

By Elizabeth S. Peña

The NEW Center for the Arts & Religion at the GTU



Picturing things, taking a view, is what makes us human; art is making sense and giving shape to that sense. It is like the religious search for God.

—Gerhard Richter

The arts—literature, dance, music, and the visual arts—enhance religious experience and evoke transcendence. Artistic expression often provides common ground for scholars and practitioners representing a wide variety of faith traditions. In the classroom the arts offer entry into complex concepts and philosophies. These are just a few of the reasons why the Center for the Arts & Religion (CARE) is happy to be making its new home at the Graduate Theological Union as a new GTU academic center.

CARE's connection to the GTU has a long history, as the Center for the Arts & Religion (formerly the Center for the Arts, Religion, and Education) has been housed at Pacific School of Religion since its founding as an independent nonprofit in 1987. But CARE and the GTU recently decided the time was right for the GTU to incorporate the Center for the Arts & Religion as an integrated program unit. GTU President Riess Potterveld explains, "The interface of the arts and religion is a central component in the curriculum of the GTU's MA and PhD degree programs, its Centers, and the professional degree programs of many member schools. Now that CARE is placed in the very center of the GTU, faculty, students, and the public will be enriched by the stimulating resources and learning opportunities CARE provides each year."

The transition brings with it some exciting changes, including the relocating of CARE's gallery and offices to the GTU's Le Conte Building. Those who recall the old GTU bookstore will find that space has been redesigned—and that's where you'll find the new Doug Adams Gallery as well as the offices for the Center for the Arts & Religion. "Having CARE and the Doug Adams Gallery in the Le Conte Building strengthens the heart of the GTU," notes Kathleen Kook, Dean of Students. "It gives students the chance to think about creative expression as well as scholarship, and creates a more vibrant community for all."

Dr. Munir Jiwa, Director of the Center for Islamic Studies and a member of CARE's Advisory Board, celebrates the welcoming of CARE as a program of the GTU: "CARE plays a critical role in advancing the arts

“Talking about contemporary art and religion in the same breath is taboo at most art institutions. It is encouraged and taken seriously at the Center for the Arts & Religion. As a fully integrated academic program of the GTU, with a beautiful new gallery in North Berkeley, CARE is poised to become a vital arts center in the East Bay.”

*—Alla Efimova, CARE advisory board member,
founder and principal of KunstWorks*



and artists in the context of the GTU’s rich diversity of religious traditions and cultures, and serves as an important place for aesthetic encounters much needed in the world today. I am delighted that CARE is now an academic program unit of the GTU, and even more delighted to serve on the advisory board.”

CARE’s move to the GTU comes with the gift of a \$5.8 million endowment. Those funds will continue to sustain the Center for the Arts & Religion, supporting the Doug Adams Gallery, courses in the arts and religion, and student and faculty grants, as well as music, dance, studio art, and other specialty programs. President Potterveld notes, “We anticipate that these considerable financial assets will empower cutting-edge programs and courses in the arts and religion each year. With this generous gift the endowment of the GTU has surpassed \$40 million for the first time.”

For CARE, becoming a GTU academic center means a sharper focus on mission rather than management. It means better connections across the GTU, expanded outreach, and a bigger role within the GTU community. Joining the GTU will enhance CARE’s grant-seeking and fundraising, in collaboration with other academic centers and colleagues across the consortium.

The mission of the Center for the Arts & Religion, “to promote scholarship, reflection, and practice in the arts and religion to serve the GTU and to benefit the community,” remains the same. CARE works toward this mission in several ways.

CARE presents exhibitions, public programs, and lectures. The exhibitions connect visual art to spirituality, and provide a background for creative programming designed for both the GTU audience and the broader community. For example, in coordination with a spring 2017 exhibition on Islamic art, CARE will revive the Dillenberger Lecture Series. GTU students will take on leadership roles in this project under the direction of CARE/PSR Associate Professor of Art and Religion, Dr. Rossitza Schroeder.

Seeking to provide courses the GTU could not otherwise offer, CARE presents the GTU’s only studio

art courses, as well as specialized classes in dance, museum studies, theater, and other fields. This intersession (January 2017), CARE will experiment with a poetry workshop, “Writing our Faiths,” open to both GTU students and community members.

CARE offers modest grants to GTU students and faculty to support arts-related research, projects, and activities. In addition, faculty are eligible to apply for arts enrichment grants, and students for a writing prize. Award winners are invited to present on their projects at one of the monthly “Brown Bag Lunch” presentations in the Doug Adams Gallery, or to blog about their work for the CARE website (www.care-gtu.edu). As GTU PhD student Yohana Junker explains, “CARE is a place of convergence for the arts, for people to rethink and critically engage with the arts, and to tease out the implications of doing and interpreting the arts and religion.” Junker notes that CARE’s growing partnerships with Bay Area groups such as the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and the Berkeley Center for the Study of Religion foster opportunities for student participation.

The Doug Adams Gallery is also the site for informal events including class visits, student gatherings, book launches, and even a monthly yoga-in-the-gallery hour!

While the focus of CARE’s work is unchanged, you may notice the shift in the name, as the Center for the Arts, Religion, and Education will now be known as the Center for the Arts & Religion. The new acronym, CARE, reflects both change and continuity, with new lettering echoing the new name, Center for the Arts & Religion.

This new phase in CARE’s work builds on the efforts of many others. CARE was founded in 1987 by PSR Professor Doug Adams. A much beloved teacher and charismatic leader, Doug’s vision was to promote the integration of the arts into worship and practice. He built CARE into a vibrant organization thanks to his personal appeal and his fundraising skills, which were matched by his own generosity.

After Doug passed away in 2007, CARE’s



(left) Artist Nicholas Coley in conversation with Eduardo Faustino and GTU PhD Student Hannah Pheasant Faustino; (upper right) GTU PhD candidate Colette Walker enjoys the exhibition; (lower right) Rich Smith (CARe Board, PSR alumnus), Marianne Lettieri (CARe guest artist), Carol Bier (GTU/CIS visiting scholar), and Joan Carter (founding CARe Board member) at the opening reception. Photos by Peg Skorpinski

continuity was ensured through the admirable efforts of CARE's Board of Trustees. They hired Carin Jacobs as Executive Director; not only did Carin provide crucial leadership in Doug's absence, but in 2009, she opened the Doug Adams Gallery in his memory. The Doug Adams Gallery was at home at the Pacific School of Religion's Holbrook Building, sharing the majestic former library space with PSR's Badè Museum of Biblical Archaeology.

The Doug Adams Gallery continued to grow following Carin's departure in 2013, becoming a center for student events and public programs, as well as exhibitions. Brown bag lunchtime presentations became a monthly feature, artists' talks were presented, and studio art classes were set up in the Gallery.

While CARE continued to thrive, in 2016, the CARE Board of Trustees agreed that the financial and administrative challenges of maintaining independent nonprofit status detracted from the organization's

ability to work toward its mission. Discussions with the GTU showed the way forward; joining the GTU would allow CARE to concentrate on programs, courses, and events, leaving administrative and management concerns to the GTU.

Rev. David Howell, outgoing CARE Board President (PSR MA '98, MDiv '01), summarized, "Doug Adams transformed the way so many of us do ministry through his teaching and his passion for the arts. His legacy lives on in CARe, and I am thrilled that we are strengthening our ties to the GTU to ensure that future generations of students will have even greater access and opportunities in the arts."

Throughout its history, CARE has been committed to the GTU consortium. CARE's new status as a GTU academic center will forge even stronger connections, facilitating communication and fostering collaboration. Dr. Kathryn Barush, Assistant Professor of Art History and Religion at the GTU

and the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University, notes, "Providing students with contextual learning opportunities is imperative in art historical education. With CARe as an academic program unit physically located right on the GTU campus, exploration of religious art up-close and in person is possible from semester to semester, allowing students to have a close look at objects as well as to hear directly from the artists and curators that bring these high-quality exhibitions to fruition."

The first exhibition in the new Doug Adams Gallery is "The Hermitage of Landscape: Works by Nicholas Coley." These luminous landscape paintings will be on display through December 9. CARE first learned of Nick Coley's work through an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, in which Coley described standing in the middle of a forest to paint, and feeling the presence of God. Showing these paintings in the Doug Adams Gallery provides

CTNS Turns 35— and Becomes a GTU Program!

the opportunity to think about the connections between nature and spirituality. In early October the gallery hosted a panel discussion on spiritual ecology, moderated by GTU President Riess Potterveld, and featuring GTU colleagues Cynthia Moe-Lobeda (PLTS/CDSP), Rita Sherma (CDS), and Devin Zuber (CSS). On November 3, CARE will present a musical perspective on nature and spirituality, thanks to the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble. All are invited to these free events.

In the spring semester, Dr. Carol Bier, visiting scholar at the GTU's Center for Islamic Studies, will serve as guest curator for "Reverberating Echoes: Contemporary Art Inspired by Traditional Islamic Art." This exhibition, on display in the Doug Adams Gallery from January 31 to May 26, will feature seven artists from across the United States who work in media ranging from textiles to 3-D printing. In addition to demonstrating the richness of Islamic visual heritage, this exhibition will offer multiple opportunities for discussion and reflection. Of special note is the March 15 Dillenberger Lecture, featuring Dr. Alicia Walker from Bryn Mawr College speaking on the significance of Arabic motifs in medieval Christian art and architecture.

With exhibitions like these, along with compelling programming, interesting courses, and other creative activities in the new Doug Adam Gallery, the Center for the Arts & Religion is delighted to take its place in the GTU family, helping create meaningful arts experiences for GTU students, faculty, staff, and the wider community.

Elizabeth S. Peña is director of the GTU's Center for the Arts & Religion and the Doug Adams Gallery.

On Tuesday, October 18, the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences (CTNS) celebrated its 35th anniversary—and its new beginning as an internal program of the GTU. CTNS became a GTU program unit earlier this year, after a long and successful history as an independent nonprofit affiliated with the GTU. The October 18th celebration featured a retrospective by CTNS Director Robert Russell touching on the major facets of CTNS's eventful history, as well as words of encouragement from current and former CTNS staff, students, and colleagues.

The GTU and the CTNS Board of Directors began pursuing the possibility of CTNS joining the GTU as an internal program unit several years ago. This was done with recognition of the deep consonance between the two institutions, and in an effort to secure a permanent home for the Ian G. Barbour Chair in Theology and Science and the rest of the CTNS program. The Ian Barbour Chair was established by CTNS ten years ago, beginning with \$1 million Ian gave to CTNS from his 1999 Templeton Prize.

In December 2015, the CTNS Board transferred to the GTU the Barbour Chair as well as its two endowment funds: the Russell Family Fellowship in Religion and Science and the Charles H. Townes Graduate Student Fellowship. The combined gift was worth approximately \$2.1 million. Then, in May 2016, CTNS transferred the journal *Theology and Science* as well as other CTNS programming to the GTU.

GTU President Riess Potterveld celebrated the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences becoming a permanent part of the GTU: "Since its founding, CTNS has brought to the world stage issues integral to the discourse in science and religion, and it has been breaking new ground through its innovative research, teaching, and contributions to the public conversation. We are delighted to welcome the Center into a new and even more vital relationship as a program and an integral part of the Graduate Theological Union."

Already enjoying the benefits of its new relationship with the GTU, CTNS is looking ahead to a future of exciting programming, scholarship, and publications at the forefront of the conversation between theology and the natural sciences, as well as the continuing fruits of the now permanent Barbour Chair in Theology and Science at the GTU.



GTU doctoral students Austen Eikenberry and Daekyung Jung with CTNS Director Bob Russell during a recent GTU doctoral seminar on "Christian Theology and Natural Science."