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The Art of Love

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A new exhibit at the University of Dayton's Roesch Library highlights the life's work of a regional artist whose life and art were testimony to his faith.


The Marian Library Gallery located on the seventh floor of Roesch Library, is now featuring nearly two dozen of his line drawings. The gallery on the second floor of Roesch Library will show an exhibit of his paintings from June 7 to Aug. 29 and will be up in time as a special exhibit for the University's June 7-9 Reunion Weekend. Hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Saturday and Sunday by appointment by calling 937-229-4214. For more information visit http://bit.ly/19anhUp.

A reception with the Ostendorf family is scheduled for 7 p.m. Tuesday, June 18, in the first floor lobby of Roesch Library. It's free and open to the public.

Born in Dayton in 1934, Ostendorf graduated in 1957 from the University of Dayton with a bachelor's degree in arts and where he and Kay DeVol met in a fine arts class. His professional career as an artist for religious and educational publications in Dayton and Cincinnati spanned 55 years and their marriage was blessed with six children.

"Their story — their love story really — began at UD where they majored in graphic arts. Both received degrees here," said Sister M. Jean Frisk, I.S.S.M., assistant for art and special projects for the Marian Library.

"They courted here, prayed often in the chapel together, enjoyed UD and all that it had to offer. It is so very beautiful how their lives, their faith and their perspective on things was determined during those loving years and how it comes full circle by giving back to the University those marvelous works that were originally inspired here.

"We thought it would touch the hearts of alumni who experienced similar love stories here."

Kay Ostendorf said they met as sophomores, dated for a year, were engaged and then married. She graduated ahead of him because when they married, he went to work as an advertising artist for the Dayton Daily News.

They discovered a shared love of art in art classes and, when her father was gravely ill, a deep, shared faith in the Immaculate Conception Chapel.

"We used to go to Mass a lot, but when my father was ill, we went to Mass everyday before we went to class," she said.

And while Ostendorf supported their family with illustrations for commercial publications and publications like a dictionary, that Catholic faith was a life-long inspiration. "When he started to do Biblical artwork, the religious art began to take over his interest," she said.

It wasn't until later years, however, that he was able to pursue his religious calling, serving as a Roman Catholic deacon at parishes in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, as well as serving as chaplain at Warren County Correctional Institute in Lebanon, Ohio.

That faith is evident in the works she donated to the University, starting in 2010 with a striking, acrylic painting titled "Our Mother."
"He was so devoted to the Blessed Mother," she said, adding that it was fitting to give that special portrait of Mary to the Marian Library. That donation felt just right.

"I started out with one and then I talked to the children. We all thought the Marian Library would be a nice home for Dad's art," she said.

Ostendorf's line drawings range from realistic portrayals of scenes from Christ's life to graceful stylized depictions of the seasons and Mary in flowing robes. Last year, the Marian Library exhibited a series of Ostendorf's paintings containing hidden images and symbols of Biblical events, accompanied by meditations written by him on the primary image and clues to the hidden ones. Some of those are included in this year's exhibit.

University of Dayton's Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute is a globally recognized center for the study of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and holds the world's largest collection of printed materials and artifacts devoted to her. The collection includes more than 100,000 books and pamphlets in more than 50 languages, and a vast collection of nearly 3,000 Nativity sets and Marian art from around the world.

For more information, contact Cilla Shindell, director of media relations, at 937-229-3257 or shindell@udayton.edu

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