

Photos by Stefan Hogen

The table setting with a cautionary covering represents Station II, where Jesus takes up his cross. On the plates, bones are ensnared in traps – a reference to becoming caught up in illegal or unethical practices. The artist asks: At what point do you follow Jesus and take up your own cross?

Modern meditation

*Artist uses contemporary imagery
to bring the Stations of the Cross into today's world*

BY PEGGY FLETCHER STACK
The Salt Lake Tribune

Few Christians likely would see the connection between Jesus' last day and banks of television sets, kitchen tables, tripods, turtle shells sawed in half, smashed wristwatches and Little Bighorn. Some might even find it disrespectful or worse, blasphemous.

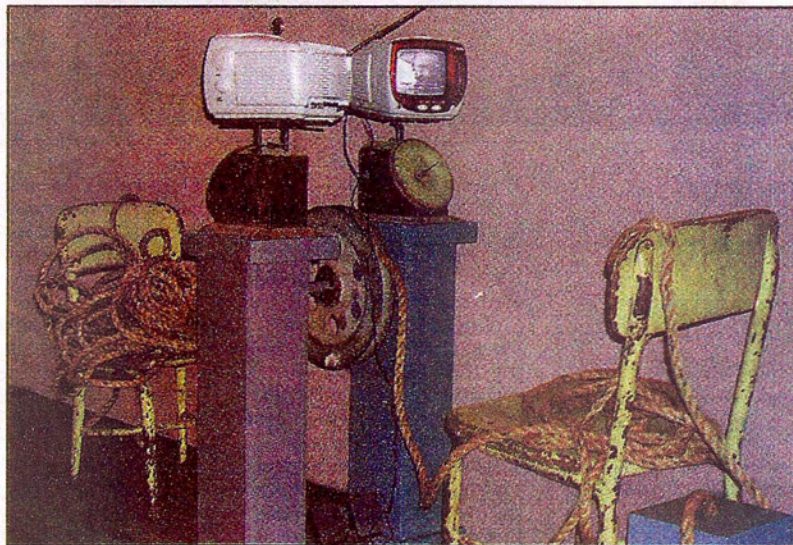
That's only because they don't relate Jesus to today's world — their world, says the Rev. Thomas Faulkner, an Episcopal priest and artist who used all those elements in his modern version of the Stations of the Cross.

"Walking the Way of the Cross: Sculptural Mediations" will be installed at St. James Episcopal Church in Midvale on Feb. 9, the day known to many Christians as Ash Wednesday.

For some, he says, the problem is "the language of modern art. My job is to translate for them."

Faulkner, of the Diocese of New York, has assembled common items from the 21st century, mixed them with political and social commentary and then attached them to one of the 14 traditional stations of the cross. Such a jarring juxtaposition may be a fitting start to the 40-day period of Lent, when Christians contemplate the death of their savior. It is a time of penance, sacrifice and sorrow.

See **EXHIBIT, C2**



At Station XI, Jesus is nailed to the cross. The artist says that the school chairs, scales, ropes and TV sets represent our weighing of what we mistakenly perceive to be truthful testimony, which can lead to the murder of innocents.

Exhibit relates Jesus to modern world

● Continued from C1

The Stations of the Cross tradition began in the 15th century when regular Christians had a little trouble getting to the sacred sites in the Holy Land, what with the Crusades and all.

So they stayed home in Europe and created a kind of proxy pilgrimage. Using sculptures and paintings positioned at different intervals along a particular path or around the inside of a church, believers imagined themselves walking beside Jesus through the streets of Jerusalem on his way to be crucified. They would pause and pray at each station as part of the devotion.

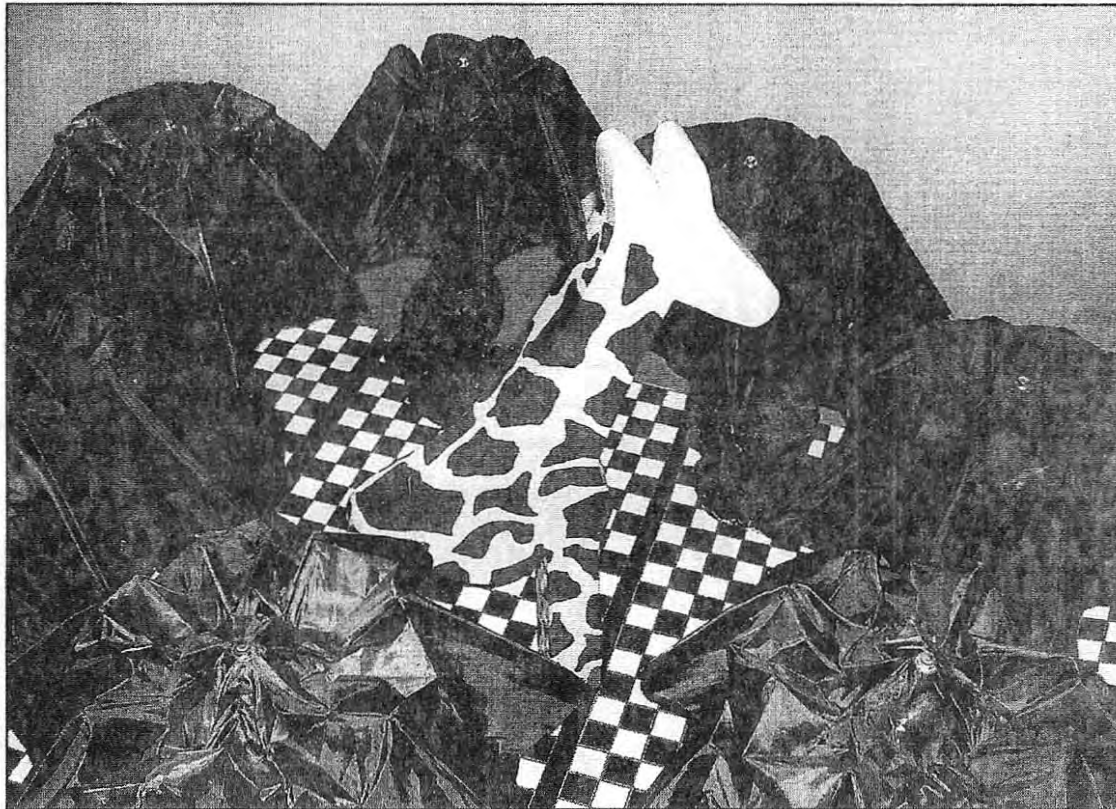
Here's where Jesus fell. Here's where Veronica wiped his lips. There's where bystander Simon was ordered to help him carry the heavy cross. He fell again. The Roman guards stripped him. They hung him on the cross. He died. They took down his body.

Today, Stations of the Cross are installed in every Catholic church and used extensively for meditation and prayer, especially during the Lenten season.

But even some Protestants, who long shunned the ritual because of its Catholic association, are finding meaning in the practice.

"As the pressures of a modern secular world increase, more and more Protestants are looking for ways to reconnect with authentic and vital piety beyond the superficial emotionalism that tends to dominate much modern Protestant worship," writes Dennis Bratcher, in *The Voice*, an online publication of the Christian Resource Institute.

The Episcopal Church has increasingly used contemporary images to represent



Stefan Huggen

At Station VII, Jesus falls for a second time. The shrouded figures, ceramic tile floor and painted giraffe represent the 5-year siege of the residents of Sarajevo (mostly Muslim) by Serbian forces (mostly Christian). As the people began to starve, they slaughtered the zoo animals for food. The artist asks: We all stumble and fall, but for what?

resent Jesus' pain and suffering.

Faulkner created his sculptures for the Meditation Chapel at the 2003 Episcopal Church General Convention in Minneapolis. Some were inspired by his eight months' work as a chaplain in the temporary morgue at the site of the World Trade Center bombings. The sixty chaplains he supervised blessed the remains recovered, conducted memorial liturgies, and provided spiritual counsel for fellow workers

Two of the Stations make specific use of 9-11 images.

At Station V, there is a model home in flames on a platform, under which there is a toy fire engine smashed by a rock. This is meant to symbolize when Simon of Cyrene was picked out of the crowd to help carry Jesus' cross.

Faulkner sees all these items suggesting unexpectedness of events — like the attack on the twin towers.

"It is a warm and sunny day in Jerusalem where you have gone to conduct business and suddenly two soldiers from the occupying forces require you to carry the cross of a con-

demned man to the site of crucifixion," he writes in the Stations' notes. "Nothing is ever the same again."

For Station X, Faulkner placed the lower half of a mannequin with a copy of the Koran.

This combines elements from the report that attacker Mohamed Atta and a fellow terrorist visited a Florida topless bar and may have left a Koran behind.

"Why do religious zealots stumble at mishearing the call of God's commandments and bring death instead of life?" Faulkner writes.

Walking the Way of the Cross: Sculptural Meditations

- **When:** February 9-20.
- **Where:** Hosted by St. James Episcopal Church, 7486 Union Park Ave., Midvale.
- **Ecumenical Youth Evening:** Feb. 11, 6:30 p.m.
- **Lenten Quiet Day:** Feb. 12, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. To register, call 322-4131.
- **Station Walks with the Artist:** Feb. 9 at 8:15 p.m. (at the close of Ash Wednesday liturgy); Feb. 10 & 11, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Feb. 13, 2 p.m., 4 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- **Drop-in hours:** Drop-in hours and Station walks with docents are being arranged for Feb. 14 -20.
- **More information:** Call 322-4131.

But there are also images from other disturbing events. For example, a photo of the battlefield at Little Bighorn is accompanied by flags of many nations at Station X, which represents Jesus being stripped.

"We are today numbed by photographs of men and women, young and old, civilian and military, terrorist and peacekeeper, from every religious and ethnic group," Faulkner writes. They are "lying dead or wounded with their garments partially or totally ripped from their bodies."

The Rev. Frederick Quinn of Utah's Episcopal Diocese was responsible for bringing Faulkner's Stations to Utah.

Quinn knows they may unsettle some who see them. But he feels it is worth it.

"The contrasts: massive, indifferent, powerful institutions vs. the gesture of comforting the Dying One," Quinn wrote in an issue of *Episcopal Life*. "Both lead to the electric blue fragile creature. Pain and death will not go away, but compassion and beauty point to an Easter world."

pstack@sltrib.com