Celebrating fifteen years

On February 14, 1993, the world’s first interfaith museum of contemporary art opened its doors. Fifteen years later, Saint Louis University’s Museum of Contemporary Religious Art (MOCRA) continues to serve as a forum for the ongoing dialogue between today’s artists and the major faith traditions. At this significant vantage point, MOCRA will present two fifteenth-anniversary exhibitions that draw on artists and artworks selected from the museum’s first 35 exhibitions.

Works set in dialogue

Our first anniversary exhibition, Pursuit of the Spirit, sets works by over 40 artists in dialogue with each other, exploring broad themes such as Sacred Spaces, The Sublime, Mother and Child, and Image and Text. Artists in the exhibition include:

Alvin Ailey  Seyed Alavi  Romare Bearden  Lore Bert  Frederick J. Brown  María Magdalena Campos-Pons  Junko Chodos  Jon Cournoyer  Michael David  Lewis deSoto  Sue Eisler  Robert Farber  Oskar Fischinger  Arshile Gorky  Steven Heilmer  Steven Holl


Opening reception  Sunday, September 21, 2008  1 – 4 P.M.

This exhibition is made possible in part by financial support from the Regional Arts Commission.
In a time when religion is a predominant topic in societies throughout the world—often generating more heat than light—MOCRA continues to foster dialogue that seeks deeper understanding of others’ traditions and greater appreciation of one’s own.

For over 35 years, the Fusz Memorial Chapel was used by Jesuits studying philosophy at Saint Louis University, but in 1990 the Jesuits relocated to smaller residences near the campus. In Spring 1991 Saint Louis University President Rev. Lawrence Biondi, S.J., gave permission to Rev. Terrence Dempsey, S.J., to adapt the chapel for use as a museum devoted to the presentation of contemporary religious Art. A thoughtful renovation made the chapel a suitable and noteworthy space for displaying art while honoring the original purpose and architecture of the building.

Since then, the museum has mounted 35 exhibitions involving more than 160 artists. MOCRA’s exhibitions have demonstrated the range of contemporary religious and spiritual artistic expression, presenting the work of artists who have attained recognition regionally, nationally, and internationally. Some work overtly pays homage to particular faith traditions while other works are more oblique but nonetheless spiritual. The media employed have varied from traditional painting, drawing, and prints to unusual materials such as blood, earth, mylar, and helium.

Exhibitions at MOCRA have been enhanced by numerous conferences, lectures, and performances involving major theologians, visual artists, art historians, museum directors and curators, doctors, lawyers, philosophers, psychologists, choreographers, and musicians.