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Straw Madonnas

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Straw Madonnas

by **Rev. Marian Paskowicz**

Exhibited at the Marian Library: January 9 - February 24, 1995

Pieces of straw and a razor blade take the place of paint and brush in the hands of Marian Paskowicz, of Norristown, Pennsylvania. "Many persons in Poland do straw painting," says the artist, who came to this country in 1960, "but in the U.S. it is rare only because artistic persons never have been exposed to it and never have thought of straw as a real or true art medium." Marian Paskowicz began doing straw art at the age of sixteen.

"The work demands art ability, manual dexterity, and patience," he says. "Yet, it is restful and rewarding, and one of the best ways I know for many persons who have great creative drive to satisfy this urge when they can't paint or sculpt."



*Our Lady of Czestochowa
rendered in straw
by Father Marian Paskowicz*

The first step is to sketch or trace the subject carefully on paper or art board. The second step is to select the pieces of straw according to the tone and shadings requested by the subject, and to cut the straw accordingly with a sharp razor. Marian uses oat, rye, wheat, millet and barley straw to provide the various shades and textures he needs. Friends and relatives in Poland keep him supplied with the raw material.

The artist carefully inlays and glues each strand on the detailed sketch. He repeats the procedure until the drawing is completely covered with varying shades of straw. He then cuts away the surplus paper and fastens the work to a colored board - black, blue, burgundy. The finished product is sprayed with a protective coating.

The detail in the completed painting is nearly as fine as a painter could do it with a brush. Shading, texture and lighting of the straw give the work a golden glow.

Marian Paskowicz has 'painted' a variety of subjects: state capitols throughout the U.S., portraits of U.S. presidents, the most famous vases of ancient cultures, the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, Saint Peter's in Rome. Among his masterpieces are counted *The Last Supper* and (imagine) the whole of the Sistine chapel. This exhibit shows a selection of over four-hundred straw madonnas.

Marian Paskowicz's art form is unique, and the artist is not eager to sell. Each of the hundreds of straw paintings is copyrighted. Marian's ambition is not critical acclaim, fame or wealth. He has an artist's dream, which is also the dream of a man with a generous heart. His dream is someday to have his own museum, where he can display his work for the joy of the audience, and use the proceeds to help the homeless.

WORKS DISPLAYED

Madonna and Child with St. John, after Sodoma

Flight into Egypt, after Murillo

The Virgin with the Infant Jesus and St. John, after Correggio (attrib.)

Madonna Litta, after Leonardo da Vinci (Boltraffio)

Pieta, after Michelangelo

Our Lady of Czestochowa

Madonna and Child, after Bodenhausen

Madonna of the Pomegranate, after Boticelli

Madonna and Child (I), after Filippo Lippi

Vierge de Douleur, after Marmion

The Virgin and Child, after Bouts

Madonna and Child (II), after Filippo Lippi

The Rest on the Flight into Egypt, after Cantarini

Virgin and Child, after Murillo

Nativite, after Nicolas Mignard

The Annunciation, after Filippo Lippi

Madonna of the Street, after Feruzzi

[Return to the Exhibits Page](#)

[Return to the Gallery](#)

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Home

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