

Lenore Tolegian Hughes  
lenorehughes.com  
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Art Exhibit: **The Light That Never Goes Out**

From the beginning of my 45-year career as an artist, I have focused on finding new meanings for the big questions in life by combining classic divine images with contemporary secular pop images. My “paper weavings” uncover new ways of thinking about metaphysical and theological concepts through the process of weaving two seemingly disparate images together. The Super Hero pieces depicted in this exhibition are the result of such weavings. In them, unexpected revelations, unique to each viewer, enrich the human spirit in search of inspiration and enlightenment. The same purpose inspired this entire exhibit, The Light That Never Goes Out—to reveal new meanings that might show the way to deeper spiritual awareness through the joining of seemingly unconnected mediums.

Candle wax has long been associated with daily life and ceremonial rituals. The same candles we arrange on birthday cakes for the making of a wish were used, in ancient days, to light the way in the dark, to illuminate the pageantry of Roman processions, to shine a light on the darkness in homes, to read by before the discovery of electricity. The church has used candles in religious services for centuries. The light from the candles provides a metaphor, God being the light of the world, and light overcoming darkness in the soul.

The spiritual illumination of mystics is at the center of the ceremonies in the church of the first nation to accept Christianity in 301 A.D., the Armenian Orthodox Apostolic Church, into which I was born. The richness of the pageantry and rituals during the service of the Divine Liturgy is still practiced in its original form today in the Armenian Church throughout the world. During the service, every person has an individual response to the icons, the outward expressions of mystical meanings. The Vessels of Grace in this exhibit are intended to evoke similar individual responses to the mysteries that may be seen in them.

In the Vessels of Grace, candle wax enfolds images of the Holy Mother of God, simultaneously concealing and revealing. Mysteries unfold as wax both clouds the images and reveals their essence, the holiness at the core. Possessing one of these vessels provides a focus for meditation. Our minds and hearts are one and single focused as they uncover and contemplate the holy images. Mary becomes the container for all our worries and concerns. And when the lights are dimmed, her everlasting light shines through the darkness protecting us from harm. Using black-light flashlights provided for this purpose, hidden surprises are exposed.

The watercolor/mixed media painting of St. Hildegard, b. 1058, patron Saint of Creativity--musicians, artists, writers, etc.--expresses my admiration for her extraordinary mystical powers she used for the good of humankind. Her holistic teachings, writings, music, astronomy, botany and art to this day address almost every part of human existence. After researching all she accomplished in her lifetime to illuminate the mysteries of the natural world for the good of all mankind, I'm sure she is Mother Earth Revealed.

Two more watercolor paintings—Enchanted and Heart Full of Passion, are both painted with watercolor and gold dust and lead the way into the light.

Holy Presence, a metal scone infused with candles and religious medals dangling from wire stars and flowers, and other symbols of nature and faith, I consider to be one of the highlights of my artistic achievements. That may be because in composing it I incorporated well-used holy medals given to me by devout believers to add to incorporate into the scone. Each time I contemplate and enter into its mysteries, I experience anew a Holy Presence of mesmerizing beauty. The entire scone is saturated with the earnest prayers of people clinging to their medals and rosaries offering prayers of thanksgiving, beseeching and pleading, from deep down within their souls.

I created the paper maché, Grotto La Virgen de Los Migrantes, after “seeing” Mary’s outline in the inner shell of an avocado. I created her with Castilian red roses at her feet, a jeweled halo-crown, and a resplendent rosary, holding out *esperanza*, hope, for all. She is a testimony to the men and women migrant workers spread all across the fertile lands of California, who work the fields daily, planting and harvesting our life-giving produce, the avocado among them.

The Mother and Child Pomegranate Grotto paper maché depicts the infant Jesus and Mother Mary enfolded into the center of a pomegranate. For centuries, and continuing into today, the ruby red, seed filled pomegranate symbolizes fertility, the promise of eternal life, good fortune and prosperity for many cultures, especially in the Middle East. It is said that the fruit in the biblical creation story in the Garden of Eden was not an apple but a pomegranate.

