



For Immediate Release
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Contact: Rie Poirier-Campbell
(860) 525-8629 ext 237

Local artists explore concept of Sacred Spaces at Clare Gallery

Hartford — What spaces can be called “sacred”? When downtown Hartford’s Clare Gallery asked this question of local artists, the responses were remarkably varied and often surprising. The result can be seen in an exhibition entitled “Sacred Spaces” at the Clare Gallery from September 20 through November 18. A reception and artists’ talk is scheduled for Thursday, September 27, 5 p.m. until 7 p.m., at the gallery. Both the reception and the exhibition are free and open to the public.

The works of seven Connecticut artists are featured in “Sacred Spaces.” They range from photographs and digital prints to watercolors and oils. More interestingly, they represent a broad interpretation of the sacred. Some literally depict churches and places of worship. Others are nature scenes in which the artists found a spiritual presence. Some show religious imagery and sacred objects found in unlikely, everyday places. In still others, the artists define the safety and comfort of their studios, or the space around them as they create, as sacred. In each of the works, the artist describes a physical place or state of mind in which transcendence may be found.

Painter Helen Nix of Avon, for instance, depicted the simple but meaningful sanctuary of West Avon Congregational Church. “In the late afternoon, with the light from the side windows reflecting in many directions, the presence of holiness is most palpable,” she said.

Roth and Moore Architects of New Haven described the process of creating houses of worship to meet the needs of a particular community. Both their photos and the accompanying narratives for the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale and Trinity Church of the Nazarene in Orange show how the traditions, beliefs and make-up of the congregations they would serve shaped the space.

Artist Moira Fain of Hartford talks of painting “en plein air” and the reaction of people as they came upon her. “They reverently walked around me in utter silence. It was then that I realized the weight an artist has when situated in nature, braving the elements and whatever comes along. It’s not the painting itself, more the act of taking the time to celebrate the moment, the beauty, even the smell of salt and oil. I imagined the scene as almost religious,” she said.

Photographer Kelli Newton of Hartford describes her work as “expressions of belief — from the kitsch to the contemplative.” Her photos depict shrines, murals, prayer cards, statues and roadside attractions in the midst of modernity, popular culture and corporate America. These disparate landscapes capture small pieces of the sacred standing up to the secular world.

Other artists whose works are featured in “Sacred Spaces” include Kathleen Kelly of Manchester, Daniel Buttery of Coventry and Sharon Kocay of West Hartford.

Several of the artists will talk about their work at the September 27 reception.

The Clare Gallery primarily features exhibitions that emphasize world religious or interfaith themes, and social justice themes, either on a global or local level. It is housed in the Franciscan Center for Urban Ministry at 285 Church Street. The Center is part of St. Patrick – St. Anthony Church, a vibrant downtown faith community.

The Clare Gallery’s hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Fridays; Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The Gallery and all related events are free and open to the public. Free parking is available directly across from the church. The facility is handicapped accessible. More information may be found on the church’s website at stpatrick-stanthony.org or by calling 860-756-4034.

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