

Revealing the Stories

Visiting the artist's studio



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BY KATHY DHAEMERS

VISITORS to the studio and gallery of Sister Mary Ann Osborne, SSND are surrounded by stories carved in wood or printed on paper. These stories are taken from Scripture and inspired by feast days such as the Annunciation, Epiphany, and Pentecost. They draw viewers in and invite them to discover their own stories.

The work of Sister Mary Ann is also inspired by conversations, writings, and music, old and new. Her art at times comments on local and international events, peace and justice issues, and acts of nature, like the tornado that devastated her home town of Saint Peter, MN, in 1998.

Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) has been a major influence on Sister Mary Ann's work. The art she created for *With Passion*, her 2015 exhibition at The Basilica,

was inspired by quotes from Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger and Pope Francis. An exhibition she conceived for Saint Paul Monastery in Saint Paul, MN a few years ago was entitled *Love Cannot Wait*. Sister Mary Ann borrowed this title from 1882 writings by Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger. An imagined diary of the foundress accompanies the art. The work is now rotated monthly in a space near the Monastery's Good Counsel chapel.

Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger's influence on Sister Mary Ann actually goes back to the very beginning of her art making as her first carvings (1985) were created to honor the SSND foundress on the occasion of her beatification. At that time Sister Mary Ann had taken only two summer workshops in wood carving, for a total of three weeks. After thirteen years of teaching in elementary schools in Minnesota, North Dakota,



and Iowa, Sister Mary Ann felt her future had a different path. She loved the students and enjoyed teaching but she felt called to teach in a new way. She was given permission to study and work as an apprentice with a wood carver in Faribault, MN. The original agreement was for one year, then followed by a second year. By 1988 she was a full-time artist, with her first studio space at Our Lady of Good Counsel. A couple of years later she pursued a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Metropolitan State University and studied for six months with Franciscan Sister Sigmunda May in Stuttgart, Germany.

The artist spends most of her days working in her sunny studio, a former laundry where she moved in 2004. Sometimes she will sketch ideas on paper, but she prefers to start with the wood carving soon after some initial drawing directly on the surface.

She usually begins with the faces. When studying with Sister Sigmunda she was encouraged to follow her heart, listen to God and let the characteristics of the wood guide her process. For carvings she typically uses kiln dried wood, bass or linden. The embellishments she adds, to her wood sculptures often have their own stories. She has repurposed arches and copper from buildings under renovation. And people often drop off items they think she may be able to use; parts of a beautiful broken vase, pieces of glass or silver, or small logs from a beaver dam. Eventually these items find their way into a piece of art.

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Sister Mary Ann's studio is located in Florian Hall at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Mankato. She welcomes visitors.

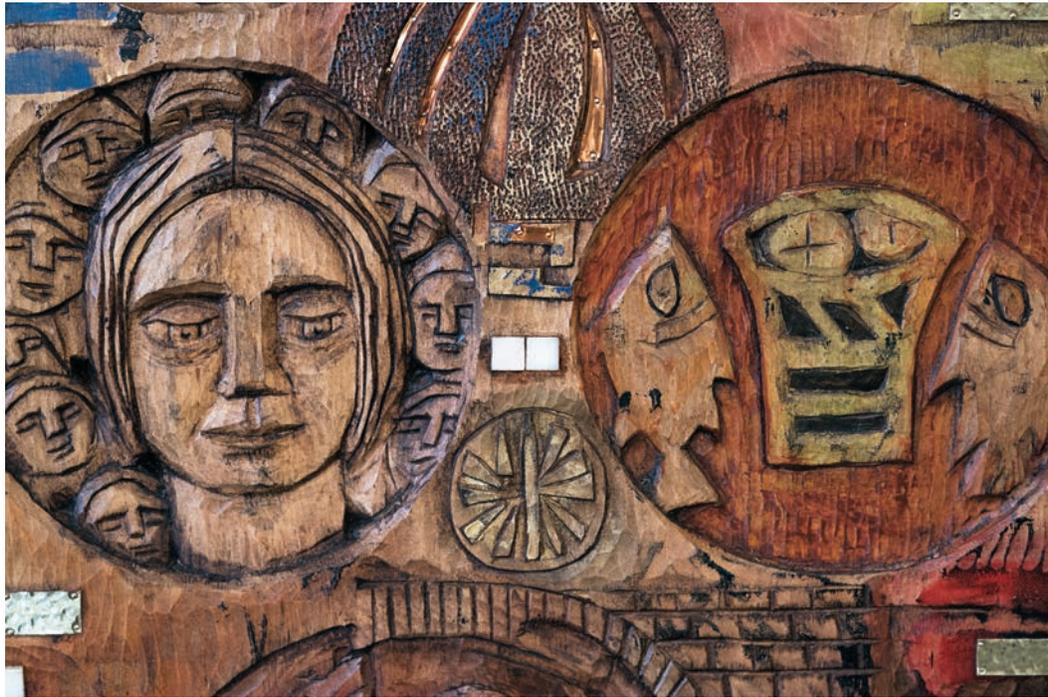
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Sister Mary Ann has admired and been inspired by other artists including her teacher Sister Sigmunda May, Corita Kent, Henry Moore, Joseph O'Connell, Ernst Barlach, and Käthe Kollwitz. Her work can be found around the world in churches, schools, hospitals, and homes. In addition to wood carving, she does woodcut prints and works with glass.

The Basilica selected her piece *One Breath* from our art collection to visually represent the Revolution of Love and Tenderness initiatives this year. The piece of art was selected given its heart shape reference embracing the people of the world with love and tenderness and will be displayed in The Basilica throughout the year. Sister Mary Ann shares the meaning as, "Through the spirit we must work together sharing love and tenderness, to make the world a better place. All it takes is one breath of God in our direction."

It is good to keep in mind that *Love Cannot Wait* has been the directional statement for the School Sisters of Notre Dame for the past five years. The statement commits this international congregation of women religious to embrace dialogue as a way of life that leads to new discoveries about themselves and others, and to conversion, reconciliation, and healing. It is a call to change lives and the world. Sister Mary Ann does this beautifully through her art. ✚

Kathy Dhaemers has been The Basilica's associate director of sacred arts since 2000.



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