

MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE Gallery

CANVASSs

Volume XI, No. 8, December 2008

<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 primarily through private, tax deductible donations. Please, help keep the gallery alive and growing. Make cheques payable to: MHC Gallery. Mail to: MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4. Credit card donations, contact Connie Wiebe at cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca.

(204) 888 6781; Ray Dirks, curator, rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca

Faces of Courage III

by Betty Smith

Tuesday, December 16, 2008 – January 31, 2009

OPENING: Tuesday, December 16, 7:30PM

Special music by Deborah Romeyn. Meet many of the subjects of the paintings and their loved ones.

This is our first Tuesday opening. Why Tuesday, you might ask? This extraordinary change is due to an extraordinary woman and a special day. *Faces of Courage III* opens on Betty Smith's 81st birthday. Join us and the courageous subjects and loved ones of Betty's portraits to say happy birthday.

Betty and I met for the first time shortly after I began working at the gallery in 1998. We've formed a tiny mutual admiration society from minute one.

After seeing a haunting portrait of a recently deceased young woman that first time we met, before we could part company, I asked Betty to consider painting enough for an exhibition of 20. She was first taken aback, then interested but overwhelmed. How could she paint 20 portraits? She managed to do it and *Faces of Courage* opened in late 1999.

Then in 2004 came *Faces of Courage II* and now *III*. Betty is up to 80 portraits and counting. We feared she'd not be able to fill one level of the gallery in 1999. Now, both levels will be bursting.

What moves Betty to keep driving herself with such passion and energy in her ninth decade? It is her loving heart, her gentle spirit that is both relentlessly positive and tenacious. It is, above all, her appreciation for the lives that shine through the veil of breast cancer. Betty has herself twice weaved through the shroud of the disease. She understands. She wants to uplift. She is on a spiritual voyage, a calling, that is not yet done.

Breast cancer has not been conquered by all of her subjects. Some have passed on. Betty's lovingly rendered portraits are part of their legacies. Each and every one a face of courage, drawn and gently painted by a fellow traveler.

Betty's subjects, thankfully the vast majority who live on, are each and every one an inspiration. Join us at the opening to not only say happy birthday to Betty but to celebrate the lives of the people in the paintings, the faces of courage of loved ones and ones who are the paintings come to life.

Ray Dirks


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

artist statement

FACES OF COURAGE

Betty Smith

Creativity has been part of my life since I was a little girl. I was always drawing and painting while my father, who was a landscape artist, encouraged me by drawing pictures that I could paint. I was often reprimanded in school for drawing when I was supposed to be paying attention. My dream was to be a commercial artist. Life's road did not lead to that end; marriage and children took most of my time and I had little left for my art. I was fortunate to have a friend who was a beautiful portrait artist and she started a small class when the children were little. She told me that I had a real talent for painting faces. Years later I joined the Winnipeg Sketch Club and carried on doing portraits for several years. For convenience and speed, most of us used charcoal and pastels. A short stint in Fine Arts gave me the opportunity to do sculpture using fibre glass. My sculpture of a woman (included in the exhibition) was designed to be a yoga pose. I was a yoga teacher to older adults at the time. Later in my life I was privileged to meet Ray Dirks and had it not been for his encouragement, I would not have had the courage to paint these watercolour portraits of breast cancer survivors. I will be forever in his debt and I thank God that Ray was put in my path.

Being a breast cancer survivor has brought untold meaning into my life through my association with the many women I know who are living 

Proposals?

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

Mailing list

To receive **CANVASSs**, invitations to all exhibitions and other gallery updates contact Connie Wiebe, 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

Thanks

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

examine carefully, discuss — **Canvas**

artist statement

FACES OF COURAGE

Betty Smith

with cancer. I personally remember the “out of control” feeling of being diagnosed with breast cancer in 1994 and then going through chemotherapy treatment. During those six months, common wisdom told me that to heal I must maintain a positive attitude. I arrived at the hospital with my sketch pad and pencils. I would put my headphones on and listen to tapes by Bernie Seigal (an oncologist with a sense of humour) while I sketched whatever came to mind. Many times I would be laughing out loud at his wonderful humour, completely oblivious of my surroundings. Along with my art, prayer and support of family and friends, and a sense of humour, I was able to get through a very difficult time. More than anything, it was my faith in God’s healing that sustained me while suffering through a life-threatening event.

Unfortunately, I had a recurrence on the chest wall in 1998 and underwent radiation treatment, but fared well with no ill effects. Again my faith sustained me. I remember imagining that the rays of the radiation machine were God’s healing rays that were flowing through me and healing me. Welcoming the experience means accepting on a deep level, that whatever has happened, there is a gift in it! Whether it is a painful experience, mentally or physically, you have the chance to stand in awe of the mystery of life. You don’t always see the opportunities at first, but you must look beyond and be aware of the path that is open to you.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says “All problems create hidden opportunities.” These exhibits were a hidden opportunity and through the many people that were put in my path, I have now had the wonderful experience of being centred in my art and in God while creating works of discipline and love. Including the portraits of my Chemo Savvy sisters in this new group of portraits has given me a very special opportunity to let my creative spirit bring to life an important episode in my life — my 10-year stint with the Chemo Savvy Dragon Boat Team. Since 1998, many women have dedicated their lives to bringing the awareness that there is life after breast cancer. We have said farewell to approximately 20 women since 1998. I am proud to be a part of this wonderful giver of life!

What gift can I give you other than what is truly in my heart?

The gift of seeing beyond the surface. . . beyond seeing the shapes, values and hues of colour . . .

I see the bravery, strength and courage that springs forth through the windows of the soul and . . . you share it with me!

Betty Smith

In love there is faith, in expectancy there is hope, and in creativity there is God’s hand. So many times I felt that God was guiding my brush!

Gallery News

Two dear friends of the gallery are on their own journeys with cancer at the moment. Please, remember Gerald Folkerts and June Springer in your thoughts and prayers.

Gifts?

Remember the wonderful Cuban exhibition that was in the gallery this past summer? Many pieces remain at the gallery and can be purchased. Besides buying a fine artwork you’ll be supporting Cuban artists and their families in tough times. Contact Ray Dirks to have a look at rdirks@mennonitechurch.ca or 888 6781.

Give

If you appreciate the exhibitions and other programming the gallery has to offer, please, consider a tax deductible donation before the yearend. We still need to raise significant funds in order to break even this year. That the gallery has survived as a truly unique institution in not just Winnipeg but Canada is something to celebrate. Can you help the gallery forge ahead into an even better second decade? Contact Connie Wiebe at 888 6781 to donate by credit card. Cheques made out to the MHC Gallery can be dropped off at the gallery or mailed to MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4.

Christmas Hours

December 24, 8:30AM – noon
December 29-31, 10AM – 3PM

Next Up

An exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of Westgate Collegiate.

**as the yearend
nears remember
the MHC Gallery**

**it exists only if
its supporters
give**

CANVAsS

Please, consider a tax deductible donation

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

name _____

address _____

_____ postal code _____

phone number (____) _____ amount _____

Make your cheque payable to the MHC Gallery
Mail to: MHC Gallery, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4
contact Connie Wiebe at (204) 888 6781 or cwiebe@mennonitechurch.ca to donate by credit card

DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE