

St. Christina the Astonishing, by Cynthia Large

reviewed by [Lil Copan](#) in the [July 10, 2013](#) issue



West Coast Quaker artist Cynthia Large came to her explorations of faith through her study of art history. She met the saints through medieval and Renaissance

paintings “that possess a crystalline clarity of surface detail and a narrative strangeness that has never been surpassed,” she says. Her series Holy Mischief portrays “the lives of the most restive and unruly figures in the history of religion.” These egg tempera and oil paintings, set within carved mahogany frames, feature figures such as Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich and Christina of Liège. Christina of Liège, or Christina the Astonishing, was a popular saint who was not formally beatified. Catholic writer Tony Staley says that “she stands out from the canon because her life . . . is not held up as an example to be followed. . . . It seems that she served the people of Liège as a wailing manifestation of their hidden consciences, laying bare their dark secrets and vices.” Legend has it that at her funeral mass she flew up out of her coffin and perched in the rafters of the church.