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'Fairest of All'

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Visitors can see the Virgin Mary depicted in vibrant colors and an artistic style that evoke Latin America and the American Southwest in "The Fairest of All," a new exhibit at the University of Dayton's Marian Library.

Artist Jan Oliver's collection features 30 paintings that explore Mary's various roles in faith — the mother of Jesus Christ, Queen of Heaven, and compassionate mother to everyone.

The exhibit opens Jan. 30 and will run through March 27 at the Marian Library Gallery on the 7th floor of Roesch Library on the University of Dayton campus. The gallery is open 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and on Saturday and Sunday by appointment. It is free and open to the public.

Oliver's collection includes angels, stars and the baby Jesus in various paintings of the Virgin Mother and portray Mary's world in vivid colors and images.

"In my world, light takes on vibrant hues, buildings glow, gray horses become blue in clear luminous light, angels and birds and magical creatures appear, stars sparkle in the sky, day mixes with night and people take on the most beautiful personas that are within them," Oliver said in her artist's statement. "My paintings reflect a world of peace and harmony — of love and faith and celebration.

"If I can paint something that can open up feelings in another person, make them smile, feel love, deepen their faith or give them a glimpse of the beauty that is still in the world — then I think I have done my job," she said.

Also on display at the gallery year-round is a selection from the library's collection of more than 1,600 Nativity scenes from around the world. The library will mount a major exhibit in November of a new gift of Nativities from an Australian collector.

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