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APRIL 27, 2019

Exploring Religion Through Art at UW-Milwaukee

APRIL 1, 2015 BY SHANA WILSON

In room 154 of Mitchell Hall, the Art History Gallery currently features one of the largest collections held in the UWM Art Collection, the Reflections on a Collection, an exhibition that commemorates the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the Rogers Family Collection of Greek and Russian Christian icons to University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.



The exhibit's opening reception and gallery talk was led by its curator/UWM graduate student Laura Sims on Feb. 5. The exhibit examines a journey through the religious history of the mid-twentieth century through paintings, letters, and photographs of the people who made the collection possible.

The exhibit showcases 32 Greek and Russian icons, only a part of the collected artwork of Mr.

Lebo observing The Virgin and Christ Child (Hodegetria) painting from the 17th century.

Photo by Shana Wilson.

of the establishment of the University's Department of Art History, a major that has since then flourished within the UWM community.



Christ Pantokrator, a Greek painting from the 16th century. Photo by Shana Wilson.

Charles Bolles Bolles-Rogers over several decades. Donated by his children, UWM acquired the Orthodox icons 50 years ago, around the time

One 3rd year graduate student in UWM's Art History Department, Julie Lebo, spent her undergraduate years majoring in Communications (with an emphasis in Journalism) and minoring in her current program. As a gallery attendant, Lebo accommodates visitors and studies the featured artwork. As a part of her Master's Degree program, she chose Museum Studies and used a few pieces from the Reflections on a Collection to compose a separate exhibition with her class that focused on subsets of art in religion.

Once Lebo graduates, she hopes to work in an art gallery in a smaller city to encourage people to visit who would not otherwise see art due to their living and financial situations. "I think that everybody should have access to art regardless of whether or not you have money or you have the ability to go see it," Lebo says. "I also think that everybody should be able to make art regardless if you don't have the money. It is hard to think that you could be stifling the next Picasso or Da Vinci because they don't have the money to get art supplies."

Another 3rd year graduate in Art History, Jordan Severson, appreciates the curator's work with the exhibit.

"She (Sims) balances the elements of looking at the icons in a meaningful way and how they came to be here," Severson says, "I didn't even know we had that many icons in the collection."

Nora Jimenez, a 2nd year graduate student, also commends the curator's work.

"I like that she focused on the collection and the history behind it. It's different from the other exhibitors that have been in this gallery," Jimenez says. "We have art shows that speak to the viewer and an art historian's interpretation of the art. This collection brings more attention toward the actual art collector."

Exploring the exhibit, none of the artwork had a description of the artist on them.

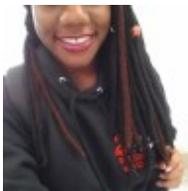
“The collector didn’t focus on the history of the works, but paid more attention to the aesthetics. He collected what spoke to him.” Jimenez, unlike Lebo, hopes to work in a bigger institution when she graduates.

Reflections on a Collection will be in the UWM Art History Gallery until March 12 and is available for viewing from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The next exhibit being featured will be Alfred von Wierusz-Kowalski: Political Struggle and Metaphor – A thesis exhibition by Marin Kniskern from March 23 to April 9, opening with a reception from 4:30-6:30 p.m. that is free and open to the public.

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