

North Dakota Museum of Art

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NORTH DAKOTA MUSEUM OF ART TO UNVEIL MARJORIE SCHLOSSMAN'S ROBERTS STREET CHAPLET PROJECT

Six small chapels are springing up amid the peonies and granite sculpture in the garden of the North Dakota Museum of Art. On Tuesday, August 1, at 7 pm the wrappings will come off and the public will be invited to enter. The project is the collaborative work of painter Marjorie Schlossman and architects Michael Burns, Joel Davy, Jef Foss, Richard Moorhead and sons Granger and Robert, Julie Rokke, and Philip Stah.

A New York jazz trio; string players from the Fargo Moorhead Symphony Orchestra; a second exhibition of paintings, architectural drawings, models and plans; and busses filled with Fargo art supporters will converge in the Museum Garden to celebrate the event. The public is invited to join the party.

Some might refer to it as "Fargo Night in Grand Forks" given that Schlossman and all principle architects are based in Fargo/Moorhead. That is, all except Richard Moorhead's sons, Granger and Robert, who work out of New York City, and David Wallace who built Jef Foss's project at his Warwick, ND, shop. Even though Schlossman's son Herb Ludwig tuned his Hawley, MN, farm into the assembly site, it is still Fargo Night in Grand Forks.

Over a year ago Schlossman decided to commission local Fargo architects to design small spiritual spaces that would serve as a locus for her art. The North Dakota Museum of Art agreed to help facilitate the project, named after Schlossman's first chapel on Roberts Street in Fargo. Because these little chapels are designed to be moved around the region, they soon became known as "Chaplets."

The New York jazz trio is another Fargo affair—once removed. Schlossman was named for her aunt, Marjorie Black, who married Gunther Schuller, one of America's most important twentieth century composers. Their sons Ed and George became jazz musicians. They will be joined by Nicole Kampgen Schuller on stage in the Museum Garden opening night, in North Dakota to celebrate their cousin's success. Ed will be on bass, Nicole on saxophone, and George on drums. The jazz musicians will take over the stage at 8 pm.

Individual string players from the Fargo/Moorhead Symphony will play *Unaccompanied* Bach during the unveiling ceremony. The Sextet will include Joan Covington, Candace Forres, Elise Hughley, Kelly Aus, Katelin Stanek and Haley Rydell.

Marjorie Schlossman commissioned these architects to create spaces that "inspire, comfort and delight the individual visitor." Once the building was complete, Schlossman made paintings in response to each structure, to the light, the viewing distance, the angles and materials, and the architectural references.

Inspiration came to the architects from many places. The Chaplet conceived by Richard Moorhead & Sons is based upon the Calistoga wagon used by settlers on their long treks west. Joel Davy's Chaplet suggests a modest farm building such as the corncrib interpreted through a Japanese aesthetic. Jef Foss's Chaplet reflects ever-present sails tacking across Minnesota's Pelican Lake

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where he has a summer home. Michael Burns, who believes that the spiritual is found in simplicity, combined darkened slatted-wood walls with translucent plastic panels to create a pool of glowing light for the central painting.

Julie Rokke has spent years thinking about what comprises a spiritual place. She and her comrades at YHR Partners, Ltd. have worked on over 100 churches. On Sunday, July 23, Rokke was in Brainerd, Minnesota, for a celebration at the start of construction of a new St. James Catholic Church. Nine days later she will be in Grand Forks for the unveiling of her Chaplet. Of all the churches she has worked on her favorite remains the Holy Spirit Church in St. Cloud. According to Rokke, "it is about light and it is just beautiful."

Drawing upon the iconography of Christianity for her Chaplet, Rokke designed a twelve-sided circle "surrounded with color, lit from above, and detailed within." Nine paintings and three doors flow around the interior space that is capped by a geodesic dome. Rokke suggests the title of a Lisel Mueller poem could be a theme for her project: "Monet Refuses the Operation." The modern-day "operation" referred to in the title would have corrected Monet's nearsightedness, which resulted in the blurring of the natural world into a mist of light and color in his late paintings. His way of painting what he saw soon became known worldwide as "Impressionism." The poem opens with the lines, " Doctor, you say there are no halos / around the streetlights in Paris / and what I see is an aberration / caused by old age, an affliction."

Philip Stahl's Chaplet is defined by its elegant roof, a long gradual curve with doors at either end. The visitor enters the long narrow confine, passes through panels of translucent plastic on one side, three paintings on the other. Ground underneath. Across from the painted panels is a spot to rest.

The artist gave the architects great freedom to develop their own concepts of what a chaplet might be. For example, the Moorhead father-and-sons collaboration is open to the sky with the artist's painting on the floor below.

Schlossman set a few parameters: Each architect needed to provide a surface for the artist to paint, either directly onto the structure or on stretched canvas that could be mounted. The structure needed to be small and lightweight enough to be broken down and reassembled, or moved intact, by two people. The materials needed to withstand North Dakota's extreme climate.

Schlossman consulted with North Dakota State University Professor Stuart Croll on technical aspects of making paintings to endure the North Dakota / Minnesota climate. She was fortunate to find in her own back yard this international expert who consults all over the world with such prestigious institutions as the Los Angeles Getty Museum.

Croll graduated in physics from the University of London before completing a doctorate in polymer physics at the University of Leeds. He joined the NDSU faculty in 2000. His research interests are concerned with the durability of polymers and coatings during weathering, film formation, colloidal suspensions, modern art conservation and nanoscale characterization of coating systems. He proved to be an ideal advisor to Schlossman.

This is the second time the Museum has collaborated with Marjorie Schlossman. In 2004 the Museum organized Schlossman's mid-career survey, her first significant exhibition since returning to North Dakota from California a dozen years earlier.

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According to Museum Director Laurel Reuter, "The North Dakota Museum of Art is committed to both the commission and exhibition of works of art by living artists. Not only does it infuse vitality into our regional art community, it enhances the growing body of art anchored in our own place and time."

The Roberts Street Chaplet Project will be on display in the North Dakota Museum of Art garden through Sunday, September 10. On September 17, it will open at West Acres in Fargo.

The North Dakota Museum of Art is the official art museum of the State of North Dakota. It is located on Centennial Drive in Grand Forks. Hours are weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekends from 11 to 5 p.m. The Museum Shop is open during these hours as well. Although the Museum does not charge an admission fee, the suggested donation is \$5 for adults and pocket change for children.