

UNH Art Gallery Opens New Season Jan. 24

Local Artist, Women in Religion Featured

By *Tracy Manforte*

UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- The spring semester season at the University of New Hampshire Art Gallery kicks off Monday, Jan. 24, with a preview reception for two exhibitions.

"Religion: Contemporary Interpretations by Women" runs Jan. 25 through April 25, and "Past into Present: Paintings by M. Zabarsky" runs Jan. 25 through March 9. The reception is planned from 5 to 7 p.m. at The Art Gallery in Paul Creative Arts Center. Both exhibitions and related events are free and open to the public.

Religion: Contemporary Interpretations by Women

Complementing the campus-wide series "Women in Religion 2000," this exhibition offers works by five women artists, each influenced by her religious experience and background. "Religion: Contemporary Interpretations by Women" covers a range of cultural identities, from Christianity to Haitian Vodou.

Exhibiting artist and co-curator Jennifer Moses says religion continues to play a vital role in the visual arts. "Women in Religion 2000¼ gives us the opportunity to look at the influence of religious themes in both a contemporary and feminine context," says Moses, also a UNH associate professor of art. "It has been exciting to put together a range of artists¼ responses to religion."

Other exhibiting artists are Arlene Shechet, of New York City, who illustrates her Buddhist connections in her sculptures and paper works, and Marilene Phipps, of Cambridge, Mass., who explores the influence of Haitian Vodou and African culture in her paintings.

Somerville, Mass., artist Debra Olin incorporates Jewish images into her work, while Boston photographer and installation artist Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons, uses her face and body as a canvas to explore her Cuban roots.

Rich imagery is a prevalent characteristic of the works chosen for the exhibition, with color and texture

drawing viewers to the expressive subject matter. "The works of these artists demonstrate that spiritual and religious needs still find expression through artistic media," says Professor Mara Witzling, coordinator of the UNH Women's Studies Program.

Past and Present: Paintings by M. Zabarsky

Melvin Zabarsky, UNH professor emeritus of art, is a figurative and narrative painter with 28 years' experience teaching and many more as one of New England's most accomplished artists. "Past into Present" focuses on Zabarsky's work in the 1990s, with selected works from his earlier years.

According to Vicki Wright, director of The Art Gallery, "In Zabarsky's paintings during the past decade, he has figuratively turned past into present by deconstructing earlier canvasses -- cutting out meaningful passages and figures -- and using them as collaged elements in new compositions. This layering of images is his way of reconstructing and redefining his past while producing a body of work that signifies his present life as a contemporary painter."

Also a history buff, Zabarsky uses books and historical photographs as inspiration for his paintings. His earlier work includes representations of historical figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Luxemburg. Zabarsky earned his BFA from Boston University and MFA from the University of Cincinnati. His work is also known internationally and has been exhibited in Spain and Japan.

ArtBreak Series

The following programs are part of the ArtBreak series, which runs Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m. in The Art Gallery (unless otherwise noted):

- Jan. 26 -- Slide lecture. "Italian Painting, Religious Iconography and Female Heroism: Influences on My Work," presented by Jennifer Moses, exhibiting artist and associate professor of art. Paul Creative Arts Center, room A-219.
- Feb. 2 -- Gallery talk. A conversation with Melvin Zabarsky, exhibiting artist and professor emeritus, and Vicki Wright, director of The Art Gallery.
- Feb. 9 -- Panel discussion. Exhibiting artists Jennifer Moses and Debra Olin discuss women in religion with David Frankfurter, UNH associate professor of history and religious studies; Penelope Morrow, UNH instructor of women's studies; and

Mara Witzling professor of art history and coordinator of the Women's Studies Program.

- Feb. 16 -- Theater. Scenes from "A Midsummer Night's Dream," performed by members of UNH's Mask and Dagger.
- Feb. 23 -- Slide lecture. "Vodou and its Altars," presented by Marilene Phipps, exhibiting artist. Paul Creative Arts Center, room A-219.
- March 1 -- Concert. Original jazz performed by the Bryan Killough Jazz Combo.
- March 8 -- Slide lecture. "Figurative Expressionism in the Boston Area," with Evan Ide, art gallery fellowship recipient. Paul Creative Arts Center, room A-219.
- March 22 -- Theater. (tentatively scheduled) Scenes from "Putting it Together," a play by Mary Gallagher.

Gallery hours are: Monday - Wednesday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Thursday, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m., Saturday and Sunday, 1 - 5 p.m. The gallery is closed Fridays and university holidays. School and group tours are offered free with advance reservation and can be scheduled by calling the Outreach Program at 603-862-3713. For more information, call 603-862-3712 or email art.gallery@unh.edu.

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