

By the Hand of Man and Nature:
New Quilts and Watercolors by Kate Graves

A series of large-scale watercolors of the trunks of trees and mandala-inspired quilts in saturated hues are the latest explorations into luminous color and harmonic design by artist Kate Graves, which will be on exhibit in the ground floor exhibition space at Capital Health in Trenton.

The show "By the Hand of Man and Nature" will be on display at Capital Health's Mercer Campus at 446 Bellevue Avenue in Trenton from March 8 to April 16, 2010. A public reception will be held on Sunday, March 14, from 3:00 to 5:00.

A professional sculptor based in Bucks County who has completed numerous area commissions, Graves has also been actively making quilts and watercolors since she was a teenager growing up in Santa Barbara, California. Her keen powers of observation serve her well in these creative mediums. Sixteen recent watercolors hone in on the wizened, expressive trunks of interesting trees, and an instinct for vibrant color and vivid prints has guided her in her lifelong collection of selected fabrics, which she recombines in mesmerizing new ways in her quilts.

"Trees are carbon blueprints of light," says Graves. "They also embody the effects of their environments, and what has been exacted upon them by both man and nature."

In her portraits of aging trees, often verging on abstraction, Graves strives not so much for absolute realism but rather to capture the emotional weight and time-scarred presence of these sentinels of nature. Each is painted entirely from life, which requires multiple sittings in the tree's environment. Building these paintings slowly over time allows the layers of pigment to bloom and settle, creating a complex and sculptural rendition that reveals the perceived character of the tree.

The fabrics Graves collects for her quilts have been created by cultures throughout the world, full of nature-inspired images and patterns. Using only 100 percent cotton, Graves reworks this material into new configurations, indicating the interstices of universal human experience and spirituality in these heartfelt creations which are machine washable and intended for daily use.

For more information on Kate Graves and her show of new quilts and watercolors, contact the artist at graves@snip.net.