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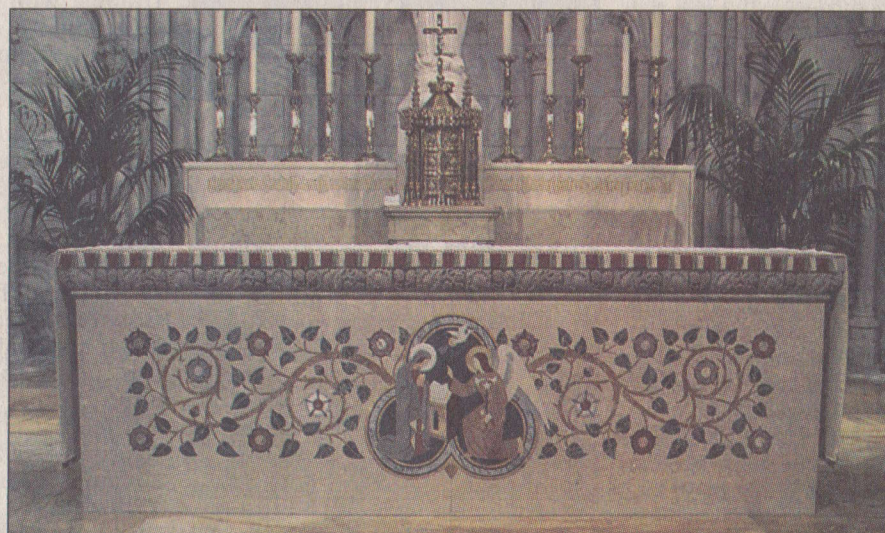
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Detail of the Drama plaque at Radio City.



Hildreth Meière's work can be seen on this altar frontal at St. Patrick's Cathedral.



Detail of the Song plaque at Radio City.

Icon of her time

Work by Art Deco muralist to be displayed in Greenwich

BY CAMILLA A. HERRERA

STAFF WRITER

Art Deco muralist and mosaicist Hildreth Meière was once recognized as a contemporary of modernists Georgia O'Keefe and Isabel Bishop.

"The diversity of the work she did — the sketches,



The Dance, Drama and Song plaques on the exterior of Radio City Music Hall.

the murals, the mosaics, the windows, the decorative art — is unique to her," says her daughter Louise Dunn, who owns Our World Gallery, site of the weekend and summer home in Stamford where her mother kept a studio from 1944 until her death in 1961.

"It was not only her work, but the variety of sites where her work is displayed for everyone to see," adds Hilly Dunn, Meière's granddaughter. "She was an amazing woman in a man's world. She was an icon of the 1920s and 1930s."

Beginning Jan. 7, studies from Dunn's private collection and photographs of Meière's work around the country will be shown at Cora E. McLaughlin Art Gallery at Convent of the Sacred Heart in Greenwich.

These give insight to the breadth of her work on public view in churches, public buildings, ships and architectural landmarks across the country, including Sacred Heart, where Dunn, her daughter and granddaughters attended school.

"Not only was Hildreth Meière an outstanding woman artist of her time, but she also is a role model for young women today," says Joan Magnetti, the school's headmistress, pointing out that Meière, her mother and grandmother are also graduates of Sacred Heart schools in New York and Missouri.

Meière designed the passport awarded by the 21 Sacred Heart schools in the United States to its graduating seniors, and in 1946, gave the Greenwich school a Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph woodcarving she designed. It is displayed in the lobby of the science building.

"We are delighted that our students who are studying history, theology, ethics, government and art will have an opportunity to integrate the lessons to be learned from Hildreth Meière's art and contributions to our society," adds Magnetti.

Among the exhibited works are two studies and a photograph of what is arguably Meière's most recognized work, the 1933 Song, Dance and Drama plaques that adorn the exterior of Radio City Music Hall in New York City. "Few know she designed them," says Louise Dunn during a recent lecture and slide show about the artist at her Erskine Road gallery.

Also on view are the studies — "Indian War Party," "Sacred Heart Council," "Equestrian Buffalo Hunt," "Creative Energy" — of Meière's designs for the ceilings, domes, vaults, floors and tapestries at the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln, a 1924-1929 commission.

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Contributed photos

A study for "Century of Progress" 1933-34 Chicago World's Fair. Each section was about 30 feet long.

"Hildreth's commissions for the Capitol included designing for different mediums: mosaic, ceramic, tapestry and leather," says Dunn, while showing slides of the building's entrances, foyers, vestibules, corridors and chambers, a commission landed with the help of the Capitol's architect, Bertram Goodhue.

"The floors were executed in marble mosaic, the ceilings in ceramic tile."

A photograph of Meière's 1928 designs for the dome, pendentives and soffit arches at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C., another Goodhue project, will accompany the exhibited images at Sacred Heart.

Dunn refers to her mother's written recollections of that time: "My mother was not a known name in the architectural world, and the planners at the National Academy in Washington, D.C., said, 'Hildreth Meière? Never heard of her.' Goodhue replied, 'Haven't you heard? She is doing all the work at the Nebraska State Capitol.'"

"At the Nebraska State Capitol, they said they'd never heard of Hildreth Meière. 'You haven't?' said Goodhue. 'She is designing the Dome at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington.'"

Dunn quotes from another of Meière's journals: "Having begun at the top with the National Academy of Sciences and the Nebraska State Capitol, the long list of commissions, well over a hundred, have come of themselves."

Among those commissions are the 1928 Narthex dome and The Transfiguration apse mosaics and four stained glass windows — Magnificat (1928), Gloria in Excelsis (1929), Nunc Dimittis (1955), Benedicite (1956) — at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City.

"At the same time that Hildreth was designing the (early) mosaics for St. Bartholomew's, she was designing the mosaics for Temple Emanu-El," says Dunn. "Both commissions were fabricated in Berlin, Germany."

The 1929 mosaics at Temple Emanu-El in New York City surround the main

sanctuary and decorate the doors to the Ark.

Other notable Meière works are the 1931 mosaic-walled Red and Gold Banking Room at One Wall Street in Lower Manhattan; the 60-foot "Progress of Women" mural for the Century of Progress World's Fair in Chicago in 1933; the 1934 Shrine of Remembrance at St. Thomas Church in New York City, the 1942 marble altar frontal at the Lady Chapel of St. Patrick's Cathedral and the 1951 mosaics for the Chapel of the Resurrection at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

The Sacred Heart exhibit marks the latest effort by The International Hildreth Meière Association — in the midst of planning a major exhibit of Meière's work at New York's St. Bonaventure University in September 2009 — to promote Meière's legacy. She served as president of the National Society of Mural Painters and the Liturgical Arts Society, first vice president of the Architectural League of New York, director of the Municipal Arts Society and associate of the

National Academy of Design.

Meière was also the first woman on the New York City Art Commission, and in 1956, the first woman honored with The Fine Arts Medal of the American Institute of Architects. Based on her journal entries, Meière preferred her work, not her gender, to be recognized.

Dunn quotes from her mother's journals: "I realize that my breaking into a man's world is what gives me any news value, but just the same, I'd rather have it said that I was one of the twenty-one artists to win the Gold Medal in Mural Decoration of the Architectural League than that I was one of the two women to have it. That would have been true had I been the only woman."

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Studies and photographs of mosaics, murals and other decorative art by Art Deco artist Hildreth Meière will be shown at Cora E. McLaughlin Art Gallery at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, 1177 King St., Greenwich, Jan. 7 through Feb. 22. Free. Open during school hours. 531-6500.