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A Journey of Love

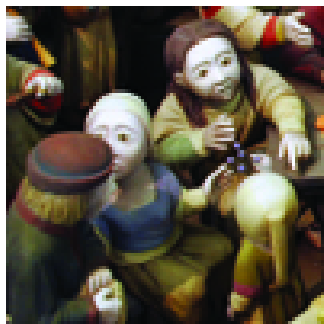
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A Journey of Love

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Just in time for Christmas, the University of Dayton has published a new book on *The Mirror of Hope*, a massive sculpture that grew from a simple Nativity scene to a panorama encompassing the sweep of Christianity from the Creation to the City of God.

The Mirror of Hope outlines the meanings and symbolism of the sculpture unveiled in 2000 by the Marian Library, which commissioned it to commemorate 150 years of University history and two millennia of Christianity. The *Mirror of Hope* sculpture is on permanent display in the first floor

lobby of Roesch Library.

The book also relates the story of an unusual collaboration between two men — the Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., who authored the book, and sculptor Kevin Hanna — working together many months over long-distance telephone lines to bring to life the stories of the Old and New Testaments in rich layers of humanity, faith, art history, symbols and the spiritual.

The partnership between Roten, the theologian, scholar and art historian, and Hanna, the deeply spiritual Protestant artist, resulted in an intricately detailed piece of 24 scenes, 12 feet long, five feet high, containing more than 240 figures — men, women, children, familiar Biblical figures, celestial beings as well as animals — and even evokes the University's iconic Immaculate Conception Chapel.

"We did the book to respond to the demands of people who asked for a book and to put something in the hands of the docents who are often asked to explain or interpret it," said Roten, who commissioned the piece on behalf of the Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute, when he served as director.

The sculpture traces a "journey of love," Roten says, that starts with God and then, through Jesus Christ, goes back to God.

The journey flows from Adam and Eve and a host of animals at Creation, includes the Tower of Babel; the growth of civilization with kings, merchants, children, farmers and musicians; patriarch Abraham; Mary's first encounter with an angel, leading up to the Nativity depicted in a stable at the center of the sculpture.

Each scene is packed with humans and animals depicted by Hanna with extraordinary care and detail, Roten said, adding that under Hanna's hands the scenes grew in size and scope: "For the wedding at Cana, I wanted eight figures. He did 35."

Roten describes the Cana scene as "an artistic explosion of Hanna's creative inspiration," including the newlyweds sitting at the table and kissing, a fiddler serenading the bride, a mother nursing a baby, and Mary, described by Roten as "alert as always, and involved in an intense dialogue with the chief steward" at the moment she instructs him, "Do whatever he tells you."

Roten, now director of research and special projects, said since the sculpture was installed 12 years ago, thousands of students, faculty, staff and visitors to the University have passed by the giant scene; many have asked about its meaning and history.

"We did the book to make sure that people don't forget, that there is permanence, a memory of what it all means," said Roten, "It's actually gained in popularity; we can see that no matter what the exhibit or event at the library, in the end everyone ends up in front of it."

The book is \$15 and will be sold in The Stable Store gift shop on the second floor of Roesch Library during the University's annual Nativity exhibit. It's also available for purchase online through the University of Dayton bookstore.

Roten will give a talk on the book and sign copies 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 6, in Roesch Library.

"At the Manger: Peace on Earth," an all-new display of more than 200 Nativities from the Marian Library collection, runs Saturday, Nov. 24, through Sunday, Jan. 27.

All events are free and open to the public, including a family-friendly open house 1-5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 24, with expanded children's activities, refreshments, live music and a college football viewing area. Four exhibits and The Stable Store will be open.

Exhibit hours vary; for information on exhibits, hours, directions and parking, visit <http://udayton.edu/libraries/manger> (url: <http://library.udayton.edu/manger>) or call 937-229-4234 (url: tel:937-229-4234) . Guided group tours are available on request by calling 937-229-4214 (url: tel:937-229-4214) . All campus exhibits are closed Dec. 23-25 and Dec. 31 through Jan. 1.

The University of Dayton's Marian Library/International Marian Research Institute, which holds the largest collection in the world of printed materials on Mary, the mother of Jesus. The collection includes nearly 3,000 crèches as well as Marian art from around the world.

For more information, contact Cilla Shindell, director of media relations, at 937-229-3257 or shindell@udayton.edu (url: <mailto:shindell@udayton.edu>) .