



In its long tradition of community interaction and support, the Stanley Spencer Gallery has, from time to time, created Christmas card design competitions for schools. To get the very best from the children and **to fire their imagination**, we offer **some background information** and **examples of** illustrations of Stanley Spencer paintings where 'Christmassy' elements are present and **then** await the explosion of creativity as the children get to work on their own ideas.

At the end of last year, we judged a competition run by the Stanley Spencer Gallery with Claires Court Junior Boys School in Maidenhead. We were **fortunate** to have a collaboration in this initiative between our own Custodian and **member of the SSG 'Learning' team**, Jan Price (previously Head of Art at **Claires Court School**) and **the art teacher at Claires Court Junior Boys**, Martyn Goddard (an established artist in his own right).

With more than 100 designs offered by the children, many were fascinating and beautiful, but alas, we could only choose one final winner. **The winning** Christmas card design by Ethan Olikara, then in Year 5, bursts with exuberance and Christmas goodwill - as well as cleverly deploying important Spencer (and Cookham) themes.



We loved the Spencer figure, with his characteristic haircut, specs and huge smile. Spencer was so well known in Cookham for his friendliness and engaging manner and **he** also spent much time in the vicinity of the various local churches, as seen in this image. Spencer's pram, now with iconic status and housed in the Stanley Spencer Gallery, is also wonderfully depicted in **Ethan's** design - with easel and other artists' materials aboard. Then we have additional Spencer themes, especially the picket fence, **featured** in so many Spencer paintings (and actually present to this day around Cookham's Holy Trinity **churchyard**), and the turkey, colourfully depicted, echoing the Spencer painting 'Turkeys', 1925.

The outcome is truly celebratory and our thanks go to all who made this competition so successful.