

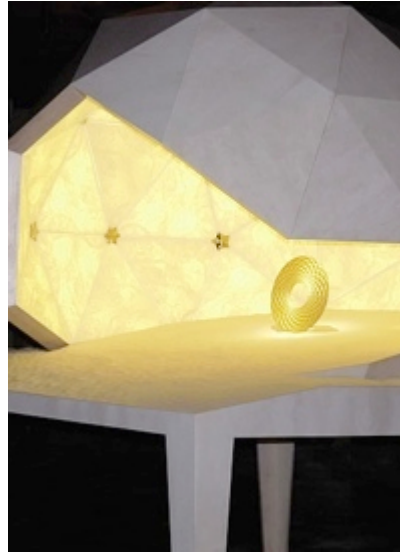


Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on December 24, 2011

L.A Cathedral Hosts Geodesic ‘Nativity’ Scene

For those who haven’t gotten the news, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles has divulged that Jesus Christ was not fully God and fully man, but God and fully disc.

The cathedral, an architectural abomination author Michael Rose calls ugly as sin, [is hosting](#) a “nativity” scene manufactured by [Bernardaud](#), a French porcelain company. Problem is, there’s no nativity at all. It’s a [disc under a geodesic dome](#). The disc supposedly represents Jesus Christ.



Hip Catholics, undoubtedly, are all aflutter with the thing traveling under the name “[Haute Sphere](#).” (Picture above left.) And, just as surely, their more traditional brethren in the Catholic faith will be completely aghast.

What Is It?

The “Haute Sphere” debuted at the cathedral on Dec. 7, the weekly Catholic newspaper [Tidings reported](#).

It was “conceived,” the [newspaper](#) said, by an architect named [Sylvain Dubuisson](#) and “crafted by” the porcelain company.

“‘Haute Sphere’ is a geodesic dome hand-crafted of 48 triangular panels of bisque porcelain with stars made of porcelain with platinum finish affixed to its interior and measuring 12 feet in height,” [Tidings reported](#).

Its impressive central feature is an engraved circular porcelain disc “aureole” with 24-carat gold finishes that rests on a bed of sand.

The piece has variable lighting that dramatically illuminates the scene and is enhanced by pre-recorded chants in Aramaic — the language spoken by Abraham, Moses and Jesus — that lend a meditative quality evoking the mystery of the Christmas season for the spectator.

What one would meditate upon other than [R. Buckminster Fuller](#) after looking at “Haute Sphere” the newspaper did not explain, but the [Catholic News Service offered](#) more detail. A “halo” represents Jesus Christ, the [news agency reported](#), “and LED lights installed behind the porcelain plaques illuminate the ‘sky’ decorated with five- and six-pointed platinum-coated silver stars hovering above the gold-embellished halo resting on a bed of sand representing the desert lands of Christ's birth.”

As for the “surround-sound recording of chants in Aramaic,” it “heightens viewers' experience of the Incarnation.”

[CNS reported](#) that the sphere made its worldwide debut last year at the [Church of the Madeleine](#) in



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Paris, and that it has also appeared in other places, such as the the [Basilica San Lorenzo](#) in Milan.

Bernardaud President George J. Kakaty, [Tidings reported](#), loves it. "It's a unique artistic impression of the Nativity," said he. Added the company creative chief, Daniel Gnaedig, [according to](#) CNS, "It's something very mystical and spiritual. It's not the typical Nativity scene, but with the lights and music, it's something special."

Typical it isn't.

CNS [also quoted](#) the CEO of Bernardaud, Michel Bernardaud: "Bernardaud had never turned its creative force to the objects or symbols associated with Catholics in the practice of their faith." He added, "It was with enthusiasm that we sought Sylvain Dubuisson to help us respond to an appeal from the Madeleine to bring an original perspective to the Nativity scene."

And who is Dubuisson? He is, [Tidings reported](#), a "French architect and artist whose unique approach to projects is described as both highly poetic and extremely technical. The son of an architect, Dubuisson has designed public spaces for expositions, projects for the rehabilitation of public housing, interior objects and furniture throughout the world."

In other words, he produces "[post-modern art](#)." Readers can decide for themselves whether what Dubuisson creates is art or not.

Unsurprisingly, the two newspapers which [reported](#) on the sphere [mention Jesus](#) only once. They discuss the porcelain company and Dubuisson at length.

The Cathedral

The [Cathedral's](#) pastor, [Monsignor Kevin Kostelnik](#), offered "Haute Sphere" glowing praise: "The Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels provides a complementary backdrop to this unique and beautiful work of art. We are honored to host the Haute Sphere for the first time in the United States, in the heart of the City of Angels this Christmas season."

But that is no surprise, given the cathedral, which looks nothing like a cathedral. Michael Rose included the cathedral in his book about the architecture of modern Catholic churches, [Ugly as Sin](#).

[Rose argues](#) that modern church architecture trespasses the three laws one should use to judge it: verticality, permanence, and iconography; i.e., they must reach for Heaven, transcend the physical world, and also serve as beautiful art that imparts the faith.

Like the cathedral, "[Haute Sphere](#)" ignores those criteria, not least because one would not know what it is if someone did not explain it.

"Haute Sphere" will adorn the haute cathedral until the [Feast of the Epiphany](#), Jan. 6, the day Christians celebrate the [arrival of the magi](#) to adore Christ.

Not all Catholics are as taken with the post-modernist "Nativity" scene as the porcelain artists and the pastor. "Somewhere in Heaven" [The Crescat website averred](#), "Baby Jesus is weeping."



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