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Sacred Dolls: Re-Imaging Our Lady

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Sacred Dolls: Re-Imaging Our Lady



Exhibit ran from December 15, 2004-February 28, 2005

🟢 DIANNE MARLENE HARGITAI, a self-proclaimed "kitchen-artist" who does not shy away from using a spaghetti maker to cut her clay or her oven to bake her ceramics, bridges the chasm between popular arts and crafts and classical sacred art. She takes found objects around the house such as buttons, beads, broken necklaces, lone earrings, second-hand trinkets, garage-sale curios, and transforms them into unique icons that, in their humble simplicity, pay homage to the Virgin Mary seldom seen in contemporary art. And she is a sculptor in her own right. Her originals of the Virgin and Child bring home with startling

immediacy what it means to be the mother of a child both human and divine, to suffer life's sorrowful mysteries but also to share in God's mysterious glory.

Dianne Marlene was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1978, she and her husband, Peter, and their two children took flight from the land of snow and ice to settle in the warmth of sunny south Florida. Dianne Marlene has worked at various jobs to help raise her family; she was a graphic artist, a waitress, an engraver, a sign designer, a secretary, a computer whiz, book designer, and an editor. In 1996, after her two children left home to make their own lives, she finally decided what she wanted to do. Play dolls. But with her own dolls that she sculpted. She taught herself from books and magazines. Once she had mastered the art of the doll, she decided to get serious, and at her daughter's suggestion, started making icons of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her true passion since childhood.

Dianne Marlene credits her Irish Catholic grandmother, Mimi, for her introduction to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Before kindergarten and Catholic elementary School, Mimi told her stories of miracles, angels, and of the Mother of God. Mimi seemed like the holiest woman she knew and she loved her dearly. Dianne Marlene began drawing the Blessed Virgin Mary. And drawing her, and drawing her. Until her family finally said, "Can't you draw anything else?" She could, but she didn't want to. It was her way of praying.



 **MARY, MOTHER OF SERENITY** (*Mixed Media. 48" Diameter*)



This life-size icon of the Virgin Mary is surrounded by a four-foot sunburst, a radiating stylized halo ablaze with gilt and flourishes of accent gems. She is portrayed in the repose of blessed serenity. Reflected on her face is that inner calm sought after by those who pray with all their hearts, be they disciplined monks or simply anyone who needs to be heard and to be healed by the balm of serenity only communion with the Father can grant. She is our Spiritual Mother illuminating our way toward such intense prayer.



 **OUR LADY OF MERCY** (*Mixed Media. 12" Diameter Octagon*)

"The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath," so wrote William Shakespeare to capture in words the amorphous quality of that rare virtue. The icon's octagon shape hints at mercy's many-sided nature: kindness, forbearance, tolerance, fairness, forgiveness, pity, leniency, compassion. The mildness we read on the face of the Holy Mother signifies mercy in all its aspects; it is the face that will plead for us at the hour of our death.

 **MARY, QUEEN OF PRAYER** (*Mixed Media. 13" Diameter*)

Prayer is spiritual communion with God. The Virgin Mary's entreaty eyes look toward heaven in earnest supplication. Each prayer is a precious offering on a bejeweled halo that is at once a prayerwheel and a wheel of life represented by blossoming set gems and the gilded laurel leaves of divine favor gracing the disk's outer rim.

The Queen of Prayer is praying fervidly for all that is precious and permanent in us: our souls.



 **MARY, QUEEN OF THE ROSARY** (*Mixed Media. 20 ½" x 8 ½"*)

The spiritual meditation we have come to know as the rosary hails back to the middle ages. The fifteen roses gracing the icon's circumference represent the fifteen groups of ten decades which add up to 150 devotional prayers implicit in the 150 inlaid beads of pink, purple and blue hues of the Joyful, Sorrowful and Glorious Mysteries.

The rose itself, the most majestic of all flowers and a fitting symbol of the Queen of Heaven, is often portrayed in stunningly stylized patterns in the stained glass rose windows we see in Gothic cathedrals.



 **OUR LADY OF THE SEAS** (*Mixed Media. 12" Diameter*)



There is special significance to the shrines of Our Lady in harbors, for she truly is a safe harbor during life's many storms. She is Our Lady of the Seas. Merchants and pilgrims flock to her grottos of coral rock and seashells; and in some lands, like the island of the Philippines, rosaries are made entirely of seashells. In this icon, Our Lady's halo is a wreath of golden seashells, some bearing pearls; the thin blue line of the inner halo is the blue sea, while the outer rim of her halo is a double braid of white pearls signifying heaven. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls." (Matt. 13:45)

 **OUR LADY, MOTHER OF GRACE** (*Mixed Media. 10" Diameter*)



Ave Maria, gratia plena! "Hail Mary, full of grace," begins the most fervently and the most frequently recited prayer to Mary by devout Catholics the world over. It is how the Angel Gabriel greeted the Virgin Mary when he announced to her that she would be the Mother of God. The myriad meanings of the word "grace," such as favor, mercy, compassion and divine love combine to define not only the Holy Mother's spiritual beauty but also her fulfillment in sharing that very special love with us. The icon's tiny pearls lining her delicate veil represent her abundant grace. These pearls reach over a turquoise ocean and overflow into the outer rim of a halo that is ever widening, never ending, only increasing to encircle all of God's children in the radiance of her grace.

◆ **OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HOPE** (*Mixed Media. 10" Diameter*)

Among our plant life there is a variety of perpetual hybrid rose that blooms continuously throughout the season. So it is with another Rose, the Blessed Mother. The hope she holds out to us is never illusory. In our material world of inanimate objects, artists and artisans try to evoke what is enduring and eternal through precious metal and precious stones. Thus the dazzling halo of Our Lady of Perpetual Hope. Diamonds are forever. But we know better. It is Our Lady's perpetual hope that blooms continuously throughout eternity, unceasing, enduring, never ending.



◆ **MOTHER OF OUR SAVIOR** (*Mixed Media. 14" Oval*)

Cuddling her infant Son, the Holy Mother smiles peacefully, oblivious to the drama manifest on her infant Son's face. An alert baby Jesus looks out into the world he has come to save. A sense of mission is already struggling with a sense of foreboding. He knows that He can only save the world by dying; the all-knowing eyes regard all that is waiting for Him, including the Agony in the Garden where He will desperately cry out: "Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but thine be done." In stark contrast to the darkness of that hour is the serenity of infancy, safe for the time being in the harbor of his loving Mother, insinuated in the icon by a halo of a thousand miniature pearls and soft roses sprinkled with dew the color of iridescent Mother of Pearl



◆ **BLACK MADONNA** (*Mixed Media. 15" x 11 1/2"*)

This icon's famous namesake, the Black Madonna of Czestochowa, a painting over five hundred years old, is not really black at all; according to one tradition the Madonna's naturally olive-colored face was darkened by smoke and soot. "Black Madonna" is but a nickname. This contemporary icon, on the other hand, celebrates not only the color of her skin but also the Madonna's clearly delineated African features. She is depicted wearing the majestic headdress of a tribal queen against a backdrop of glittering ebony, a jewel unto itself, magnified still by the array of rare jewels paying tribute to her rare beauty. Her beautiful aspect humbles us, she magnifies the Lord.

🍷 **OUR LADY OF THE ROSES** (*Mixed Media. 16" x 11"*)

This representation of Our Lady of the Roses contemplates the Virgin Mary's Joyful, Sorrowful, and Glorious Mysteries. Enclosing the figure of Mary is a ceramic frame displaying in its stylized patterns the dual nature of the rose: the flower and the thorn, joy and sorrow. Reflected in the Virgin Mary's compassionate eyes is her graceful acceptance not only of God's perfect will but also her children's devotion bound by earthly imperfection. But there is also abounding glory in her halo's golden sunburst and in the burst of flowers overflowing from her Immaculate Heart. In one of many Novenas to the Blessed Virgin appear the lines:

When thorns beset life's devious way,
And darkling waters flow,
Then, Mary, aid thy weeping child,
Thyself a Mother show.



🔹 **O HOLY NIGHT** (*Mixed Media. 20 1/2" x 8 1/2"*)

The silent drama of the Nativity, one of the rosary's Joyful Mysteries, unfolds in this blue and gold rococo alcove. St. Joseph, standing vigilant with his blossoming shepherd's staff by his side, fixes his loving gaze on the tender and mild Mother and Child in his care. The Holy Family is illuminated by the star of David shining brightly in the Bethlehem night. And in the blue arch of sky representing heaven above, two joyful cherubs rejoice over the birth of the Christ Child. "Sleep in heavenly peace."

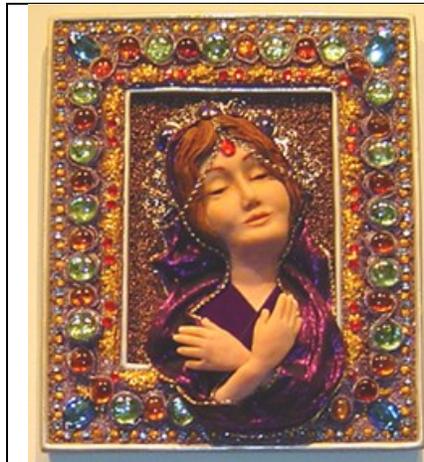
• **"MY SOUL DOTH MAGNIFY THE LORD"**

(Mixed Media. 12" Diameter)

During the Visitation, Elizabeth tells Mary that at the sound of her greeting, the babe leapt for joy inside her womb. Mary also has a child in her womb. He is the Son, dwelling in her and illuminating her being. The purity of her soul, like clear magnifying glass, exalts the Son as the grandeur of the Lord God's very presence grows inside of her. The central metaphor is the intensifying sun, shown in



the icon as a sunburst of radiating jewels that magnify its rays of light. The jewel is Mary's soul and the sun is the Lord. As the sun illuminates, so does the Son, for His aura is the light of the world. And this process of illumination begins with Mary's Immaculate Conception. The prophet Isaiah foreshadowed this miraculous process when he wrote that the soul shall exult in God as a bride adorns herself with jewels. Mary answers Elizabeth with what has come to be known as the Magnificat: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoice in God my Savior." (Luke 1, 39-47)



• **OUR LADY'S RAPTURE** (Mixed Media. 10" x 12")

The expression on the Virgin Mary's face is that of spiritual rapture, an overflowing of joy that is possible only in God's holy presence; the attitude of the Virgin's arms and hands is one of utter surrender to God's will. While the halo is implicit in the bejeweled tiara adorning the head, there is an aura in the shape of a window that opens to the Virgin Mary's Joyful Mysteries. Our devotion to Mary makes us beneficiaries of her rapture in the Lord as she leans out of her window to share with us her overflowing joy.



◆ SHRINE OF THE SACRED HEART OF MARY

(Mixed Media. 28" x 14" x 7½")

Shrines to the Virgin Mary like Our Lady of Fatima or the Black Virgin of Montserrat are sanctuaries marking her apparition or some other miracle ascribed to her and to her Immaculate Heart. This icon to the Sacred Heart of Mary is a miniature representation in the spirit of those venerable shrines. Hovering over the encased shrine beaded with sky-blue gems is a curved temple roof aspiring toward divine grace. Deep within the recessed aperture is the a circular icon of the Virgin Mary showing her heart, the sacred center of her joys and sorrows, her mercy and her all encompassing love.

● MARY, MOTHER OF THE FORGOTTEN

(Mixed Media. 21" x 13 ½")

In this construct the emaciated Mother and Child are in naked contrast to the icons in the gallery. It is the only one intentionally devoid of any ornamentation. It not only hearkens back to Christ's humble birth in a stable, but it also calls attention to the plight of God's forgotten children, especially in places as far away as the Sudan and as close by as the American ghetto. The bare scaffold of the Mother and Child's desperate existence is *their* special altar, dearer to God than the gilded altars of our greatest cathedrals.

Mary, Mother of the Forgotten, pray for us.

