

11-20-2008

From Shepherds to Spies

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"From Shepherds to Spies" (2008). *News Releases*. 1651.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1651

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



From Shepherds to Spies

11.20.2008 | Fine Arts, Catholic

Wise men and shepherds are a familiar sight around Nativity scenes, but government spies?

Spies disguised as chimney sweeps are just a few of the figures in a huge 130-piece village from Czechoslovakia dating from the 1850s, featured in the University of Dayton Marian Library's 2008 exhibit of Nativity scenes, also called crèches.

The hand-carved village is largest of about 30 scenes from around the world on display in the annual exhibit, which opens Nov. 28 in the Marian Library gallery on the 7th floor of Roesch Library at the University of Dayton.

The exhibit is free and open to the public. For the first time it will be open during the holidays on Saturdays and Sundays from 1 to 6 p.m., on Nov. 29, 30, Dec. 6, 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21. The crèches will be on display through November 2009 Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The centerpiece of this year's exhibit is the Czech village and is the newest acquisition in the library's collection of more than 1,500 crèches, according to the Rev. Johann Roten, S.M., director of the International Marian Research Institute.

Roten explained that the scene, which includes about 80 villagers such as a butcher, a baker and street musicians and 50 structures such as churches and homes, was created in the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia at a time when depictions of the Nativity were illegal.

"The government forbid people from having these scenes in their homes," Roten said. "So because chimney sweeps could get into everyone's homes to clean chimneys, the sweeps were recruited to look inside the homes for hidden scenes.

"Including the sweeps in the scene was really a political-religious statement about the government," he said. Since acquiring the set this year, Roten said volunteers have worked many hours cleaning and restoring the figures and buildings.

Roten said there is a strong bond between culture and religion, and the Nativities demonstrate that bond in a highly visible, accessible way, telling the Christmas story in the symbols and through the people of individual cultures.

In addition to the Czech scene, other scenes on display include a large-scale porcelain set with an elephant more than a foot tall, a century-old crèche with wax figures and a Nativity scene set in the Brazilian jungle by artist Sidney Matias. For more information about the Marian Library exhibit call 937-229-4214 or visit www.udayton.edu/mary.

Selections from the Marian Library crèche collection are loaned to museums, churches and galleries throughout the nation during the Christmas season

The Dayton Art Institute continues its holiday tradition of exhibiting crèches from the library. The theme of the DAI exhibition is "A Child's Delight—An Adult's Puzzle," featuring more than 20 crèches that capture the diverging approaches of children and adults to the Christmas story. The free DAI exhibit, 456 Belmonte Park North, is open Nov. 26 through Jan. 4 every day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information: 937-223-5277 or www.daytonartinstitute.org.

Gallery St. John, at Bergamo Center, Mount Saint John, 4400 Shakertown Road, Beavercreek, will feature more than 30 Marian Library crèches in a show titled "Christmas Around the World." The free display runs from Nov. 26 through Jan. 4. Hours are noon to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. For more information: 937-320-5405 or www.bergamocenter.org.

Selections from the Marian Library's collection are also featured this season at the Knights of Columbus Museum in New Haven, Conn., and the Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens in Akron, Ohio.

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