

in Crossfire?

Modern take on journey of Christ

By NICOLA MOTT

A COLLECTION of paintings of Jesus are due to be put up inside Blackburn Cathedral — and the artist today admitted they could “cause a stir.”

The 15 unusual oil paintings — which give an alternative view of the traditional Stations of the Cross — will be positioned around the cathedral on Sunday.

And although 48-year-old Penny Warden said she did not intend her modern art to shock, as a graduate in theology she accepted they could upset some people.

Penny, from Berkshire, declined to reveal how much the paintings had cost, saying it would not be appropriate.

She is hoping her work will bring new people to the cathedral and will give Blackburn national attention as the first to have a permanent exhibition on such a scale.

She spent nine months producing the paintings, which have been sponsored by local businesses, schools and the Friends of Blackburn Cathedral, after being commissioned following a successful exhibition in the cathedral two years ago.

Together the six-foot canvas paintings are called The Journey and each one portrays a different stage of Jesus' last journey to the crucifixion, including him being whipped and falling the first time, as well as his resurrection.

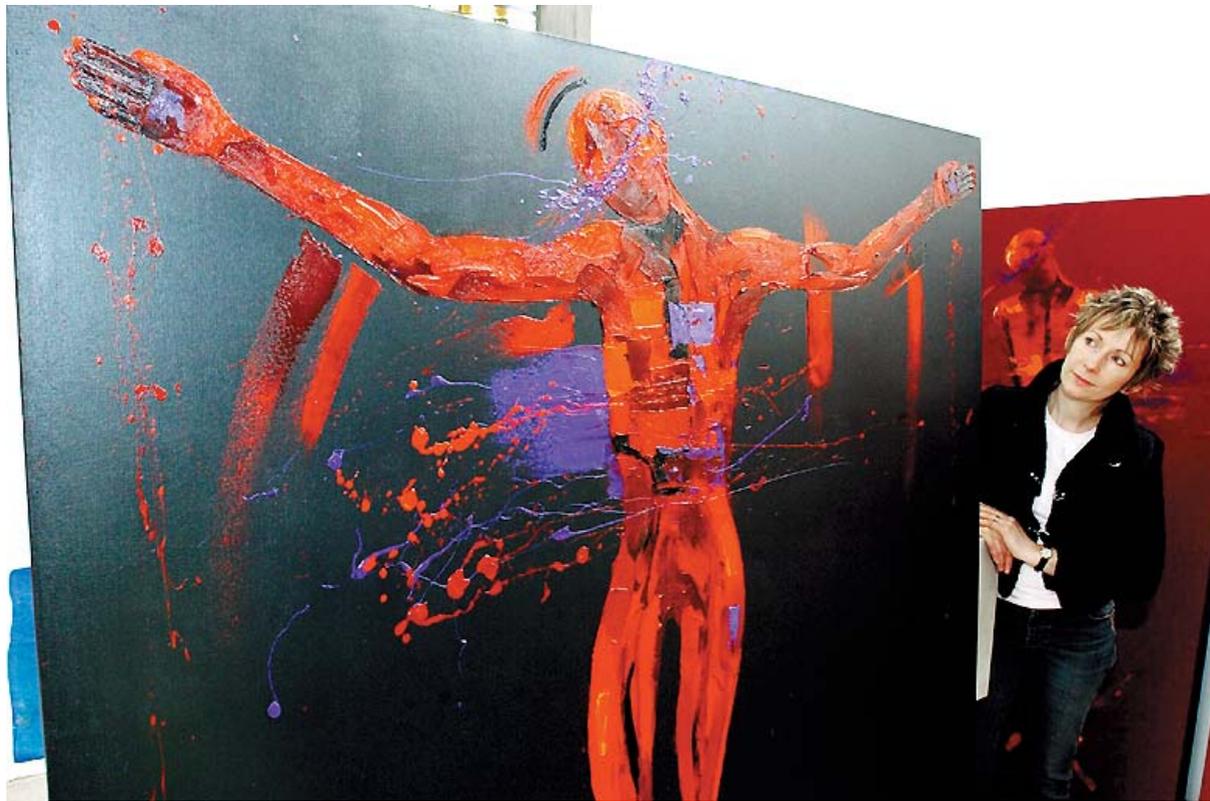
Each features a single faceless figure and the usual cross from scenes of the crucifixion has been omitted so that Jesus is the focal point.

She said: “When I set out coming up with the ideas for the paintings, I did not intend them to shock people but I can see that they could be seen as quite controversial.”

“A lot of people might not like them but I am hoping this will lead to me being commissioned to do others both here and across the world.”

“They are very challenging and people won't be able to ignore them. Christians who know the story will see it portrayed in a very modern way, it is very contemporary. And it will also challenge those who are not religious people.”

“I hope it will do great things for Blackburn itself and bring new people to the cathedral.”



CAUSING A STIR? Penny Warden with her interpretation of the Stations of the Cross, at Blackburn Cathedral



We've got the Angel of the North and I'd like to think of these modern Stations of the Cross as “The Stations of the North”.

“So often you are told what to look at in paintings of the Stations of the Cross and nothing is left to the imagination. I hope people will be able to relate to my paintings and come up with their own feelings.”

“They also place religious art where it should be, and where it always was — in religious places.”

Canon Andrew Clitherow, of Blackburn Cathedral, said: “This major exhibition of modern art is probably the most adventurous of its kind in any English cathedral.”

The Dean of Blackburn, the Very Reverend Christopher Armstrong, said: “The Stations will be of national significance and complement the already impressive stock of modern art at the cathedral.”

“They will assist the cathedral in its missionary mandate to

tell the story of Christ's last few hours to a puzzled and agnostic generation.”

Deborah Moore, 45, of Larkhill Flats, Blackburn, who was visiting the cathedral yesterday, said: “They're not offensive to me but I suppose I just feel more comfortable with the traditional portrayal of Christ. I feel closer to him to see him in the traditional way.”

But church-goer Frank Mercer, 49, of Blackpool, said: “It's not right. I don't like them at all, in fact, I find them quite offensive.”

The Bishop of Burnley, John Goddard said: “I welcome the idea of the cathedral being a place for quality art and hope it will help people to follow the Christian devotion.”

The Rev Peter Hapgood-Strickland of St Andrew's CE, Colne Road, Burnley said: “The stations of the cross are meant to be though provoking.”

“Sometimes our thoughts are set in one particular way and we need to be provoked.”

news briefs

Park railway is right on track

BURNLEY: The Thompson Park railway will restart this Easter.

Currently the miniature railway is being built but when completed, trains will run noon to 4pm every Sunday and bank holiday Monday until the end of September.

For more information visit www.bpmrs.org.uk.

School success

BURNLEY: Musical students at Towneley High School are celebrating after four bands based at the school won their sections at the Burnley Festival.

Health date

BURNLEY: A meeting of the council's housing and health scrutiny committee will be held at the Town Hall at 6.30pm tomorrow.

Farm van theft

DUNNOCKSHAW: A white Ford Transit van was stolen from Dunnockshaw Farm, Burnley Road.

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