

Saint Louis University Museum of Art to Present What Is Christ, a Limited Exhibition Exploring Ignatian Spirituality

by Maggie Rotermund

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ST. LOUIS – The Saint Louis University Museum of Art (**SLUMA**) will present a new, limited exhibition by **Nick Leeper, S.J.** <<https://www.jesuits.org/profiles/nicholas-leeper/>>, a Jesuit scholastic and graduate student in philosophy at Saint Louis University.

“What Is Christ,” a collection of Leeper’s paintings and sculptures, opens Friday, May 3, and will run through Sunday, May 26.

The works in the exhibition encourage the viewer to see God through secular items.

“The heart of Ignatian spirituality is using one’s imagination,” Leeper said. “Art is a mode to engage that. We should be prepared to use our imagination to have an encounter with God.”

The pieces in the exhibition – four oil paintings and four sculptures of wood and plaster – came out of Leeper’s capstone project. As he was writing about philosophy in art and religion, he thought he should also create works that demonstrated what he was writing about.

“I was looking at the intersection of philosophy and art through a Jesuit lens,” Leeper said.

Artists, including El Greco and Manet, portray Christ through phenomena such as light and color. Leeper’s work examines how secular objects can reveal more deeply who Christ



Nick Leeper, S.J. Photo by Maggie Rotermund.

is.

“The exhibition is about encountering God in ordinary objects,” he said. “Theatre, art, movies, songs – they give us more than just the words or what we see. Art inspires the imagination.”

See more of Leeper’s work <<https://www.nkleepersj.com/>>

Leeper began working on the pieces last summer while at an art school in New York and continued to develop the pieces when he returned to SLU in the fall.

Leeper, who belongs to the Jesuits USA East Province, will graduate from SLU this month and return to New York City to teach art and history at Xavier High School. During his time at SLU, he’s helped run Java with the Jesuits and was part of the team that expanded the regular coffee sessions to include six retreats this year.

Leeper has a bachelor’s degree in history and education from Rutgers University-Newark and a master’s in church management at Villanova University.

There will be an opening reception from 6-8 p.m. Friday, May 3, at SLUMA, located at 3663 Lindell Blvd. SLUMA is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday-Sunday.

About SLUMA

Opened in 2003, the Saint Louis University Museum of Art (SLUMA) is located in a Beaux Arts style building, originally built in 1900 for the Saint Louis Club. Saint Louis University’s collection, which dates back to the University’s early days, continues the Jesuit philosophy of focusing on educating the whole person. SLUMA represents a critical step in realizing the University’s mission, advancing St. Ignatius’ ideals, as well as increasing the overall exposure of society to the arts. Distinguished by its Jesuit-based tradition, the museum developed into one of the nation’s top university museums.