

*Nashville, Tenn.* - The biblical "Seven Days of Creation" are being glorified in a Jacquard loomed tapestry to be permanently displayed in The Temple - Congregation Ohabai Shalom, Nashville's oldest and largest Jewish reform congregation.

The Temple commissioned Laurie Gross Studios of Santa Barbara, Ca., an award winning, internationally recognized leader in the production of spiritually based artwork, to create seven paneled Judaic tapestries for its sanctuary choir wall.

A dedication ceremony of the tapestries will be held on Friday, April 11, 2008 at 8 p.m. during The Temple's Shabbat services where co-designers Laurie Gross and Susan Jordan will discuss the artistic processes and religious symbolisms used in the tapestries, entitled "Seven Days of Creation."

The ceremony will also recognize the Zeitlin - Averbuch Families for donating the needed funds for the tapestry project, a gift made in memory of their beloved Martin Zeitlin, a noted Middle Tennessee real estate developer and home builder, who passed away in September 2005.

"Our family wanted to create a special and different tribute in memory of Martin," says his wife, Shirley Zeitlin. "Our family was taken back when we saw how beautiful the tapestries would be from viewing the initial drawings. It was at that point that we all realized and agreed that we would support this tapestry project to honor Martin's life. Now, our grandchildren, future generations and the entire congregation will enjoy this beautiful art for years to come."

Measuring a total of 30 feet in width and 10 feet in height, the textile panels are hung side-by-side to collectively tell a story of the seven days of creation, notes Betty Lee Rosen, chair of The Temple's Beautification Committee which was responsible for its production and completion, along with rabbinical guidance from The Temple's Rabbi Mark Schiftan. The tapestries are hung reading from right to left as Hebrew is traditionally read with day one of creation on the far right and the seventh day of creation on the far left.

"A giant Torah scroll was used to connect the whole imagery and to highlight the Hebrew scripture, 'The name of G-d, and it was good,'" says Mrs. Rosen. "The artwork is vibrant, spiritually moving and comforting; it has a sense of flow, making you think of music when you look at it."

The production process for the tapestries took one year to complete. First, the artists did extensive Judaic research and obtained feedback and guidance from Rabbi Schiftan and the seven-member Beautification Committee and the Zeitlin family.

"As artists, we are further inspired by biblical text, Midrashic material and Jewish tradition, creating work that embodies universal themes, rich in metaphors," says Gross. The artists further depicted conceptual drawings and actual weaved samples to pinpoint color and weave effects for the committee's review.

The artists used electronically controlled Jacquard weaving, a fairly new process of movement established by The Jacquard Center of Hendersonville, North Carolina in 2000, an art center that collaborates with skilled artists and designers in the product development and production of weaved fabrics. The tapestries were woven on a commercial Jacquard loom at The Oriole Mill in Hendersonville, North Carolina using high-end threads of 100 percent cotton with 85 colors in all. The mill spent over 300 hours in the tapestries' production. Both artists spent months hand embroidering to embellish the tapestries and its colors.

Mrs. Rosen notes that the congregants of The Temple have a deep appreciation for art and are dedicated to the beautification of its building. "You will find several fine works of art throughout our temple and inside its sanctuaries," says Mrs. Rosen. "With each commissioned work of art we embark upon, we strive for it to be very purposeful and full of content. This particular piece had a challenge because it had to be compatible and

The Temple's full appreciation of art is further exemplified in organizing its annual juried Temple Arts Festival which is open to the community. For the past three years, the Temple Arts Festival has delighted the Nashville arts community with extraordinary exhibitors of distinctive collectible art for sale by a host of master artists and craftsmen from around the United States and abroad, with its efforts earning The Temple national acclaim. This year's Fourth Annual Temple Arts Festival is scheduled for April 5-6, 2008, just five days before the tapestries' dedication.

The Temple did a major renovation of its facilities in 2000 using funds raised from its capital campaign. "The choir area was always slotted for artwork, but there were not enough funds at that time to complete the artwork we envisioned for the main sanctuary," says Mrs. Rosen. "Time has passed since then and it took the generosity of the Shirley Zeitlin Family to make the funding of this project possible." The artwork behind the choir area now completes the beautification of The Temple's sanctuary.

The tapestry artists Laurie Gross and Susan Jordan also designed the chapel's arc doors and Torah covers. "They were familiar with our project," says Mrs. Rosen, "and have a gift for making art that our congregation admires, so it was natural for us to commission them once again."

"The joy of making art for both spiritual and public environments is getting to know each community and together problem solving the needs for their specific project," says Ms. Jordan. "With The Temple, their issue was the need for acoustical artwork within their choir area that, at the same time, would complement the sacred space and add a religious theme of importance to the congregation."

"The result is a unique piece of Judaic artwork that looks both like a 3,000-year-old tapestry passed down from synagogue to synagogue as well as a modern work of art," says Rabbi Schiffan. "It is one of a kind and reflects our congregation and its Judaic beginnings."

Contributing members of the Zeitlin – Averbuch Families who donated funds to support the “Seven Days of Creation” tapestries in memory of Martin Zeitlin included: his wife, Shirley; his sons, Manuel and Janice Zeitlin, Bruce and Beth Zeitlin, and Jeff Zeitlin; his brother, Barry and Linda Zeitlin; Shirley’s brothers, Jerry and Arlene Averbuch, and Larry and Sandy Averbuch; and Shirley’s mother, Juliet Averbuch.

Members of The Temple’s Beautification Committee are: Betty Lee Rosen, chair; Royce Fishel; Jenny Lewis; Harriet Schifftan; Sy Trachtman and Lisa Shmerling.

not compete with the other works of art in the sanctuary and had to make a statement of its own.”

The Temple, Congregation Ohabai Sholom, [www.templenashville.org](http://www.templenashville.org), is Nashville, Tenn.’s oldest and largest Jewish reform congregation. Its congregation services the Middle Tennessee region, including Davidson and Williamson Counties. To arrange for a specially guided group tour of The Temple’s artwork, contact Administrator Mitzie Reynolds at [info@templenashville.org](mailto:info@templenashville.org).