I know that many of you belong to sarts— the Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies, but, also, that some of you do not. For those who don’t know much about us, let me begin by telling you who we are.

The Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies was founded in 2002 to encourage the integration of the arts in the teaching of religion at all levels, but especially in colleges, universities, and theological schools. This integration depends on the collaborative and generative work of artists, scholars, and religious leaders who may work in different kinds of institutions or contexts, but who wish to foster the spiritual and religious dimensions or intersections of the arts as well as integrate the artistic or aesthetic dimensions of religious life in their teaching, learning, or spiritual practice.

In the past six or more years, sarts has been generously supported by grants from the Henry Luce Foundation. These grants have underwritten programs at the annual meetings of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for Biblical Literature as well as some initiatives with the College Art Association. They have also supported arts, the publication of sarts, the development and maintenance of a website for the Society and efforts of the program committee to find and nurture new members. Perhaps most significantly, the Luce Foundation funds have allowed sarts to provide small, competitively awarded grants to young artists and academics to pursue targeted projects in the field of Religion or Theology and the Arts.

Among the goals of the Society are the sharing of syllabi, notices of programs and events, resources, promotion of the Luce fellowships, promotion of arts, and the highlighting of important new publications. We also provide an image gallery where artists are able to display images of their work. These are some of the features included in our new and much-improved website: www.societyarts.org.

This year’s programs were held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Atlanta, Georgia. We started, on Friday October 29, with a joint venture between sarts and The Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning. This afternoon-long program was titled “The Role of the Arts for Transformational Pedagogy.” In a series of workshop-styled sessions, we explored the ways faculty can incorporate the work of artists into their teaching. Three practicing artists (a painter, a poet, and a musician) as well as faculty respondents assisted us in this.

Following the workshop, we held a reception for members and guests. The following morning we co-sponsored a tour of the High Museum in Atlanta with the Art, Literature, and Religion Section of the AAR. That afternoon we heard presentations by four of this year’s Luce Fellows, Laurie Cassidy, Sophia Rose Shafi, Kimberly Vrudny, and Erica Kierulf. Hearing about the work of our Luce Fellows is always a highlight of our meeting and an excellent opportunity for conversation and exchange of ideas.

If you are not now a member I want to encourage you to join our dialogue, benefit from our activities, and to contribute your energy, talents, and creativity to our work. Membership is $50 annual and includes a subscription to arts. If you are already a member, I thank you for your participation and hope you will continue to join us on our programs.

With all best wishes for this academic year.

—RJ

A Note from the sarts President
Robin Jensen

President
Robin Jensen

Board Chair
Wilson Yates

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ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies had its charter meeting at the 2002 AAR/SBL.

The Society was organized to provide a forum for scholars and artists interested in the intersections between theology, religion, and the arts to share thoughts, challenge ideas, strategize approaches in the classroom, and to advance the discipline in theological and religious studies curricula.

The goal of the Society is to attract consistent participation of a core group of artists and scholars of theology and religion in order to have dialogue about theological and religious meaning of the arts, and the artistic/aesthetic dimension of theological and religious inquiry.

For more information and to become a member of sarts, visit: www.societyarts.org.