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Culture colors images of Jesus

Over the centuries, artists have created thousands upon thousands of images depicting Jesus Christ in his human form.

And yet, according to a Nazareth College art professor, very few of these images — if any — offer a completely authentic representation of Christ.

"Nobody knows what he looked like," Roger Adams said. "We don't have any indication that Jesus was thin, fat, tall or short."

Even so, Deborah Zeller discovered that many people have definite ideas about what Jesus would — or would not — look like after she painted "I Am the Resurrection." The 8-by-6-foot painting, in which Christ looks skyward with a joyous expression (see Page 10), was displayed in her parish during the 1996 Easter season.

Although Zeller has sold about 1,000 prints of "I Am the Resurrection," she acknowledged that there has been a strong outcry against the painting as well because Jesus was not depicted with the traditional, solemn expression.

"Even in my family — they think I've become almost like a Jesus freak. It's like a forbidden area you don't touch. It's really interesting," said Zeller in a telephone interview from her residence in Glen Ellyn, Ill.

Zeller added that her other paintings of a smiling Jesus have not fared well at competitions.

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