

# Canticle of the Sun II

By John Coburn | Volume 1.1 Fall 2014



*John Coburn: Canticle of the Sun II, 1974 (c) 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VISCOPY, Australia*

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## **Canticle of the Sun II, 1974**

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas; 91.5 x 91.0 cm

John Coburn  
Sydney, Australia

*Canticle of the Sun II* is one of three related works by the Australian artist John Coburn (1925–2006): *Canticle of the Sun* (1965) oil on board, 162.0 x 152.5 cm; *Canticle of the Sun II* (1967) oil on canvas, 74.5 x 85.0 cm; and the 1974 work pictured above. Alex Mitchell writes of Coburn that “he sought a confluence of Western European culture, the Roman Catholic religion, Aboriginal spirituality, and nature.”<sup>[1]</sup>

The title and inspiration of this work come from a song composed by the thirteenth-century mystic Francis of Assisi.

*Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!  
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing.*

*To You, alone, Most High, do they belong.  
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your name.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures,  
especially through my lord Brother Sun,  
who brings the day; and You give light through him.  
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!  
Of You, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;  
in the heavens You have made them bright, precious and beautiful.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,  
and clouds and storms, and all the weather,  
through which You give Your creatures sustenance.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water;  
she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,  
through whom You brighten the night.  
He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,  
who feeds us and rules us,  
and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of You;  
through those who endure sickness and trial.*

*Happy those who endure in peace,  
for by You, Most High, they will be crowned.*

*Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Bodily Death,*

*from whose embrace no living person can escape.  
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!  
Happy those she finds doing Your most holy will.  
The second death can do no harm to them.*

*Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks,  
and serve Him with great humility.*

Some of Coburn's best-known works appear in venues for the performing arts. He designed the *Curtain of the Sun* and the *Curtain of the Moon* for the Sydney Opera House. *The Creation*, a work comprised of seven tapestries, was given as a gift from the Australian government to the United States. It hangs in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.

— Editor

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#### FOOTNOTE

[\[1\]](#) Alex Mitchell, "John Coburn: Spirit of Abstraction," *Art Collector*, Issue 14 (October-December, 2000): 97.