



Detail of photo by Guy Lockwood (www.guylockwood.com)

Chris Gollon (1953 – 2017) enjoyed many solo museum exhibitions in the UK, public commissions and museum acquisitions including the British Museum. He has exhibited with Yoko Ono, David Bowie and Gavin Turk in *ROOT*, a crossover exhibition of contemporary music and art created by Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth, at Chisenhale Gallery, London. In 2004, his fourth Station of the Cross was exhibited in St Paul's Cathedral with works by Bill Viola, Tracey Emin, Maggi Hambling, Peter Howson in *Presence: Images of Christ for the Third Millennium*. In 2009, Alan Yentob featured Gollon's work on his BBC1 programme *Imagine*. In 2010, art historian Tamsin Pickeral's biography *Chris Gollon: Humanity in Art* (Hyde & Hughes) was published, endorsed by Bill Bryson OBE. From 2014 – 2016 his national touring exhibition *Incarnation, Mary and Women from the Bible* toured to English cathedrals, for which he produced the first image in art history of Judas' Wife. He had an interest in artistic boundary crossing, collaborating with musicians including Thurston Moore, Grammy-nominated Yi Yao; and at the end of his life, a two-year collaboration with singer-songwriter Eleanor McEvoy. Acclaim for Gollon's work continues after his untimely death, with the Grade I listed Romsey Abbey purchasing and installing his *St Ethelflaeda* diptych in 2018. In 2019, there was a major museum retrospective of his music-related works *CHRIS GOLLON: Beyond the Horizon*. In 2021, the title track of Eleanor McEvoy's new album 'Gimme Some Wine' is a song written for and dedicated to Chris Gollon. A TV documentary is currently being made on his life and work, to be released in 2024. Official information website: www.chrisgollon.com

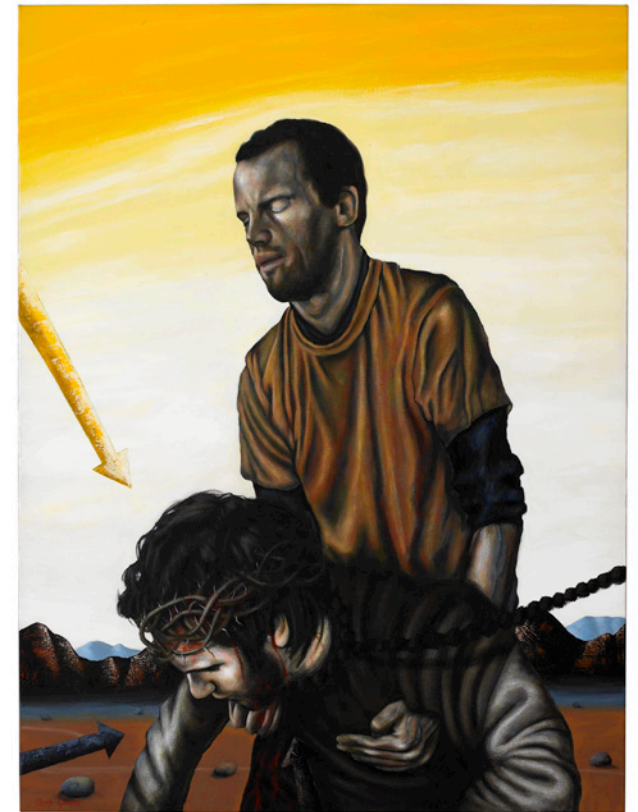
Having represented him for 25 years, artist's estate held by:

IAP • FINE ART

T: 01600 772005

W: www.iapfineart.com

E: info@iapfineart.com



14 Stations of the Cross paintings by CHRIS GOLLON

Church of St John on Bethnal Green

Chris Gollon's critically-acclaimed *Fourteen Stations of the Cross* were permanently installed in 2009, and subsequently blessed by Richard Chartres, Bishop of London. First commissioned in 2000 by Fr Alan Green and the Parish Church Council (PCC), Gollon agreed to create them at cost. They took eight years to complete because most funding came from the kindness of individuals over a long period, some dedicating the donation to loved ones; others were funded by The Jerusalem Trust, The Christian Arts Trust and by St John's congregation. Award-winning novelist Sara Maitland funded *Station VIII: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem*, and was so taken by Gollon's Stations she was inspired to write *Stations of the Cross* (Bloomsbury, London & New York, 2008) featuring all fourteen.

Unusually for Stations of the Cross, Gollon's vary in size and are site-specific. The first two Stations, where Jesus is condemned, then given his Cross, would have occurred in private. They are positioned in the vestibule of this Grade I listed Church, designed by Sir John Soane, where neo-classical columns hint at the solemnity of a courtroom. The third Station, *Jesus Falls A First Time*, which would have occurred in public, is situated in the bright southern nave. The paintings inject colour into the church as stained-glass windows might. The Stations continue around the church and the skies in each darken in the northern nave as the day of Jesus' last journey fades and moves toward the eventual eclipse. The fourteenth Station, *Jesus is Laid in the Sepulchre*, is deliberately placed by the stone font, hinting at the Resurrection.

Fr Alan Green was moved by one of Chris's paintings entitled '*Penitent Magdalene (after Titian)*', shown in Gollon's main gallery then located in Bethnal Green in the 1990s. He also saw in Gollon's secular work an empathy and dignity afforded to people on the fringes of our society; and that perhaps even unconsciously, they held many religious allusions and forms, which did not suggest conformity, but were challenging.

On a hot summer's day, he took the PCC to meet Chris in his studio on Platt's Eyot, an island in the Thames. A bond of trust was soon formed, and the commission was voted through, despite Chris refusing to do preliminary drawings. This was simply because he was a straight-to-canvas man. If he did fully worked up drawings, he'd then lose interest in painting the final image. The commission was therefore in itself a leap of faith, based wholly on a deep trust between all parties.

Since Chris Gollon was not a practicing Christian, in order to bring the story closer, he took the unusual step of using his own son as the model for Jesus, his daughter as Mary, and his wife as Veronica. Fr Alan Green is cast as Nicodemus, and David Tregunna (Gollon's friend and gallerist) as Joseph of Arimathea. The juxtaposition of real figures with imagined ones creates a heightened sense of reality. The Stations are also the result of a collaboration between an artist and a priest. Gollon leant heavily on Fr Alan Green for theological aspects; but Alan also encouraged Chris to depict Jesus's humanity as opposed to attempting an image of the Divine, allowing the viewer a freedom of perspective.

Gollon's Stations received wide critical acclaim including: *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *BBC1 News* and *Radio 4 Today Programme*; as well as all denominations of the Christian press including *The Tablet* and *Church Times*. In 2019, two years after Chris Gollon's untimely death, two studies for the Stations and a large painting '*Judas Iscariot & The Magdalene*' (partially inspired by Bob Dylan's '*With God On Our Side*') were donated by a collector, and permanently installed in the southern gallery. The Stations and studies will also feature in a forthcoming TV documentary on Chris Gollon's life and work, to be released in 2024. A full-colour fine art catalogue '*CHRIS GOLLON: Fourteen Stations of the Cross*' is available from the Church for £5.

The Stations are now an active aid to worship in the 10am Good Friday service each year.

"Like Spencer, Gollon dramatises the everyday in contemporary images and, depicting our clumsy, ridiculous ordinariness, brings alive for a modern, cynical audience the ghastly dissonance of this story of good and evil, sacrifice and humanity, answering on its own terms a 21st-century culture that regards the heroic as absurd."

Critic's Choice, Jackie Wullschlager,
Chief Visual Arts Critic, Financial Times

