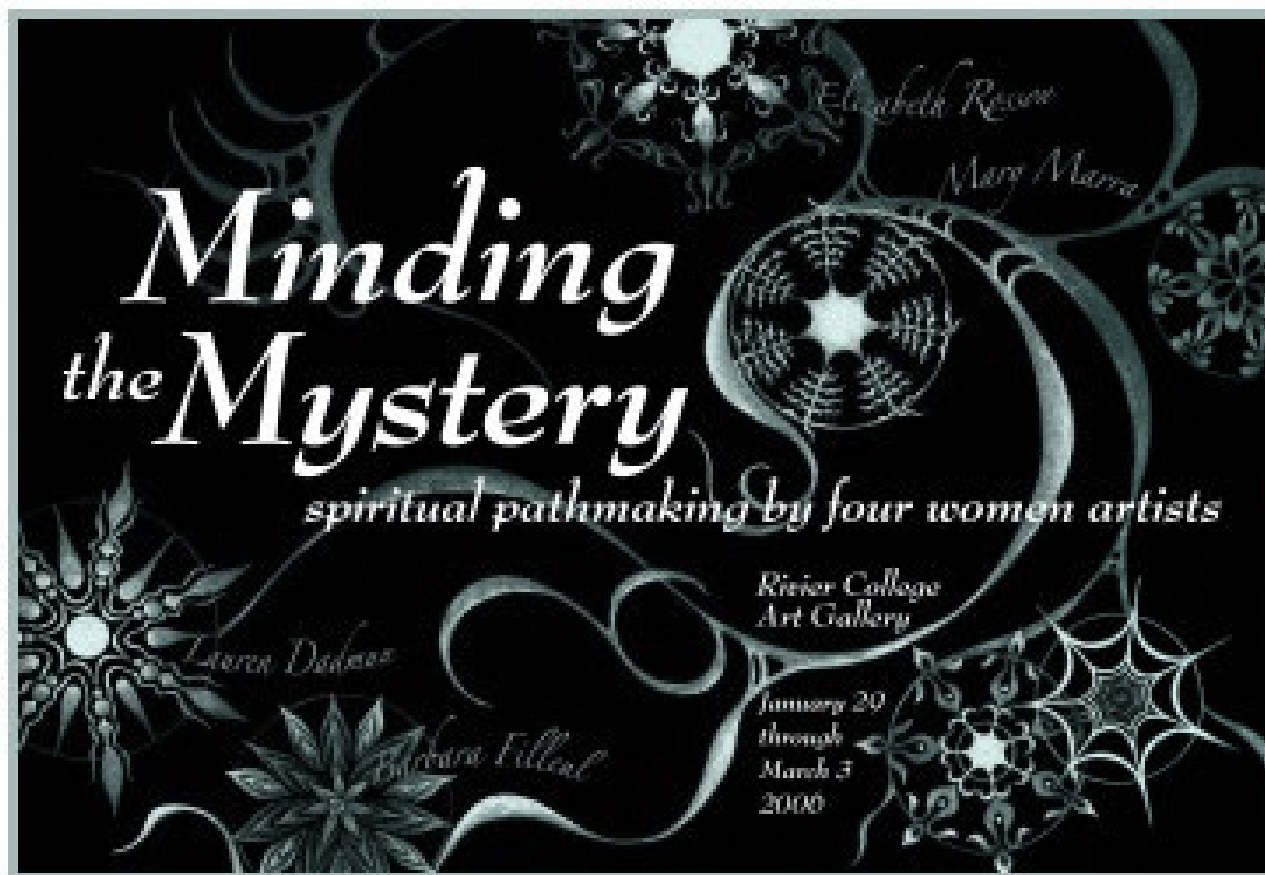


RIVIER COLLEGE ART GALLERY (SPRING 2006)

Sr. Theresa Couture, M.F.A., D.Min.,*
Director, Rivier College Art Gallery

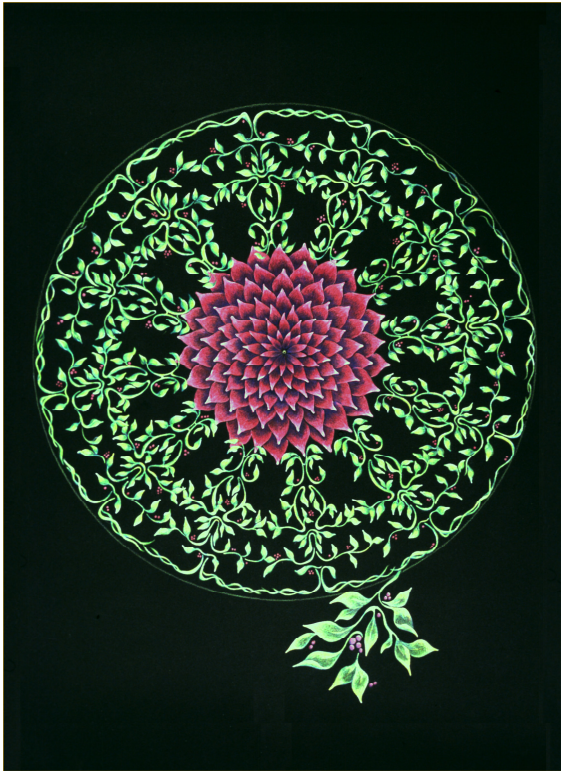


Minding the Mystery

Spiritual Pathmaking by Four Women Artists

January 29-March 3, 2006

Why this foursome? Some years ago Elizabeth Rosson, artist and spiritual director, invited participants in her art and spirituality retreats to join her each month for a day of meditating with art at her home studio in Nashua, New Hampshire. Fifteen women responded and over a period of about ten years became regular attendees. Though the group is no longer intact, the four women in this exhibition, diverse as they are in artistic background, continue to represent its original ethos. It is in recognition of the integrity with which they repeatedly supported one another along a path where art and spirituality can merge that they were invited to exhibit together at the Rivier College Art Gallery.



Elizabeth Rosson
MANDALA
Colored pencil on black paper. n.d.
(Courtesy Photo)



Barbara Filleul
FIRE TWISTER HILL
Monotype. n.d.
(Courtesy Photo)

From the beginning a typical Saturday gathering of the group started with such amenities as coffee and homemade pastries over which the women shared ideas and insights. After this they retreated to individual studio spaces for a morning of making art as an exercise in meditation. An intentionally healthy lunch was followed by more quiet time for personal studio work and meditation. Toward the end of the day the group gathered once again to dialogue about what they had individually experienced throughout the process of the day's creating and reflecting.

Over time not only did close bonds form amongst the participants, but also, out of the rhythm of the monthly gatherings, art became a means by which each of the women recognized more fully that she was developing, in her own unique way, a cherished intimacy with divine mystery. Art became for them a distinctively conscious pathway to the divine; inversely, that which is most profoundly sacred, from both within the self and without, became foundationally integrated into their varied artistic explorations.

What seemed to most definitively unify the work presented in this exhibition, then, was a shared desire to unabashedly re-interpret and re-energize spiritual themes in art. This may have no more than a faint resonance within a society reluctant to address the divine in concrete form. Yet, paradoxically, it pays homage to a simultaneous clear-sightedness within contemporary culture about the accessibility of the *grand mystery*, that is, the presence of God, if only in glimpses or quick moments of heightened awareness. Against a dense background of contrasting familiarity, ordinariness, and self-sufficiency, any art emerging from such persisting conviction is perhaps capable of exuding enough energy to move the estranged, the jaded, and ultimately the spiritually fragmented viewer. Examining the content of the Gallery's initial 2006 exhibition, one might have sensed that a carefully and even protectively hidden

reality was about to be revealed and that for the moment the invitation was simply to respond with a sort of *in-between* of emotion in addition to an easier intellectual curiosity about what it might be.

Built upon symbols, which suggest a mixture of personal aesthetic and universal mysticism, the inherent messages were characteristically subliminal, barely discernable to the beholder. In a world generally more accosting in approach, more fraught with disruptions and agitations, and consequently a place where it is difficult to find an inner place of sustained contemplation or prayer, *Minding the Mystery* asked us to concentrate. It attested to the potential in us for seeing into ourselves and thereby for re-structuring the mystical now. Together, the pieces acknowledged our sometimes felt experience of a richly variegated world and, teasing us into an intensified though oblique awareness of the ineffable, possibly even opened new pathways into specific beliefs and their accompanying iconographies.

OTHER EXHIBITIONS (SPRING 2006)

March 20 – April 21, 2006 (closed April 13-17)

“Bread Upon the Waters: Pursuing the Art of Generosity”

An invitational and juried exhibition of prints and drawings presented by the Printmakers Network of Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA)

April 30 – May 5, 2006

Annual Senior Art Student Exhibition

Gallery Hours: Monday-Thursday 11-4, 6-8:30; Friday 11-4; Saturdays and Sundays by appointment.

Please consult the Gallery website for updates and new information: <http://www.rivier.edu/rcadsite/2ADGal.htm>

For further information, call: Sr. Theresa Couture, Gallery Director for 2004-2005, at X8275
or the Office of the Department of Art and Music at X8276.

* **Sr. THERESA COUTURE** is an artist in digital and combined media. She received her M.F.A. from Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island; D.Min. in Theology and the Arts from Graduate Theological Foundation, South Bend, Indiana (partially coordinated with studies at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California and the Andover Newton Theological School, Newton, MA); and M.A. and B.A. in English from Rivier College. Theresa Couture combines an active studio life with a full professorship in art at Rivier College, a Catholic liberal arts institution sponsored by the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary of which she is a member. She has served as Co-chair of the Department of Art and Music and Director of the Design Program. She is currently Director of the Rivier College Art Gallery. Her work on paper has been exhibited throughout the United States. Many of her pieces are in private and university collections as well as in the collections of the Armand Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, California, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. Her work has appeared in *Art New England*, *Christianity and the Arts*, *Insight*, *Face of the Deep*, and publications of Christians in the Visual Arts (CIVA).