the deep.'¹⁶ D'Souza provided the technical expertise to execute the complex lightbox window which involved a frame hung onto the curved back wall of the church. For both artists this was a mutually creative and satisfying collaboration with D'Souza emphasising the importance of involving a parishioner-artist in the creation of the art work for his own place of worship. The parish itself also became fully involved in the project with individuals each buying their own colourful segment piece of the window as a contribution to the cost. The window itself was not revealed to the congregation until the rededication of the church by the Archbishop of Westminster, on 19 March 2010, when it was theatrically unveiled and lit up in the dark church to audible gasps of appreciation from the congregation. As one elderly lady remarked 'I've been coming to this church for fifty years, it has never looked so beautiful!'¹⁷

The 'lightbox' window at Our Lady and St Joseph's was an ambitious and innovative undertaking by a somewhat 'maverick' priest whose determination to transform the church worship space challenged the regulations of the church hierarchy. Its execution was enabled by the collaboration of two artists who drew on their own faith identities and experiences of worship within the parish. The result is a piece of art work which is sympathetic to the original stained glass in the church but also innovative both in its lightbox technology and its abstract design. Its completion provides a powerful means of spiritual engagement for the large congregation of this diverse Catholic Church. Since completion, artist-parishioner Martin Jarvis has been engaged to run creative workshops for young confirmation candidates in the parish using art as a means to nurture and stimulate faith formation. Sophie D'Souza has gained a further commission, to renovate the tiny fragments of stained glass from the original Victorian church which are now incorporated into new windows in the church's sacristy.

Conclusion

In offering a detailed account of the production of religious stained glass art in two suburban churches, this paper has sought to make an argument for the re-evaluation of the role of religious creativity in the making of (sub)urban space. First, the paper has made visible creative work, both in the past and in the present, which is largely invisible and excluded from wider discussions of urban creativity. This argument is twofold celebrating both the innovation and significance of religious art and also challenging the enduring representation

of suburbs as being outside narratives of creative or artistic innovation. Instead, what emerges from this account is that far from being separate, religious art is often intertwined with secular or commercial art work evident in the employment of artists at St Thomas church who were working simultaneously in the commercial spaces of Heals department store or contemporary artists who combine ecclesiastical commissions with domestic stained glass or murals. In the particular case of stained glass this paper offers a reflection on the parallel artistic work taking place in the domestic decorative interiors of newly built suburban homes, and the development of this stained glass art in suburban churches.

Second, the paper offers some insights into the gendered dynamics of artistic practice and the collaborative engagement and commissioning of religious art by different institutional actors and worshipping communities. Our historical account of the experiences of Moira Forsyth, Kathleen Roberts and Elisabeth Starling hints at a paternalistic relationship shaping their engagement in the artistic legacy of St Thomas. In contrast, the contemporary artist, Sophie D'Souza enjoyed a collaborative artistic project working both with parishioner-artist Martin Jarvis, the priest and the congregation of the church for approval for her design. Yet despite differences in the amount of artist freedom allowed them in these commissions, both Moira Forsyth and Sophie D'Souza commented on their marginalisation in the field of stained glass. If Forsyth was to reflect that it is 'not specifically a career for women ... physically tiring and heavy work' Sophie D'Souza concurs that as a female artist it is very hard to earn enough from stained glass art without taking on other work such as art teaching.¹⁸

Finally, we want to reflect on the role of religious art in shaping the quotidian faith practices of diverse faith communities. In highlighting the contributions of religious art to the shaping of suburban spaces, our analysis reveals the distinctive religious engagement which the artists bring to their project. For both Moira Forsyth and Sophie D'Souza stained glass is revealed as a specific medium through which colour and light can be used to create a sense of numinosity and sacred space. Although the recent materialist turn in religious studies has focused attention on the lived experience of faith, relatively little has been written about how faith communities respond to the aesthetic and material environment of their worship spaces or what role they might play in shaping these spaces. The analysis of the making of stained glass art in two ordinary suburban churches offered in this paper suggests that such an approach can offer an important insight into the ways in which religious art and creativity shape faith practice.

Notes

1. 'Notes on stained glass (for Cicely)' undated. Papers of Moira Forsyth, Archives of Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
2. The project 'Making Suburban Faith' was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council between 2015–8. For more details see the project website: <http://www.makingsuburbanfaith.org/>
3. It was in Burslem that Moira worked with her father on what is now a celebrated example of religious and social art in the construction of a new Catholic church, St Joseph's. Built at the initiative of the local parish priest and paid for by subscription what is remarkable about this church is not only that it was constructed by unemployed miners and potters for the price of a free meal a day, but that the stained glass work in the church (modelled on Chartres Cathedral) was cut and constructed by these same men under instruction from Moira and her father. A huge ceiling mural 'Christ in Glory' was designed and completed by Moira in 1937 although she did the work without pay as a gift to the church. This Grade II listed church received new funding in December 2015 from Historic England for restoration work in light of its artistic and social value. (Hughes 2008).
4. Letter from Prudence Maufe to Moira Forsyth, 26 September 1930, files AAD 10/487-1991 to 10/601-1991, Moira Forsyth Papers, The Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.
5. Sketch, St. Christopher' panel for a Children's window, Church of St. Thomas of the Apostle, Hanwell, 1933, file AAD 10/6462-1991, Moira Forsyth Papers, The Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.
6. Letter from Edward Maufe to Moira Forsyth, 13 November, 1950, files AAD 10/1894-1994 – AAD10/1928-1991, Moira Forsyth Papers, The Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.
7. Extract from letter from Moira Forsyth to Edward Maufe, 7 November 1933, box MaE/51/1, Sir Edward Maufe Papers, RIBA Archives.
8. Letter from Moira Forsyth to Miss Mangold, 26 March 1982, files AAD 10/6149/1991 to AAD 10/6181/1991, Moira Forsyth Papers, The Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.
9. Lecture notes (undated), file AAD 10/6149/1991 to AAD 10/6181/1991, Moira Forsyth Papers, Archive of Art and Design, Victoria and Albert Museum.
10. Interview with the authors, 21 October 2013.
11. Statement of Intent, Canon Bernard Scholes (n.d.) Archives of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster.
12. Interview with the authors, 5 May 2015.
13. Interview with the authors, 28 April 2015.
14. For images see <http://sophiedsouzastainedglass.co.uk/> (Accessed 29 July 2016).
15. Interview with Chris Fanning by the authors, 27 May, 2015.
16. Interview with the authors, 5 May 2015.
17. Authors' fieldnotes, 19 March 2010.
18. Moira Forsyth, see note one. Interview with Sophie D'Souza, see note 13.

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