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Laura van Duren Creates Art to Share

By Andrea A. Firth



Laura van Duren's Truth Scope

Photo Michael van Duren

The centerpiece of artist Laura van Duren's Not for Sale exhibit at the Mercury 20 Gallery in Oakland is an interactive installation called the Truth Scope. "I love the idea of creating art that people can interact with, that they can touch," says van Duren. The five-tier, funnel-like structure, which hangs from the gallery ceiling, is made of welded steel and covered with pages carefully selected from antique books about personal and political conflict. Van Duren was inspired to

create the interactive sculpture after hearing a presentation at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church (MVPC) by the founder of Not for Sale, a campaign devoted to ending human trafficking and slavery.

"The cause resonates with me in a personal way," says van Duren, who grew up with domestic violence and her own experience of fear, threats, and forms of entrapment. She invites exhibit-goers to step inside the scope and help her to complete the sculpture. Chalk is

provided for the viewer to share what he or she would like to be freed from by writing on the inside of the scope. Illuminated from the skylight above with birds that van Duren created in molds and resin suspended overhead as if in flight, the relatively small space inside the scope is evocative of the wide-open spaces in nature.

"This is the biggest thing I have ever made," says van Duren, who sculpted in clay for 20 years before venturing into welding. The Truth Scope took 12 hours to install and required a 17-foot long truck to transport it from her home-based studio in Lafayette. Van Duren also created a series of collage boxes for the exhibit that are displayed on the gallery walls. The recurrent use of cages, ladders, birds, and branches in the collages and scope provide the imagery for the themes of freedom, safety, and escape, says the artist.

"I'm constantly seeking what I can use from the environment for my art," says the self-described scavenger of the suburban landfill, who regularly collects branches and other natural materials from her yard to supplement her art supplies. "And I'm a big believer in the concept of reuse," adds van Duren, who often shops for clothes at Lafayette's Wayside Inn Thrift Shop.

Van Duren has lived with husband Michael and their three children (ages 22, 20 and 16) in Lafayette for 12 years and likes to share her art with the community, especially with young people. She

recently traveled to Peru with a group from the MVPC to help with the construction of a childcare center. She planned to teach art to the Peruvian children and work with the other young people on the trip to paint a mural on the inside walls of the center. Van Duren shipped boxes of art supplies to the location in advance. When the supplies never arrived, she scoured the remote village for paint. Only able to find white house paint, the resourceful artist mixed the colors herself and was able to complete the mural. "I'm definitely going back," says van Duren, who enjoys social justice work and sees service as part of her role as an artist.

20% of the sales from van



Artist Laura van Duren constructing the Truth Scope Photo Michael van Duren

Duren's exhibit will be donated to Not for Sale. The exhibit will run at the Mercury 20 Gallery through September 25th, for more information go to www.mercurytwenty.com.

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GRAND MASTER WEI-CHUEH VISITS THE U.S. IN OCTOBER AND JOINS US IN THE CELEBRATION OF BUDDHA GATE MONASTERY'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

Ten years ago, Grand Master Wei-Chueh, the founding abbot of Chung Tai Chan Monastery, adhering to his compassionate vow to enlighten all beings, sent five monks to establish Buddha Gate, the first overseas branch of Chung Tai Chan Monastery. This October, in celebration of Buddha Gate's tenth anniversary, the Grand Master will visit the monastery where he planted the seeds of enlightenment ten years ago.

It is with great joy and deep gratitude that we anticipate the Grand Master's forthcoming visit. We invite everyone to join us in participating in this momentous and auspicious event.

During his visit, Grand Master Wei-Chueh will preside over the Eight Precepts ceremony and transmit the Three Refuges and Five Precepts. We will dedicate the merits from observing the pure precepts toward peace and harmony in the world and for all sentient beings. These merits, derived from our pure practice, will be our best gift gleaned from celebrating Buddha Gate's tenth anniversary and are a means of offering our gratitude to the Buddha.

For the past ten years, the Dharma Masters at Buddha Gate Monastery have devoted themselves to helping

others to understand the wonderful truths of Buddhism, attain peace and purity of mind, and walk the path to enlightenment. They have offered free weekly meditation classes, conducted monthly Dharma ceremonies and special workshops in Buddhist concepts, as well as meditation retreats, senior retreats, children's classes and summer camps. Buddha Gate has also participated in community outreach programs such as blood drives, vegetarian food drives, and disaster relief. Both Buddhists and non-Buddhists have benefited tremendously from the programs at Buddha Gate.

Looking toward the future, we hope that more people will come to discover the truths of Buddhism, that all will learn to walk the Bodhi Path by practicing the six perfections of giving, precepts, tolerance, diligence, meditation, and prajna wisdom and thereby come to realize their intrinsic pure nature. It is the fervent hope of all those at Buddha Gate that Buddhists will deepen their practice and non-Buddhists will have the opportunity to embrace the Buddha's teachings. We will continue to practice unceasingly to fulfill the Grand Master's compassionate vow- "The mind is pure, the land is pure. The mind is peaceful, the world is peaceful."

Following is the itinerary:

Oct 1 (Fri.) 7:00 pm - Chung Tai Zen Center of Sunnyvale
Dharma lecture and Three Refuges Transmission Ceremony

Oct 2 (Sat.) 10:00 am - Buddha Gate Monastery in Lafayette
In celebration of the 10th Anniversary of Buddha Gate Monastery Grand Master will transmit the Eight Prohibitory and Fasting Precepts. (Full Registration)

Oct 3 (Sun.) 10:30 am - Buddha Gate Monastery in Lafayette
Three Refuges and Five Precepts Transmission Ceremony (Please contact Buddha Gate Monastery for registration.)

Oct 8 (Fri.) 7:00 pm - Chung Tai Zen Center of Houston in Texas
Dharma lecture, Three Refuges and Five Precepts Transmission Ceremony

Oct 9 (Sat.) 10:00 am - Texas Pagoda Chan Monastery in Shepherd, Texas
At the site of the future Chung Tai International Retreat Center Opening Purification and Consecration Ceremony

Oct 10 (Sun.) 1:00 pm - Middle Land Chan Monastery in Pomona (Southern California)
Opening Purification and Consecration Ceremony

*If you want to attend the ceremonies, please contact the monastery for more information.



Free meditation classes will start at the mid of October.

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"To be liberated is not to escape from difficulties; it is to use the power of wisdom and samādhi to eliminate the obstacles present. That is liberation."

—Grand Master Wei-Chueh's Dharma Dews



Buddha Gate Monastery