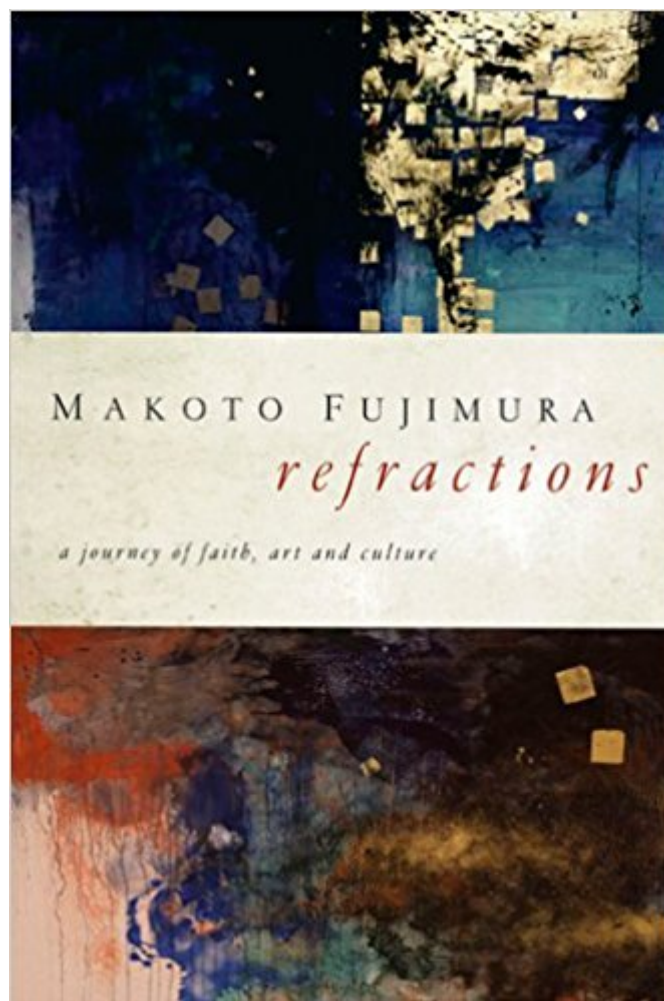


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# Refractions: A Journey Of Faith, Art, And Culture



## Synopsis

A collection of essays, thoughts, and prayers from award-winning artist Makoto Fujimura, *Refractions* brings people of all backgrounds together in conversation and meditation on culture, art, and humanity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An artist with the craftsmanship and global appeal of Makoto Fujimura comes along all too rarely. Such an artist with a strong faith commitment who both inspires and leads other artists--now that's really rare. Mako is a fine writer. I learned, and was provoked and frequently moved by these reflections that through Mako's eye have become unique refractions." --Philip Yancey: author of more than twenty books, including *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* and *What's So Amazing About Grace?*

"Like his art, Makoto Fujimura's essays harbor a depth of luminosity that requires and rewards patient contemplation. This collection is an important contribution to the conversation between faith and art and between art and our beautiful, broken world."

This beautiful book consists of refined blog posts written by Fujimura on a number of topics related to faith, art, and culture. Because these chapters started as blogs, the tone is more reflective, which is perfect for a book on art. Readers wanting strong definitions on what art is and straightforward

answers about how Christians should relate to art will be frustrated, but I found Refractions to be very helpful for my own understanding of art and culture. Fujimura is a talented and gracious writer, and the book includes photos of some of his artwork. For my brief review on this book and most of the books out there on Christianity and the arts, see: [theologyforreallife.com/artsbooks](http://theologyforreallife.com/artsbooks)

The reader's first impression of this book will certainly come from its presentation. The publisher (NavPress) spared no thought in creating a beautiful over sized quality paperback with color reproductions of the author's and other artist's work. I was drawn first to thumb through the book, taking glimpses or tastes of the book before ever sitting down to read it. Fujimura is an American artist using Japanese-style painting, honored in Japan and the US. In 1992 he was the youngest artist to have a piece acquired by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo. The subtitle of his book is "A Journey of Faith, Art, and Culture." A better word would be journal rather than journey as the relatively short meditations reflect a personal thought process rather than a thorough treatment. This qualifier in no way discounts the value of the book, but it would more accurately reflect what it is. The backdrop of these reflections is Ground Zero where the artist lives. This is the reflective mirror by which these chapters are written. Art as a means of peacemaking is a major theme though any creative reader will find some thing to mull over. Not to be read quickly, the book invites time and reflection, a soaking in of the reality of the presence and importance of art in our daily living. For the Christian this book will open eyes to the gracious gift of creativity which needs to be recognized and valued in the church. A creative artistic interpretation of da Vinci's Last Supper toward the end of the book was riveting and thought provoking. "The greatest message imbedded in the painting--that Judas, the seed of betrayal, is in all of us (153)." During the '80's Fujimura experienced a "transfer of allegiance from Art to Christ which he recounts in "River Grace." Tasting this book draws me to search out his memoir as well. Great quotes: "What makes us truly human may not be how fast we are able to accomplish a task but what we experience fully, carefully, and quietly in the process (27).""My art reaches for the heavenly reality via earthly materials (28).""All of earth is 'ground zero' in that our failures and conflicts invade every aspect of our experience, leaving scars (61).""Art is an inherently hopeful act, an act that echoes the creativity of the Creator (69).""We need more creative visionaries who would dare even to plant seedlings in stone that will mature into trees whose roots will crack open the rock, as if it were a mere egg, spilling its shalom dirt into the hearts of a city (127)."

insightful

In this collection of personal essays, artist Makoto Fujimura engages the reader by offering his concerns for, and purposes in, creating works of art as a person of faith. His discussion of material, procedural and spiritual concerns for making art in the 21st century outline with illuminating contours the basic concerns of all artists trying to take responsibility for their work in the face of the many joys and sorrows that humankind faces, and what the expression of those things mean to the culture of our time. Fujimura offers this thoughtful, meditative and readable collection for anyone interested in understanding his work, and more broadly, the work of all contemporary artists of faith. A collection worth reading.

I first discovered the writing of Makoto Fujimura when he had an article in *IMAGE: A Journal of the Arts and Religion*. His essay was one of several written by people of faith in response to 9/11. Since that time I have explored his work as an artist and found his "Refractions" nourishing and thought provoking. It is a gift to have his early essays/blogs in this single volume and I hope that it will be the first of other collections of his "Refractions." This book is beautifully laid out and the artwork sensitively placed. The restoration of beauty to art and to conversations about those things that are central to people of faith has been one positive thing that has come to us out of the ashes of 9/11 DCP March 4, 2009

This book was spiritual CPR to my writer's dying heart! The essays inspired me to remember why art, faith, and culture are so very, very important. Beautiful.

As I read "Refractions" I began to see the world through a lens I often miss in my hurry toward the next project, the next meeting, the next task. Fujimura reminded me to slow down, see the world of God's design and creation through the eyes of an artist and follower of Jesus, and learn to appreciate the various ways God speaks to us today. The art and the artistry of words in this simple volume will resonate with anyone seeking to find God in the busyness of our world. "Refractions" continues to remind me not to be in a hurry, to slow down, and to listen to God's voice in the everyday world.

A great work speaks for itself, so why do we want to hear more from an artist whose medium is visual rather than words? I started this book with trepidation, and soon realized I'm simply wrong in my assumption that a visual artist best leave writing to writers. This book at times soothes and at times

shocks me back to a conscious awareness that a soul can speak through all sorts of media. Fujimura's book, like his art, leaves us speechless, in silence so that God can speak. Artwalk Inc, our non-profit in Los Angeles, celebrates the sacred in artists' ways. I certainly want to celebrate Makoto Fujimura's wise words here, and will make it available to our members. Thanks, particularly, for mentioning the beautiful urban planner/theorist, author of LIFE AND DEATH OF GREAT AMERICAN CITIES, who proved that courage, care and hope make for great neighborhoods. Thank you, Makoto Fujimura. Thank you.

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