



## 2018 Interfaith Biennial: Expressions of Love and Truth

The 2018 Interfaith Biennial brings together eleven artists from around the world who, according to their own faith traditions, harness art's unique capacity to explore and express big ideas of love and truth.

Artists' projects are rich and varied: here one can learn about the Buddhist concept of chakras through Terry Dowd's mixed-media assemblages or marvel at Marina Forbes' contemporary re-interpretation of Byzantine-Russian icon painting in the Orthodox Christian tradition. One might try to reconstruct an original medieval Jewish illuminated manuscript, based on Miriam Stern's digital collages. Or, a viewer may partake in Kim Theriault's participatory sculpture—by taking and sharing a vial of mustard seeds, in order to, as the Gospel of Matthew's parable describes, sow opportunities for faith.

The interfaith biennial is a program of the Office of Mission and Ministry and the Interfaith Cooperation Committee.

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### RACHEL BRAUN | Silver Spring, Maryland

*God Covers the Sky with Clouds, 2016*

*Psalms 147, selected verses*

The embroidered text from Psalm 147 includes portions of verses 8, 16 and 17: “God covers the sky with clouds, and prepares rain for the Earth, bestows snow as a blanket of wool, and throws hail like breadcrumbs.” I love snow: the damp smell in the air just before it flurries down, the crunch of boots across a snowy yard, the peaceful quiet when a city settles down to watch the snow accumulate. But snow (and hail and rain) can be destructive, and indeed, the full sense of the Psalm's verses reflects that. “Who can withstand God's cold?” asks the Psalmist at the end of verse 17. The bounty and beauty of nature are evidence of God's love, but in our reaction to and indeed, impact on weather, we face hard truths. When is the cold precipitation a peaceful, sensory treat, and when is it a threat?

We can control some of our response to it: when we pause to appreciate God's nature, when we provide warm clothes and shelter to those in need, when we care for one another in weather emergencies, when the rain falls on healthy farms, when Mother Earth is safe to stay cold. “Who can withstand God's cold?” The Psalmist leaves that question unanswered, but reassures us in the next verses that God will dispatch a word to melt any threatening ice. May we use that model in our lives today, using our words to dispel fear and threats. Hallelujah!” concludes the Psalm.

**GREGORY DEDDO | Chicago, Illinois**

*Kindred doubts, 2016*

*Oil on Panel*

In my work I explore the sorrow, grief and joy of human relationships, family history and the importance and limitations of memory. My understanding of relationships is informed by my faith in the triune God who is not only the model of love and truth, but is Love and Truth. As human beings limited by space, time, and a rather selective and faulty memory, we must live by faith. Faith in others to be truthful and consistent, faith in our selective and poor memories to be accurate, but most importantly faith in a God who knows all and upholds all. It is our call to not cling to our own understanding and knowledge, but to die to ourselves that we might live freely in God and love others.

The paintings are about this uncomfortable state of never fully knowing, and being unable to control God and others. Learning to live with the unknown, the ever-changing, and the creeping doubt and despair. It is in this balance that we build our relationships. Painting for me is an active and imaginative way of being attentive, of first and foremost learning to humbly receive and then faithfully respond. It is a way of living in the discomfort of relationships, of living with the possibility of loss, and of living with the possibility of being wrong and being surprised.

**TERRY DOWNS | Laconia, New Hampshire**

*Seven Chakras: #7 Sahasrara; #6 Ajna; #5 Vissudha; #4 Anabata; #3 Manipura; #2 Svadisthana; #1 Muladara*

The Kundalini is an Indian, Buddhist concept of the force that drives us in our personal development. Accordingly, it resides in the central channel of the body, corresponding to the central nervous system, from the base of the body to the top of the head. It is associated with the spiritual system of Tantric Buddhism and offers an explanation of the various stages of understanding that occur throughout life.

As a religious concept it can be nurtured and particular practices can drive the Kundalini energy from one chakra to the next, in the quest to achieve spiritual enlightenment. Early, it became an aspect of many eastern religions, such as Buddhism in its various incarnations. Yoga and transcendental meditation transcend specific religious practices and have carried the concept around the world.

The idea that the kundalini, also understood as the inner Chi, can be moved by the subject, up or down the central channel of the body called Shushumna, while coming to rest at the levels, stations, or chakras. Interestingly, recently in the Western tradition, such stages of development are similarly described by psychologists, such as Erikson. Individual Chakras are often realized by others such as B.F. Skinner, Freud, C.G. Jung, Bernard Lonergan. Particular behaviors can be explained by the presence of the driving force at each chakra. As such the system has relevance on a universal level and applies, in a dramatically interfaith fashion, to all religions and spiritual systems.

**MARINA FORBES | Rochester, New Hampshire**

*Mother of God Hodigitria, 2017*

*mixed media on gessoed linen canvas, 23k gold*

Russia converted to Orthodox Christianity in the 10th century. This conversion coincided with the “golden age” of Byzantine icon making, a rich spiritual tradition brought to Russia and developed as a profound expression of faith and a source of miracles, revealing the man’s inner world, purity and nobility of the soul, his readiness for sacrifice and the depth of his thought and feelings. As a Master Iconographer I work in the tradition of the Byzantine-Russian icon painting.

**ARCHIE GRANOT | Jerusalem, Israel**

*Song of Songs XI. 2011*

*Chapter 6, verses 1-6*

*(reproduction of original papercut)*

I have been a papercut artist for almost 40 years. My work, inspired by Jewish and Biblical texts, show that the revival of this traditional art form need not be a repetition of motifs and style. My work is distinguished by multiple layers of paper, each hand cut with surgical scalpel, requiring a lengthy and intuitive process of creation, a process often hidden beneath the multiple layers of paper. Curves and links are interwoven creating incredible depth, texture and movement to which occasional and careful use of gold leaf and woven papers only adds. My use of Hebrew inscriptions, hand cut in astonishingly precise calligraphic letters, is an integral part of my Papercutting.

In 2009 I was commissioned to create a papercut *Song of Songs - Shir HaShirim*. Taking four years to complete, each of the 18 "pages" was cut by hand in multiple layers of paper. I believe that this Biblical allegory reaches out to peoples of all faiths and beliefs.

**CAROLE P. KUNSTADT | New York, New York**

*Sacred Poem LXXIII, 2016*

*thread, gold leaf, paper: pages from Parish Psalmody dated 1849, (678 knots)*

*Sacred Poem LXXX, 2016*

*thread, gold leaf, paper: pages from Parish Psalmody dated 1849, (450 knots)*

*Sacred Poem LXXXVII/ Jacob's Ladder, 2016*

*thread, gold leaf, paper: pages from Parish Psalmody dated 1849, (192 knots)*

*The Sacred Poem Series* takes physical, material, and intellectual inspiration from *Parish Psalmody, A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public Worship*, published in 1849. Pages of psalms are manipulated and recombined, resulting in a presentation that evokes an ecumenical offering - poems of praise and gratitude. The aged pages and the fragmented text suggest the temporal quality of our lives and the vulnerability of memory and history.

Visually there is a consistent and measured cadence to a page of psalms which is echoed in the repetitive weaving and knotting of the paper: pages are cut in strips and woven creating an altered dense surface. The repetitive action of cutting, sewing,

knotting and weaving is similar to praying, reciting, singing, and reading: implying that through the repetition of a task or ritual one has the possibility to transcend the mundane. The gold leaf elevates and heightens the rich textural qualities. The interplay alludes to the enticing presentation of illuminated texts historically. The physical text and the utilization of gold evocatively and powerfully serves as a gateway to an experience of the sacred and the realization of the latent power of the written word. This process of interaction is played out visually in the piece, mimicking the internal experience.

Explored and displayed in this visual context, the alteration of the papers' linear, tactile and facile nature emphasizes transformation, while the possibility of revelation is playfully realized. It becomes a celebration of life, love, truth and beauty that's contained within them.

**ELAINE LANGERMAN | Washington DC**

*Poem/Painting #8: "Late August Evening", 4/1/16*

*mixed media on panel*

Love directs every line, stroke and shade of what I perceive in my everyday life. I am in love with the richness of nature and our planet, and I drink with my eyes and ears this evidence of the Divine. "Late August Evening" for me inspired a visual dance in response to the words of the poet. I read his poem and let my inner eye amass images suggested by the sound of crickets as the sun set on an evening at the end of long, hot summer. Gan Shel Zahav is the name of a book project I conceived in order to use these small drawings as a vehicle to induce a form of meditative response to the idea of a prelapsarian paradise. I let my hand wander, moving in unpremeditated strokes to form what it would. Putting ego aside. Using the sacred medium of metal point, I undertake this voyage of discovery as I continue this project.

**ROBIN L. POWER | Chicago, Illinois**

*Mandala, 2016*

*Stoneware, porcelain slip, glaze, c.10 reduction firing. Internal light*

The theme of most of my work is about the human condition, and thoughts and emotions that bind us as human beings. My intention is not to execute my work literally and explain too much but rather give a glimpse of the story. Similar to a candid photograph, this allows the viewer to call upon their own life experiences to draw a conclusion about the piece. My work originates from my subconscious, I allow my thoughts and emotions to flow and develop as I work. Sculpture is my passion, in it I have found a place for my soul to live.

**MIRIAM STERN | Teaneck, New Jersey**

*Met I, 2017*

*digital print on paper*

In 2016/17 the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY had an exhibition titled Jerusalem 1000-1400 Every People Under Heaven. In their statement about the exhibition they write, "Multiple competitive and complementary religious traditions,

fueled by an almost universal preoccupation with the city, gave rise to one of the most creative periods in its history. This landmark exhibition demonstrated the key role that the Holy City played in shaping the art of the period from 1000 to 1400.”

I was fascinated by many of the manuscripts with their elaborate calligraphy, rich decorative borders, and gold leaf and photographed them. Using bits and pieces from the medieval manuscripts I created new contemporary images on my iPad. Just as these texts were open to interpretation then, they remain open to interpretation today. Some beliefs expressed in these texts might have shifted and changed over time. Some have not. That is the beauty of religious diversity and interpretation. My pieces are visual interpretations of these ancient works.

**KIM THERIAULT | Chicago, Illinois**

*A Little Bit of Faith, 2018*

*pine, cork, glass, metal, mustard seeds*

Love and truth are big concepts but they can emerge from tiny individual actions. My work seeks to facilitate interaction beyond the passive act of looking and toward actions of choice that can form the basis for each viewer to relate to others in truthful and loving ways.

Common objects in their simplest forms can reveal truth or promote love. While this piece can be viewed as a singular object, its conceptual framework activates fundamental elements of one’s own truth and gestures of caring. The parable of the mustard seed and its many versions of how a minute grain of faith can grow into something powerful and far-reaching serves as the basis for *A Little Bit of Faith*.

This work is a metaphor for DU and the Sinsinawa Dominican sisters who have proved over and over that the smallest intervention can be more loving than grand gestures. Allowing people to take mustard seeds as they wish tests their love for their community since they have the choice to pass them along, hoard them, or leave them for others once they have theirs.

**DEBORAH YASINSKY | New York, New York**

*IV Son Woodcut, 2018*

*woodcut print*

This print of a woodcut I carved expresses faith and relates the theme of Love and Truth as an expression of Interfaith diversity because it depicts the love a mother has for her child, my own child and his medical struggles. The imagery is drawn from the iconography of many of the medieval western tapestries that reference the Bible. I often draw on imagery from religions different than my own in creating my work. There is a universality to many religious works.