

James Quentin's *Scroll Cross*, *From His Side*, and *Black Forest Cross* (clockwise from left to right)

by [John Kohan](#) in the [March 2025](#) issue

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(clockwise from left) *Scroll Cross*, *From His Side*, and *Black Forest Cross*

James Quentin Young created his first cross in the early 1970s from L-shaped motor parts. Over the next 50 years until his death in 2022, the assemblage artist from Minnesota made hundreds more from broken tail lights, paint can lids, furniture legs, synthetic pearls, and a host of other found objects. His mission: to reclaim

Christianity's most sacred sign from a secular culture that had turned it into gaudy costume jewelry and a flaming symbol of racial hatred.

Young believed there were good theological grounds for recycling the trash of consumer society as cruciform art. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that "in Christ . . . old things are passed away, behold all things become new." Young rescued unwanted and broken objects from waste bins and transformed them into sacred imagery. A stone a builder rejected might literally become the compositional cornerstone of an assemblage piece.

In *Black Forest Cross*, Young pays homage to folk artisans of faith who create rustic roadside shrines. He underscores the importance of holy writ in *Scroll Cross*, supporting a cruciform atop red signal lights that resemble rolled manuscripts. In the minimalist piece *From His Side*, weathered wood, dripping glue, and a broken red disc evoke Christ's wounds on the cross. As Young pointed out, since the crucifixion took place in the ancient equivalent of the town dump, the Romans would likely have used discarded wood to nail together the cross on which Christ died.