



Afghan Woman Shedding Burka

Brushstroke Stories: Human Rights Painting Project Depicts Global Leaders

THE 27 COLORFUL, RICHLy TEXTURED CANVASES of artist Tom Block's series *Human Rights Painting Project* sent a strong and timely message to the Jasper community at an opening reception in February. The series of paintings, on display until May in the Alumni Room of the O'Malley Library, depict men and women who have raised awareness of human rights abuses in their countries.

At the reception, Block delivered an illustrated lecture *Artist as Shaman in an Age of Uncertainty*. A shaman is believed to be able to foretell the future through communication with good and evil spirits, a relationship that the artist explores in his paintings. His portraits of lawyers, writers, students and labor union leaders juxtapose the goodness of their work against the violence and corruption of oppressive government regimes.

"The series of works that he [Block] does on various subjects are apropos to Manhattan College because they deal with spirituality and human rights and goodness in the world," says Amy Surak, the College's archivist. She met Block, a member of Amnesty International, at the Peace and Justice Studies Association's 2006 conference held on Manhattan's campus, which is where they first discussed the idea of an exhibit.

Each painting, paired with a short bio, serves as a mini history les-

son. Up close, they appear to be wild splatters of every color of paint on Block's palette, but step back, and the lush brushstrokes form the exaggerated figures of his larger-than-life subjects. Most of his portraits are individuals, such as his red, pink and magenta striped rendering of *Jacqueline Moudeina* of Chad. She became a prominent human rights lawyer four decades after her father was poisoned to death with a potion made from lion saliva because he refused to join in government politics.

Block also groups single countries into one human composite. His *Algerian Villager* signifies the more than 100,000 people, including many innocent civilians, caught in the fray of warring groups. Another bold canvas, *Afghan Woman Shedding Burka*, depicts a woman in a sea of red, green, violet, yellow and orange burkas, a tribute to the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan. The members of this group, started in 1977, smuggled cameras under their burkas to snap pictures of Taliban abuses, such as public executions and floggings, which they posted on their Web site for the world to see.

From rural villages to big cities, the stories behind Block's paintings connect people from all over the world. Like their subjects, the paintings rally for change and offer a powerful conduit for conversation on human rights.

ROTC Cadets Honored

TWO CADETS FROM THE AIR FORCE ROTC's Major William V. Holohan Squadron of the Arnold Air Society at Manhattan College were recognized with national awards. Cadet Matt Krauss '07, a mechanical engineering major, was awarded the 2007 H.H. Arnold Sabre as the outstanding area commander of the year. Cadet Mateusz Caryk '07, an economics major, was awarded the Arnold Air Letter Trophy for authoring the most outstanding article of the year, which was featured in *The Arnold Air Letter – Newsletter of the Arnold Air Society*. Both are currently active duty Air Force pilot trainees.

The Arnold Air Society is a professional, honorary service organization whose mission is to provide Air Force officer candidates with opportunities to interact among collegiate level officer candidates, as well as to encourage increased communication with Air Force officers and leaders; to exercise leadership, organizational and public relations skills; and to participate in campus and community service activities.



Mateusz Caryk '07



Matt Krauss '07