

Press Release January 2024

St. John's Church Hartford presents CREATED, an immersive community-led installation.

CREATED expresses the beauty of creation, and as we are made in the image of the Creator God, we too are creative.

The exhibition draws on the creativity of Hartford's congregation and wider community and sees some eighty unstretched painted canvasses hanging in the nave of the church. Each canvas is the collective or individual effort of children, teenagers and adults from in and around the parish, and was made in a series of workshops over Summer 2023. Given the initial brief *flora*, participants united in common practice given identical blank canvasses and the same watercolour paints, pastels and aquarel crayons. There is a core focus on inclusivity here, that we are all equal in the sight of God, we are all His children – though we express this creativity differently. Diverse, yet all share in the creativity of a bounteously creative God. Opening the first week of March, the audience will see the result of many months of activity, but the exhibition purpose had its genesis in these workshops.

Many workshop participants responded with a surprised joy, and were given confidence to overcome personal prejudices regarding their own creativity. This experiential element acts as a foil to the material, visual installation on display. Experience (that is, mental memory) meets the visual (the combined aesthetic of the canvas hangings) in strong embrace.

CREATED has come to mean an exhibition in two phases, therefore. The material in making set the precedent for new significance and purpose anticipating the exhibition.

This second phase is an Eden-like evocation of a garden. Sound, sense, sight, touch and smell are all present. The canvas hangings in situ are a multi-sensory installation which mirror nature's beauty.

There is a tactile aspect to these raw, ripped canvas hangings; viewers are encouraged to move through and touch the works by wandering through the space. Such humble materials physically confront the viewer, they spin and sway responding to movement, symbolizing creation in motion and our delicate world, anchored by Jesus' enduring hope and grace.

The heart of this exhibition lies in unique collaborative process, embracing diversity and transcending skill to emphasize raw artistic expression. The project underscores art as a means to unite the community, fostering camaraderie and celebrating the creative spirit.

CREATED; 01.03.24 – 07.03.24. Open Daily, free admission 2.00 – 7.00pm; St John's Church, Hartford CW8 1NP; stjohnshartford.org

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CREATED expresses the beauty of creation, and as we are made in the image of the Creator God, we too are creative. An exhibition that will see over eighty raw, unstretched canvas paintings – made by Hartford community - hanging in the central space of St. John's Hartford. These hangings were made during Summer 2023 in a collaborative creative spirit. Significantly, these workshops strengthened bonds across relationships but also promoted creativity.

The installation embraces a sensory Eden-like experience, mirroring nature's diverse beauty and fallibility. Although flowers fade and die, the Word of God is steadfast and gives hope to all.

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