

NEXT BSTS SPEAKER: ISABEL PICZEK

It is anticipated that the next BSTS meeting will be a talk given by talented Hungarian-born artist Isabel Piczek on why the Shroud cannot be the work of an artist. Based in Los Angeles, Isabel Piczek hopes to be able to make a stop-over in London on a visit to Rome probably early in the New Year. The date and venue of this meeting will be announced in the next Newsletter.

LAST BSTS MEETING: NORMA WELLER

Norma Weller, Lecturer in Colour Studies, Brighton Polytechnic, has kindly consented that this Newsletter carry the text of her communication as given at the last BSTS meeting. This is as follows:

'Through an innovatory colour intensification technique based on the properties of a colour scale used in theoretical work on colour and its values, it has been possible to so intensify the Shroud image that it becomes now clearly visible, showing hitherto unrecognised but crucial details.

The properties of this scale which uses no modifications but purely the spectrum of light has the effect when used methodically in relation to a monochromatic image, of so intensifying the tones as to make the face appear 'present' and 'alive'

It is a form of colour transcription invented by myself in relation to monochromatic photographs to be used in art. But in this case, through the utmost simplification of the process, it appeared to yield the most unexpected results.

It has shown that there is what would seem to be a wreath of foliage around the brow, particularly over the left side of the forehead. By a chance concatenation of circumstances, I happen also to have done, for my own purposes, extensive research on the Nazarenes and their traditions and have found some deeply fascinating facts about their customs of burial, particularly concerning the hierarchy of their community and the details of their rites, which at that time were completely sacrosanct, closely guarded secrets.

The most elevated priestly leaders would be identified by a precise set of garments: (i) the Padân, or priestly Padama, a square cloth directly placed over the face, reminiscent of the Mandyllion/Veronica; (ii) the shroud itself, placed over the whole body; (iii) lastly, until now unrecorded, and highly important to our considerations, a myrtle wreath placed over the brow of the deceased so that it falls over the left side of the brow.

The myrtle in Mandaean-Nazarene traditions is the supreme symbol of the immortality of the soul. The Mandaean word for myrtle is *asa*, meaning 'healed'. It is the sign of kingliness, and crowning with the sign of priesthood, and eternal life. Its perfume is regarded as the vital essence of the soul. The fact that this myrtle crown has been revealed in this image intensification process is an example of the kind of synchronicity which took place with the Secondo Pia photographic plate, and will hopefully contribute further to the authentication of the Shroud.

Having seen the sheer nobility of this image not made by hands I have absolutely no doubt in my own mind that we need to think again. Either there is something essentially wrong with the carbon dating, or we should perhaps admit that we are confronted by a phenomenon so great that it defies our present understanding.'

Norma Weller

[Editor's note: For those wishing to enquire further into Mandaean traditions, Norma Weller recommends a work by Lady Drower on the Mandaeans of Iraq and Iran, published by E.J. Brill of Leiden. Further contributions by Norma will appear in a later Newsletter]