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<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/programs/gallery/>

hours: Mon. – Fri., 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM; Sat., noon – 5 PM

an institution of Mennonite Church Canada

located on the campus of Canadian Mennonite University

**TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS:** The MHC Gallery's budget is met almost exclusively through donations. The gallery receives no government, university or church conference funding for its operating budget. Please, help keep the gallery alive.

MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4  
(204) 888 6781; Ray Dirks, curator, [rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca)

## Invisible Dignity

juried exhibition

featuring Toki Orui's Hiroshima Series

**OPENING:** Friday, November 23, 7:30PM

November 23, 2007 – January 19, 2008

### Juror Comments by Jennifer Gibson

This year's theme for the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery's Annual Juried Exhibition is a tough one. As a result, there are fewer submissions than in previous years. Still, 31 brave artists submitted 86 artworks for my consideration, all attempting to deal with the topic of human dignity.

How does an artist portray human dignity? One might expect to see a large number of portraits, and indeed there are many pieces that capture the visages of young and old, males and females from various cultures. But human dignity is also about circumstances and how people have created and/or react to those circumstances, and so there are other works that illustrate these concepts through the depiction of landscapes and genre scenes.

In fact, I found a rich range of interpretations of human dignity: issues of faith (Christianity, Hinduism), class (the poor and powerless), age (the young and the old, for dignity is often not given to people in these groups whose voice is often ignored), gender, culture (First Nations and Inuit, Asians, Indians, Africans and those from Middle Eastern nations) and even references to particular historical events (bombing of Hiroshima, carrying out relief aid) are addressed by the art. Other groups that are typically dispossessed are represented as well: the obese, the mentally ill, refugees and prostitutes. Some works are tributes to those who are marginalized, while other pieces simply

**Canvas** — a piece of strong cloth on which to paint a picture

**Artists** Steve Black Bonnie Bodnarchuk Sarah Collard-Wiebe Karen Cornelius Debbie Danelley Sheldon Dawson Frieda Epp Gerald Folkerts Naomi Gerrard Gerald Kuehl Annemarie Layman Louise Lamb Manju Lodha John Mills Ross Muir Tomy Ndebele Toki Orui Pat Penner Hanif Shabgard Gen Tsuboi Jean Wiens

**Juror** Jennifer Gibson Art Curator **Gallery 1C03** University of Winnipeg

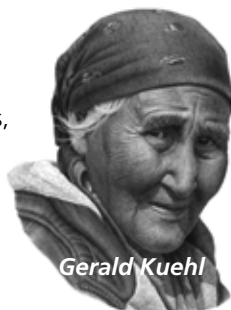
*The Invisible Dignity juried exhibition* follows in the footsteps of *Unveiling the Mystery, the invisible dignity project exhibition*. The juried exhibition will be followed by a student exhibition on the same theme. We are pleased the juried exhibition features artists and themes from many different places. Searching the theme of human dignity is appropriate regardless of our backgrounds, cultures or faith traditions. The gallery, based in the Christian tradition, looks to the verse in Genesis stating we are all created in the image of God as ample proof that all humankind should be respected and that God wishes for each of us to be people of dignity, regardless of our skin colour, material circumstances, culture, job, age, gender, etc....

We should also be people of peace. Toki Orui's beautifully painted series featuring the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Memorial Dome speaks for peace and dignity, especially through the lack of humanity in the artworks.

Come visit the gallery now and through the next several months and enter an oasis of peace, dignity and hope in a troubled world. *Ray Dirks*



Yoki Orui



Gerald Kuehl



Pat Penner

attempt to present situations and subjects as their creator sees them, neither heroizing or demonizing them.

For some artists, participation in this show involved submitting work that addresses one's vulnerability, perhaps tearing open wounds that are still healing. It became clear that, in dealing with a theme as sensitive and passionate as human dignity, the artist's

personal connection with the subject matter strengthens the artwork. We can all think of times when human dignity has been compromised, both in the past and the present, in places near and far. However, when the issue of someone's dignity has touched our lives directly and that encounter is reflected in one's art, it injects an immediacy into the work.

Bearing this in mind, I was particularly struck by the canvases submitted by Toki Orui which deal with the bombing of Hiroshima. I had read about these works a few months ago, and I was intrigued by them

### Proposals?

**Artists, please, submit your proposals to us!** The gallery hosts exhibits in approximate two month blocks throughout the year.

### Mailing list

To receive **CANVASS**, invitations to all exhibitions and other gallery updates contact Connie Wiebe, [cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca).

### Contact

Ray Dirks, MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB Canada R3P 0M4. Ph: (204) 888-6781. E-mail: [rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca)

### Thanks

Bill and Margaret Fast, Herb and Erna Buller, Frank and Agnes DeFehr, The Winnipeg Foundation, Agatha and Al Doerksen, Friesens, Herb and Donna Peters, Ted and Mary Paetkau, other donors

examine carefully, discuss — **Canvass**

then, so it was a privilege to view the pieces in person. What makes these paintings particularly powerful, as MHC Gallery Curator Ray Dirks has pointed out, is their absence of human life. The empty industrial landscapes depicting the memorial dome are a testament to the devastation in this part of Japan more than sixty years ago. The strength of these works cannot be denied and so I wish to see Orui's entire suite of Hiroshima paintings displayed in the Gallery alongside the other works selected for inclusion in this exhibition.

In terms of other, general commentary on the works submitted for this jury, I would like to address media. I was pleased to see work that incorporated less conventional techniques in addition to the more traditional materials of oils, acrylics and watercolour. Collage, prints, photographs, stained glass, textiles and even videos were submitted and I urge artists to continue their explorations in these media for future juried exhibitions.

The technique of the works was somewhat uneven. Clearly, many of the artists who submitted work are professional artists who are adept in their chosen medium. Some of the pieces could be more refined in terms of their handling of materials, use of colour, construction of composition or draughtsmanship. Even so, I applaud everyone for their efforts.

I thank you for putting forward your work to the juried exhibition this year. It was an enjoyable experience to view your art!



Hanif Shabgard

The MHC Gallery **CANVASs** is published by the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Mennonite Church Canada. Gallery curator: Ray Dirks. All correspondence and exhibition proposals should be sent to 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3P 0M4. Phone (204) 888-6781. E-mail: rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca. Contact us and join our mailing list. Website: <http://mennonitechurch.ca/programs/gallery/>

**CANVASs**

## Interested in painting in the gallery's studio?

Anyone interested in getting together with other artists to paint and visit are welcome to drop by the gallery's upstairs studio on Thursday afternoons from 1:30-3:30. If two hours doesn't seem enough, dropping by earlier would be fine. This is a trial endeavor that we hope will become something permanent. For more information, contact Ray Dirks at 888 6781 or rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca.

## Moving ahead

Unveiling the Mystery has been a wonderful success. The exhibition is at the core of the Invisible Dignity Project. Other events — talks, workshops, school tours, a benefit concert, a prayer and fasting service — were part of the whole. Together, the exhibit and other events, have spoken powerfully. Many Winnipeg schools, in fact, have adopted the theme this year. If young people have a passion for the marginalized, dispossessed and stereotyped our city cannot help but become a better place.

In 2008 the gallery will have operated as a fulltime exhibition space for 10 years — 10 years being a relevant and positive institution in the larger community. Not bad for something simply inspired by the statement that artists are God gifted, should be recognized as such and that those gifts should be utilized. The gallery's momentum is growing, not declining, as it heads for its second decade. More and more schools are taking part in gallery programming. The relevance and importance of all aspects of the gallery's work continues to move ahead.

To head safely into a second decade we must continue to rely on your donations. No cash comes from government, university or church conference. We need it from you. We need to raise approximately \$60,000 a year — a pittance compared to most similar sized institutions. This \$60,000 supports nearly everything we do — from salaries to opening refreshments to hammers and nails to mailing to shipping to this newsletter. It is at this time of year that we must raise most of our funds. Please, if you value our work, consider a generous tax deductible donation. We need people to give \$25. We need people to give \$100. We need many to give \$1,000 or \$2,000. We need some to give \$10,000.

Donations can be made in cash, by cheque or by credit card. Contact Connie Wiebe at 888 6781 or cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca for information.



## Please, consider a donation

**I'd like to support the MHC Gallery** (PLEASE PRINT)

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 contact Connie Wiebe at (204) 888 6781 or cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca to donate by credit card

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