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CINCINNATI ARTIST'S THOUGHT-PROVOKING ART ON DISPLAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

DAYTON, Ohio — Looking at Tom Dusterberg’s “Body of Christ” painting, one can’t help but notice the only thing missing from the portrait of Christ on the cross is, ironically, his body. Instead, a series of five small, disjointed paintings — all mounted on a crucifix-shaped canvas — depict Jesus’ head, hands, feet and heart.

Portraying the familiar with a twist is a trademark of the Cincinnati artist, whose work will be on display this summer at the University of Dayton’s Marian Library Gallery.

Admission to the exhibit, which will run from June 1 through July 14, is free and open to the public. Gallery hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Marian Library, which holds the world’s largest collection of printed materials about Mary, the mother of Jesus, is located on the seventh floor of Roesch Library on campus.

A “virtual” tour of the exhibit will run concurrently on the library’s Web gallery at http://www.udayton.edu/mary/current-exhibit.html.

“My paintings aren’t meant to be simply decorations for people to hang over their sofas, I want my art to speak to people, to make them think. I want the images to resonate in their minds in a different way,” said Dusterberg, whose pieces — evocative, provocative and sometimes irreverent — often portray religious icons in an abstract way. Religious, however, is not a term the artist prefers to describe his work. Spiritual is the more appropriate term, he maintains, because even the pieces without a spiritual theme are spiritually motivated.

“Religion has gotten a bad name in contemporary society,” Dusterberg said. “But I sense that a lot of people feel the need for and the reality of the Spirit. And art is a very spiritual thing for me.”

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Office of Public Relations
300 College Park  Dayton, Ohio 45469-1679
(937) 229-3241  (937) 229-3063 Fax
www.udayton.edu
Well-versed in a variety of media and styles, Dusterberg included oils, colored pencil, water color and other media in the collection of 18 spiritually-themed pieces he assembled for the UD gallery — including nine new pieces created specifically for this exhibit.

Titles and styles range from "Clergy Contemplate Death," a tongue-in-cheek statement on contemporary clergy’s continuing loss of ministry time to increasing administrative duties, to "Mary, Queen of Poets and Mystics," an elegant rendition of the Virgin holding a rose and scroll, and "Virgin and Child," a three-dimensional painting symbolizing Christ coming through his mother, Mary.

“Body of Christ,” included in the exhibit, represents Dusterberg’s thoughts on religion in contemporary society. “As Christians, we are the body of Christ,” Dusterberg said. “But in today’s society that’s not recognizable as such — the body is missing.”

“No matter what the theme, I enjoy making philosophical statements about the business of the world in my work,” he added.

Dusterberg worked as a commercial illustrator for more than 25 years before turning his career attention almost fully to fine art. He owns the Glendale Gallery of art in Cincinnati, viewable online at http://www.glendalegallery.com.

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For media interviews, call Tom Dusterberg at (513) 771-1660.