

Holy Fabrics

Sacred artwork the inspiration for Sacred Silks

By Jerry Hames,



Angela Coppola, is the president and creative director of Sacred Silks International, a California-based company that makes silk renderings of famous religious art.

Angela Coppola's idea came from divine guidance, she says, a few days after lunch with the Rev. Alan Jones, dean of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco, and his wife, who were seeking ways to make the cathedral's gift shop more profitable.

Coppola, who lived near Grace Cathedral at the time, walked past a few evenings later and was struck by the beauty of the stained-glass rose window. She thought about reproducing it -- in silk. Once she saw the first sample, she had an even bigger idea.

"The same voice inside me said: 'Wow, this would be fabulous to do for every religion in the world and to create a company that sells these,'" she says.

Coppola is now the president and creative director of Sacred Silks International, based in Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California, about 25 miles north of San Diego. The company makes silk squares, oblongs, pillows and men's ties with artful designs from various religions and Christian denominations.

The silks can be worn or used for decoration at home, especially for creating a sacred space.

Launched in 1999 with nine designs, Sacred Silks now features more than 20 different patterns, ranging from the mandala-like Sri Yantra to Judaism's "fire and water" windows from a San Francisco synagogue to Sir William Richmond's mosaics in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. "I feel this is my calling," she said.

Detailed and color-conscious

Getting the details and colors right for each design is time-consuming. A design based on a painting of angels by N.C. Wyeth that hangs in Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., for example, was especially challenging and, as a result, took many attempts to perfect.

"We feel that we are dealing with sacred art, and therefore it should be produced in a way that's really beautiful and with quality," Coppola says.

Her products are sold in the United States, England and Canada through the [website](#) and in some stores affiliated with religious institutions. Products range in price from \$25 to more than \$100. Coppola says a 10 percent royalty goes to the religious institutions from which the art is taken.

Coppola credits her religious background with her interfaith emphasis. She attended a Roman Catholic nursery and elementary school, although her adopted mother is Jewish. In her 20s, she married a man who produced a yoga show, and her religious sensibilities changed.

Now, she says, she meditates and prays daily, in addition to reading Scripture or spiritual philosophy. When in San Francisco, she attends services at Grace Cathedral.

"I believe that everyone's path to God is honored," Coppola says. "As far as I'm concerned, it doesn't matter how you get there."

"Not only do we hope that our products inspire people to remember that God is everywhere and to be reminded of the divine, but I hope that through the art, the sacred art, people will begin to see similarities in religions," Coppola says.

-- Jerrold Hames is editor emeritus of Episcopal Life. Writers from Religion News Service contributed to this story.