

EVENTS

What's Happening

- Fri, 19 Sep**
Computer Training
 more...
- Fri, 19 Sep**
Pi Sigma Alpha Voter Registration Table
 more...



More Events

Campus-Wide Events

Student Events

Museum Events & Exhibits

Admissions Events

[HOME](#) / [NEWS & EVENTS](#) / [Yager Museum Hosts Exhibit of Northern Ireland Murals](#)

News

Yager Museum Hosts Exhibit of Northern Ireland Murals

September 10, 2008

The Yager Museum of Art & Culture at Hartwick College will play host to a traveling exhibit called "From Protest to Peace: Murals by the Bogside Artists of Northern Ireland," which tells the tale of the region's ongoing "Troubles." The stunning exhibition of Northern Irish public art is travelling the United States for the first time, and is on display at the Yager Museum from September 4 through November 3, 2008.



The display includes 11 murals originally located on buildings along Rossville Street in the Northern Ireland city of Derry, which depict events from the recent troubled history of Northern Ireland. The murals have been digitally reproduced in large format, and they are exhibited with educational panels that explore the history depicted in each mural. Six additional banners build the context of the exhibition, covering topics such as "The Troubles," the Bogside Artists' reconciliation workshops, and the city of Derry's colonial past.

The original images of the murals were photographed by Martin Melaugh, research fellow at the University of Ulster, Magee campus, in Derry. The exhibit was created by the Georgia Southern University Museum in Statesboro, GA and was co-curated by faculty in the Center for Irish Studies and the University Honors Program.

"These spectacular murals provide firsthand insights into a complex conflict," said Howard Keeley, director of the University's Center for Irish Studies and a co-curator of the exhibition. "Visitors get a solid overview of Northern Ireland and its history and people. The dramatic artwork tells stories about social justice, sectarian strife, and visionary peace-making."

The murals depicted in the exhibition were created by three men, Tom Kelly, his brother William Kelly, and their friend, Kevin Hasson, known

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community as The Bogside Artists. The artists are also alcohol manufacturer, a farmer, a republican, and a committed Christian. All three have personally experienced the unfolding of "The Troubles" during their lifetimes.

In painting the murals, the men continued an Ulster (Northern Ireland) tradition of using murals as a vehicle for social commentary, but they have taken this tradition further. The Bogside Artists use their murals in cross-community workshops involving both Protestant and Catholic youth to initiate discussions focused on the history and context embedded in the murals. The art is used to revisit the past, but also to encourage participants to reflect on their history beyond traditionally established boundaries. The result is a grass-roots effort designed to help move the process of peace and reconciliation forward.

"In recognizing and acknowledging a troubled past, the images of the artists serve as healing instruments in the difficult reconciliation process," said Bob Frigo, assistant director of the University Honors Program and a co-curator of the exhibit. "What sets The Bogside Artists apart from other muralists in Northern Ireland is their use of the mural as a peace-building tool in local cross-community workshops."

The Yager Museum of Art & Culture at Hartwick College is open Tuesday through Saturday, noon to 4:30 p.m. Admission is free.

Hartwick College is a private liberal arts and sciences college of 1,480 students, located in Oneonta, NY in the northern foothills of the Catskill Mountains. Hartwick's expansive curriculum emphasizes connecting the classroom to the world. Through personalized teaching, collaborative research, a unique January Term, a wide range of internships, and limitless study-abroad opportunities, Hartwick ensures that students are prepared for the world ahead. Strong financial aid and scholarship programs keep a Hartwick education affordable.

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