



# Artist Deconstructs Sacred Texts To Show Them In A New Light

by Jessica Bush

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Artist Meg Hitchcock's personal relationship with religion is one that has grown and changed dynamically over the span of her

life. She constantly questions and reflects on this relationship through her collage works that utilise language and symbolism in a powerfully provocative way. We caught up with Meg for some insight into her process and personal journey.

**Your work is unique and powerful. How did you happen upon the idea of crafting images out of text?**

I was a painter for twenty years. As much as I loved the process, the end result was always too decorative. I had ideas that I wanted to convey in my work, but they got lost in paint.

Then I had this idea to use letters cut from a newspaper to create a prayer mandala. I loved it! It was then that I realized that language and text were my medium.



**What drew you towards using religious texts? Was there a particular personal experience that took you down this path?**

I quickly moved from newsprint (too acidic) to books. My personal history led me to the use of sacred texts.

I was raised in a devout Christian family, and became an evangelical, born-again Christian in my teens. I followed this path for most of my twenties, and then it started to fall apart for me.

My primary downfall was that I no longer believed in the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ. And since I was no longer able to say with conviction that Christianity was the only path to God, I was by definition no longer a Christian.



By then I was in my thirties, and I started reading sacred texts from other religions. The beauty and familiarity of the writing touched me deeply, and I realized that all these “other” traditions were pointing to the same thing as Christianity. I started to see God as a creation of humanity; we created this divine Being in order to better understand our own divine nature.

So my use of sacred texts is an expression of my journey, and my evolving understanding of Consciousness. One thing that we all share is the knowledge that we will die. What happens after that event? That’s the question that has ripped civilizations apart.





It's terribly ironic, if you think about it. Some people are so bent on being "right" about their idea of God that they're willing to condemn or annihilate anyone who disagrees with them. Straight-up insanity.

## Is there an overarching message or feeling you hope to inspire in your audience?

First and foremost, I like to create a visual buzz with my work. That's why I'm a visual artist – to create works that are interesting to look at. After that initial impression, I like my work to convey something of humanity. In my work with sacred texts, I speak to the common thread that runs through all scripture. The Holy Spirit, the Tao, Shakti, Consciousness – whatever you choose to call it – we recognize ourselves in it. It reflects back to us our true nature. St. Francis of Assisi said, "What you are looking for is what is looking."



So my work with sacred texts is an expression of our shared humanity, warts and all. It's a celebration of all that we're capable of: the good, the bad, and the seriously ugly.

**Could you walk us through the process of creating one of your works, from idea to realization?**

I come across a passage in a holy book that speaks to me, and then I find another book to cut the letters from. Generally there's a relationship between the two texts, and I should add that sometimes I veer away from holy books, but not often. Then I come up with a design in my sketchbook, lay it out on a piece of paper (sometimes I skip this step and wing it), and then I start cutting the letters from the second text to create the original passage. At this point, it's just cut,

ft upon his head ever art thou with smiling m...  
 three eyes are full blown lotuses in thy hands...  
 kullalotus and a sword Thou art the presiding...  
 the creeper which grants all desires Thou art...  
 d the power to write both verse and prose Th...  
 luelotus Ocean of kindness and compassion...  
 y mercy shower upon me the nectar of prosper...  
 round Lady brilliant as the garments of bright...  
 ent Thou art clad in tigerskin Thy waist is ad...  
 ling bellsthou holdest the head soft wode mon...  
 gin blood just severed by the sword Thy waist...  
 emons as it were with a garland and thus art...  
 al attained with difficulty I take refuge with...  
 armful Thou art Bindu and the half moon wh...  
 mantra and the shelter of all Thy forms are th...  
 art beyond the reach of Veda By the service of...  
 good deed attain liberation O Paramesvarit...  
 m who is Brahma Vishnu and the three eyed...  
 lects to serve thy lotus feet but serves inste...  
 lot... who are themselves plunged in the ocean...

There have been many high points in my art career, which of course means that there have been a host of low points as well. My most recent accomplishment is to have given up my day job, so I'm now working full-time in my studio. This felt great, as it's been a goal for a long time.



**Do you have a favorite or most significant piece?**

My favorite piece is always the one that I just finished, but it only lasts a minute. I'm my worst critic.

**Who inspires you?**

Karen Armstrong, Charles Dickens, Herman Melville, and Christopher Hitchens, to name but a few.





## What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?

Don't listen to other peoples' advice; just listen to your inner wisdom. We all have the truth written in our hearts.

To see more of Meg's work, visit her [website](#).

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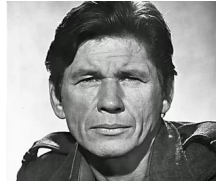
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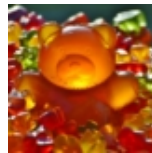


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