

Interview: Artist Paul Hobbs

ONE of artist Paul Hobbs' thought-provoking paintings hangs in Lambeth Palace, testament to the esteem in which his works are held.

Commissioned by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, the work entitled *Dream Dreams*, displays many of the qualities which have made him a prominent figure in his sphere of the art world.

Paul's latest exhibition opens in Sevenoaks on March 11, and will feature a wide range of images posing questions on human values, dignity and faith.

"My work is challenging," the Gloucester-based artist says. "Typical comments are that it's stimulating and thought-provoking. It's about getting people to think more deeply about values, how we fit in the world and how the Christian faith relates to that."

THOUGHT-PROVOKING: *Dream Dreams*, by Paul Hobbs and, below, *Icon* are just two works being shown at his latest exhibition



"I've shown in lots of churches and schools, and the children love it. Teachers are in the business of making people think and my exhibits are meant to provoke feelings."

In all, about 25 works will be on show, many looking at social issues and how society values them. Homelessness, old age, sexuality, child abuse and the effects of famine are themes included in his current exhibition. Familiar images are collaged together to make sometimes disturbing, but often amusing juxtapositions.

Paul draws on topical news and social debate for his subject matter. "It's about trying to come to terms with a world in which there is great opportunity and great suffering."

"What I'm hoping for in the Sevenoaks exhibition is that people will see this juxtaposition. If they feel angry or disturbed, I hope they will be able to put that to one side and see what is underneath, what I'm trying to say. That's the key to my work."

To balance these exhibits, Paul will also be showing a series of more celebratory abstract paintings and sculptures, providing a visual feast of pattern, colour and movement.

Smaller abstract works will feature the themes of faith, hope and love.

Other pieces are studies from a Christian narrative perspective such as an interactive exhibit of a set of bricks featuring the Beatitudes, which can be rearranged at will, and act

as a metaphor - "are we playing with God's words or playing with life?" as Paul asks.

A professional painter for about 12 years, Paul gained a BA in social and political science at Cambridge and a Diploma in fine art at the Byam Shaw School of Art, in London, and then taught for seven years in Dorset and at Wells Cathedral School.



He has had solo exhibitions all over the country, including London, Winchester and Gloucester cathedrals, Bath Abbey, as well as in China, and has shown his work in schools nationwide.

His next project will be a series of works on the subject of the Trinity, to be shown at Bradford Cathedral during June and July.

Caroline Hardy

Paul Hobbs Art Exhibition.
March 11 to 16, St Nicholas Church,
Sevenoaks. 01732 740340.

