



Art that heals the world displayed in Vail

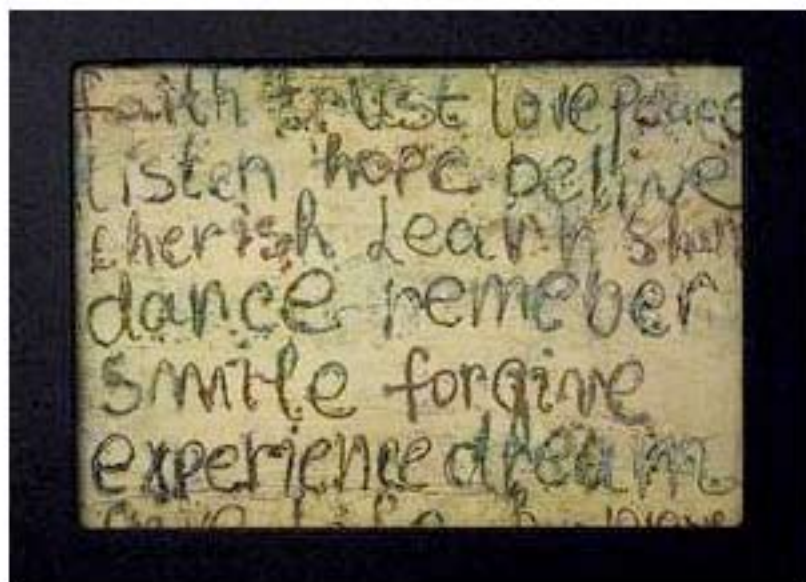
Tikkun Olam, a new art exhibit at the Vail Interfaith Chapel, brings truths together

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This Tikkun Olam panel is part of a display from Denver's Mizel Museum currently on display at the Vail Interfaith Chapel.

Kristin Anderson/Vail Daily



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Tikkun Olam pieces line a wall in the Vail Interfaith Chapel on Thursday as the Tikkun Olam committee, left, has a meeting.

Kristin Anderson/Vail Daily

VAIL, Colorado – For one Sudanese woman living in Denver, Tikkun Olam – the name of an art exhibit now on display in Vail, Colorado – means peace in her war-torn homeland.

On the day the woman became a U.S. citizen, she participated in a public art project focused on Tikkun Olam, which in Hebrew means repair the world. On a panel the woman drew simple figures of women with baskets on their heads and children next to them – a picture of life in her village before the war, before she became a refugee.

Her brother wrote "Stop the war in Africa, in Sudan, in Darfur, and help the people of Darfur, especially the women and the children" next to the drawings in Arabic. She couldn't write it herself because women weren't allowed to learn how to read and write, she told the artist behind the project, Christy Honingman.

"It just illustrated to me the range of how people responded to what healing the world meant," Honingman said. "To some people it meant healing this world here in the U.S. and making a greener environment, for other people it was much more global, like stopping a war."

The traveling exhibit, which was originally commissioned by the Mazel Museum in Denver, is on display at the Vail Interfaith Chapel through mid September. B'Nai Vail, the Vail Religious Foundation and the town of Vail partnered to bring the exhibit to town.

Twelve, 7-foot tall columns with five panels on each line the walls of the north wing of the chapel. It's the first time the chapel has hosted an art exhibit, said Leslie Fordham, the executive director of Vail's Art in Public Places program.

'Everyone was telling a story'

A total of 54 people from 27 countries participated in the project, which debuted at the Denver Public Library in 2007.

Contributors were not professional artists, but individuals from all walks of life. With a map and pins in hand, Honingman attended events like World Refugee Day searching for participants.

"I'd ask people, 'where are you from?' They'd point to a country and I'd say, 'well, we don't have anyone from that country.' Suddenly, in dozens of languages, everyone was telling a story," she said.

continued



Art that heals the world displayed in Vail *continued*

'Everyone was telling a story'

For people who spoke little to no English, it didn't take long for people to come up with their idea of world repair, Honingman said.

"There were a couple of people who drew the world, who drew the United States and one who even drew the statue of liberty," Honingman said during a phone interview from Boston, where she's vacationing. "For them, just being in America was repairing their world."

Our neighbors

When B'Nai Vail Rabbi Debra Rappaport first heard the name of the exhibit, Tikkum Olam, it appealed to her, mainly because of the history of the two words and how they evolved into a phrase about healing the world.

"Kabbalah mystics told a creation story about God wanting to create the universe and putting God's life force into it," Rappaport said. "God's life force was so big, the original vessel shattered so there is sparks of God's light everywhere."

"So as humans, our work is to bring up those sparks of light. By thinking about the message of respecting and loving differences and teaching tolerance, we're lifting up those sparks."

The power of the exhibit lies in its ability to spur conversation, she said.

"There's something about artistic expression that touches us at a more profound level than the intellect," Rappaport said. "I love having it in the chapel here because so many religious extremists think that only they're right. And what we celebrate here is that we all have pieces of truth and there's room for lots of different truths."

For Honingman, the exhibit may have sprung from a deep sense of sadness, but in the end her feelings have come full circle, "to a true sense of hope," she said.

"It conveys that we are much more like our neighbors than we are different," she said. "People asked me if I traveled around the world to create this exhibit and I say, no, these are people who live in our community, these are people from the greater Denver area. These are our neighbors."

If you go ...

What: Tikkun Olam: Repairing the World art exhibit

Where: In the north wing of The Vail Interfaith Chapel, 9 Vail Road, Vail

When: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., weekdays through mid September

Artist reception: Meet the artist, Christy Honigman, on Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Vail Interfaith Chapel

Cost: Free

More information: Call B'Nai Vail at 970-477-2992 or visit www.mizelmuseum.org

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