

A VILLAGE PILGRIMAGE

The Passion Art Walk Transforms Barrington's Downtown

Bobbie Puttrich created "Praying Hands" which was displayed at the first stop on the Passion Art Walk, at Barrington Flower Shop.

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Christine Gunn-Danforth organized the inspiring and successful Passion Art Walk.

THRONGS OF DEVOUT CHRISTIANS FLOCK TO PILGRIMAGE SITES EACH YEAR on physical and metaphorical journeys. Jerusalem. Vatican City. Lourdes. Fátima. Some pilgrims seek redemption or healing. Others walk to remember, to reflect, to atone. But some contemplative journeys happen closer to home: during Holy Week, from March 25-30, Barrington played host to 700-some pilgrims for the first *Passion Art Walk: A Walk to Remember*.

The event reinvigorated Barrington's sleepy downtown—nearly deserted due to spring break—by placing 12 original artworks in 12 retail establishments, and inviting all to partake. Commissioned specifically for the Passion Art Walk, each piece represents a scene from the Passion: the biblical story of Jesus' capture, condemnation, and ultimately, his crucifixion. By design, the art works each feature hands—sometimes those of Jesus, others those of his captors—inviting the viewer to focus on that one humanizing element as they proceed through the story.

“We wanted to create an interpretation, and hoped people would be open to receive it,” says Christine Gunn-Danforth, who organized the art walk. A Barrington resident, Danforth is an international consultant on biblical theology and communications, with a focus on filmmaking. After experiencing a profoundly affecting *Stations of the Cross* event in her native South Africa in 2010, the idea of recreating the Stations in Barrington took root. After attending Crabtree Nature Center's *Art in Nature* exhibit, Danforth originally

envisioned an outdoor experience of the Stations of the Cross. “But it wasn't His plan,” she says.

CHARTING THE COURSE

In late February, with Holy Week fast approaching, Danforth had several conversations that led her to pursue the Village's business district as the art walk's home. “I knew Mike Shipley [of Cook Street Coffee], and quickly became connected with several other merchants,” she recalls. Danforth looked at her map, and plotted the merchants she planned to ask. Twelve stations. Twelve artists. Twelve stores would have to say “yes”.

The plan unfolded, one affirmation at a time. The Barrington Flower Shop, where Jesus and his disciples gathered in the Garden of Gethsemane: *yes*. Bravura, where Judas betrayed Jesus: *yes*. Egg Harbor, where the rooster crowed and Peter denied Jesus in the garden: *yes*. TT Patton, where Pontius Pilate washed his hands: *yes*. Acacia Organics, where soldiers fashioned a crown of thorns for Jesus: *yes*. Phillips Men's Wear, where soldiers clothed Jesus in a purple cloak, mocking him: *yes*. Cook Street Coffee, where Simon of Cyrene helped Jesus bear the cross: *yes*. Mia Sorella, which became Golgotha, site of the crucifixion: *yes*. The Bread Basket, where soldiers divided Jesus' linen tunic: *yes*. Susan McConnell Photography, where Jesus asked forgiveness for his persecutors: *yes*. The Catlow, where Jesus died, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two: *yes*. And M.J. Miller, where Joseph laid Jesus in the tomb: *yes*.



On March 24, Francesca's hosted a launch event attended by the artists, merchants, and representatives from each of the 16 participating area churches. Here is the unveiling of "Resurrection Hands", a 73" x 100" painting by Californian artist Hyatt Moore.

"The store owners each said 'yes' the first time I asked," Danforth marvels. "No one needed convincing. It was clear that God said 'I'm going to make a footprint, and you're going to step where I have stepped.'" Danforth shared the list of stores with the commissioned artists (many of whom she knows from her work as a section leader for creatives at Willow Creek Community Church), and asked each artist to choose the store with whom they felt the closest connection. Again, the artists and stores dovetailed seamlessly. "The stations and the artists' styles interacted with the genre of the stores so beautifully; it was more than I could have planned."

Just shy of a month later, the artwork was in place. On March 24, Francesca's hosted a launch evening attended by the artists, merchants, and representatives from each of the 16 participating area churches. Before dinner, the merchants opened their doors to one another for tours—which began, appropriately enough, at the intersection of Cook and Station Streets—and the artists spoke about their pieces.

The evening culminated in the unveiling of "Resurrection Hands", a 73" x 100" painting by Californian artist Hyatt Moore. Each participating church was entered in a drawing to host the Moore painting for one week each. Pastor Patrick Raymond, of Saint Michael's Episcopal Church—also an accomplished artist—won the honor of displaying the painting for his congregation during Easter Week.

WALKING THE WALK

On March 25, the art walk began without fanfare. The tone was distinctly more "treasure hunt" than "art fair," as small groups navigated the map. Rather than displaying the artworks prominently, the artists and store owners collaborat-

ed to find a natural home for the pieces. At times, viewers—pilgrims—were challenged to locate the art. When they found it, they could either stand in contemplation, use a Quick Response (QR) code to access the biblical timeline accompanying the piece, or enjoy a brief explanation from the hosting merchants.

Each day, word of the event spread, in much the same way Jesus' words traveled so long ago: by mouth, and personal testimony. Participating churches printed brochures, and an informative website was built (www.passionartwalk.com), but the tight marketing budget and even tighter timeline meant that the walk would have to be discovered. On Good Friday, a solemn day, more than 200 attended the walk. "By Saturday, many had returned from spring break," Danforth recalls. "They came home to a buzz in Barrington!" Saturday's attendance topped 300, with visitors processing between stores bedecked with gold and purple balloons.

When Danforth approached Judy Zabielski and Laura Mueller, co-owners of Acacia Organics, with the prospect of hosting artist Kaia Calhoun's "Hurting Hands", the women immediately accepted. "There was an instant connection. We named our business after the Acacia, a thorny tree known for its healing properties," explains Zabielski. "We're here to help people get to the root of their health issues." (The Ark of the Covenant, which held the Ten Commandments, was also carved from Acacia wood.)

Calhoun, a photographer, composed her piece as a closely cropped image of Jesus' persecutor placing the crown of thorns upon his head. "I made this



"Betraying Hands", by Marg Rehnberg, was located at Bravura.

crown of thorns with my own hands out of Buckthorn, and I had my hand model place it on my husband's head," Calhoun says. "On the day of the opening, the verse accompanying my piece struck me, 'Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head' (John 19:1-2). As I made my own crown of thorns I suddenly became aware that these soldiers would have been hurting themselves by creating this crown to place on Jesus." The intentional omission of many details led to the fuller appreciation of those shown.

Conversely, artist Don Krause created a painting rich in detail. The realist's "Mocking Hands" was hosted by Phillips Men's Wear, where men's clothier Terry Owens assumed the role of docent. "In Don's work—for which his sons posed—a soldier in modern dress mocks Jesus, clothing him in a purple robe," Owens says. "Don likes to place things in a contemporary setting, which makes them harder to dismiss or relegate to ancient history." This modernization creates a momentary disequilibrium, and teeters on the brink of indicting the viewer.

All in all, Owens feels the net impact of the event was positive. "Certainly the downtown has hosted art fairs, but this was far more gratifying and less disruptive," Owens says. Many attendees expressed sincere appreciation for the event. In business terms, the walk did not necessarily generate immediate sales. "People having a contemplative moment aren't likely to change gears and buy a Polo sport shirt," he observes. Yet, he found the concept a "great idea, an inspired idea."



Artist Cynthia Sloan and restaurant manager, Cory Hitzler, display "Denying Hands" at Egg Harbor Café.

The art walk appealed to Mary Sirois and Molly Kiefer, co-owners of Mia Sorella salon and boutique, from many angles: as individuals (and identical twin sisters), they share a devotion to Jesus; as merchants, they were eager to open their doors and increase traffic during an otherwise quiet week. "It was an honor to be a step along the way," says Kiefer, who is also a co-pastor, with her husband, of Thrive Vineyard Church in Palatine. "Our ministry is loving people, and helping women feel their best. We provide a place for reflection—this was a great fit."



Josh Calhoun of Citizen Way, and his wife, artist Kaia Calhoun, join Judy Zabielski and Laura Mueller to display "Hurting Hands" at Acacia Organics.



A. Artist Donald Krause joins Terry Owens at Phillips Men's Wear with his "Mocking Hands" painting. **B.** "Helping Hands" was created by Steve Puttrich and was displayed at Cook Street Coffee. **C.** Artist Bridget Mantasoot and salon manager Tiffany Simpson display "Surrendered Hands" at Mia Sorella. **D.** Bread Basket owner Sam Nikolaidis invited the Passion Art Walk into his restaurant. He is joined by artist Donna Jung who created "Greedy Hands". **E.** Artist Donald Krause brought his "Passion Hands" painting to be displayed at the Catlow. Here he joins Catlow owner Roberta Rana. **F.** Mike Miller, owner of M. J. Miller & Co. Jeweler (on right) joins artist Bruno Vanoudenhove who presented "Silencing Hands" on the last stop of the Passion Art Walk.


The boutique hosted Bridget Mantasoot's "Surrendered Hands", a diptych featuring Jesus' crucified hands. "It was a great way to tie the church and the community together during the Lenten season," says Sirois. Mia Sorella, and many other stores, set out bowls of jellybeans for visitors. "I bought four or five big bags of jellybeans for the event," Sirois notes. "By the end of the day on Saturday, there was one single jellybean in the bowl."

Jellybeans and a welcoming atmosphere made the walk accessible to all. Karen Benson, a Barrington resident and mother of three children aged 8, 6, and 4, brought her children to the event. "At each stop we looked at the artwork together, and my son and I took turns reading the scripture aloud," Benson says. "It was a powerful way to connect with the Easter story." She found the experience eye-opening in many ways. "As I often have three young children in tow, I had never been in many of the stores that hosted the paintings. I loved several of them and will be back!"

MOVING FORWARD

The walk culminated at the Catlow, with a showing of "The Passion of the Christ" (2004) and a live performance and meet-and-greet with Christian rock group, Citizen Way, known for their hit single, "It Should've Been Me". About 120 people attended these events. "This was a great option for people with teenagers and older children, who are well beyond egg hunts but still searching for a way to experience Easter," says Danforth. "It can start the conversation."

The collection's afterlife is still largely undetermined, but the works will remain together. As of publication, they were scheduled to be featured in the National Day of Prayer in Chicago on May 2, and to grace the walls of Willow Creek's new Care Center at its grand opening. Selected works will likely travel as part of the Cancer Survivor's Society's revolving collection. And Hyatt Moore's "Resurrection Hands" will continue its journey through participating area churches.

"We could never have told this story without the whole community," Danforth reflects. "The art's interaction with space, the synergy between artists and merchants—the response made it more than I could ever imagine." 

Passion Art Walk 2013

The following churches, merchants, and artists made the Barrington-based art walk event possible.

Churches

- Church of The Atonement
- Immanuel Lutheran Church and School
- Living Grace Community Church
- The Orchard Evangelical Free Church
- Salem United Methodist Church
- St. Anne Catholic Community
- St. Matthew Lutheran Church
- St. Mark's Episcopal Church
- St. Michael's Episcopal Church
- St. Paul United Church of Christ
- The Chapel Barrington Campus
- The Community Church of Barrington
- Thrive Vineyard Church
- Trinity Oaks Christian Academy
- Village Church of Barrington
- Willow Creek Community Church

Merchants

- Barrington Flower Shop
- Bravura
- Egg Harbor Cafe
- TT Patton
- Acacia Organics
- Phillips Men's Wear
- Cook St. Coffee
- Mia Sorella
- Bread Basket Restaurant
- Susan McConnell Photography
- The Catlow
- M.J. Miller & Co.

Artists

- Bobbie Puttrich
- Marg Rehnberg
- Cynthia Sloan
- Valerie Stanaszek
- Kaia Calhoun
- Donald Krause
- Steve Puttrich
- Bridget Mantasoot
- Donna Jung
- Ted Stanaszek
- Hyatt Moore
- Bruno Vanoudenhove