

Worship through art



DAVE SIGLER/Chronicle

It took four people to haul this large acrylic painting on plywood into the Garden Courtyard at St. Anne's Episcopal Church. While the painting is large, the scripture is obscured and not highly visible in the painting. Artist Tyler Clutter said "the whole idea of word and image together is a very incarnational concept. Whether you can read it or not, it's still there."

Local Christian artist works to express faith through visual medium

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Staff Writer

Artists create culture. They have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hands to make. The genius of Christian community is that all who belong are invited to participate, invited to bring their skills and their passions to contribute to the greater good.

— from Christians in the Visual Arts mission statement

For Tyrus Clutter, artist and assistant professor of visual art at the College of Central Florida, art and religion are not mutually exclusive of each other.

On the contrary.

When it comes to expressions of faith, "it's a different way of knowing," he said. "The same as with music or dance. We don't know just by words. It's also physical."

Clutter recently completed a mural, "I Come to the Garden Alone," of Jesus being comforted by an angel in the Garden of

Gethsemane.

Last week it was installed in the garden courtyard of St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Crystal River. Clutter, 39, attends services there.

Clutter, who often incorporates written words in his artwork by painting on top of book pages, said, "The whole idea of word and image together is a very incarnational concept. Whether you can read it or not, it's still there."

On his website, www.tyrusclutter.com, he writes: "The text here, though much of it will be obscured, is taken from the Anglican Book of Prayer — the liturgy for the Eucharist. That communal event is foundational to the life of the Church. The

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Tyrus Clutter painted an acrylic mural to occupy a prominent space in the St Anne's Episcopal Church Garden Courtyard. Clutter is the assistant professor of visual art at the College of Central Florida and a member of the Church.



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image will be obvious from a distance, but the inquisitive viewer will also find nuances within the text when viewing it closely. The combination of word and image is also a direct reference to Jesus himself — the Word made flesh.”

Also on the website is a video of the progress of Clutter’s mural, from preparing the 6-by-8-foot canvas to painting it.

He started it in September 2010 and finished it the end of February.

Prior to coming to Florida three years ago to be near family in the area, Clutter was the director at the nonprofit organization Christians in the Visual Arts at Gordon College in Massachusetts.

In its mission statement, the goal of CIVA members is to use visual arts to “help the church rehearse and remember the biblical story, help congregations

deepen times of personal devotion and prayer.”

Clutter said for him, painting is like prayer. “It’s personal, and it may be that as I’m working I’m grappling with things,” he said.

Although he grew up in an evangelical church, attended a Nazarene college and graduated from a Free Methodist college, over the years he was drawn to Anglican forms of worship.

“I went to an Anglo-Catholic church in Boston, and at the time I was there, there was a huge growth of twenty- and thirtysomethings that mostly grew up as evangelicals but loved that very liturgical, traditional style of worship,” he said. “Partly as I

progressed as an artist I was looking for traditions that were a little more accepting and encouraging of the visual arts.”

On the day the mural was installed, Harold Walker, the church’s junior warden in charge of the grounds, stood back and admired the painting.

“What’s incredible is the talented people we have at our church,” he said. “This is a great addition to the garden and something we will all enjoy.”

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