

# Artist's work right at home in church

By Nicole D'Amore

Correspondent

Lee Hodges has found the perfect venue for her biblically themed artwork — a church.

She will celebrate the grand opening of the Art Gallery of Grace and Lee Hodges Studio from 3 to 7 p.m. Saturday, the day before Easter, in Blair Hall at Grace Church, 1560 E. Main St., Ventura.

Hodges has been a member of Grace Church for 20 years, but never realized there was a door to Blair Hall, which had formerly been used as a nursery, right on Main Street. For the past year, she had worked and exhibited at the Ventura Healing Rooms, which recently moved to a new location, and she was looking for a space closer to the downtown cultural district. She made a proposal to Pastor Tracy Cook and the board of deacons and received an endorsement of her plan to use the space as a dedication to God.

"The church provided the space, and the rest was up to us," Hodges said. She and her husband, Bill, and friends set to work, revamping the

## ARTISTIC TOUCH

ceiling, putting in track lighting, ceramic tile, even a tiled bench under the window and a coat of fresh paint.

"I am all about color, he is all about construction," she said of her husband. "We work well together." She selected neutral colors as a background for the artwork.

Her mixed media pieces are intended to intrigue viewers, causing them to reflect on eternal truths while enjoying the beauty of the piece, she said.

Most of her pieces include a cruciform as a prominent feature. It might be the first thing you see, or something you notice only after close examination of the painting.

"A Scene of Heaven" done in a gold and bronze background, includes trees, people and buildings with broken CD pieces adding an aqua iridescence.

"It's my visual interpretation of Revelation 22," Hodges said. The piece won first place, peoples' choice and Jury of Your Peers awards at the recent 70th annual Art and Photography

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Lee Hodges

Exhibit at the Blanchard Library in Santa Paula.

Awards are nothing new to Hodges. In 2004, she took first place, peoples' choice and best of show as well as the Douglas Shively Memorial Award of Excellence at the Santa Paula show. In 2005, she received the first City of Ventura Mayor's Arts Award for Arts Leader. She was the gallery director for the Buena Ventura Art Association for 15 years.

Hodges is excited about her new space.

"This is my working studio as well as a gallery," she said. She plans to work from noon to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and will have workshops.

A long table in the center of the room already has pieces in progress. Along the walls are carefully labeled boxes containing paints, brushes, handmade papers, rubber stamps she has

purchased and stamps she has made.

"One stamp gives a papyrus effect," she said. She takes photographs wherever she goes and incorporates them into her paintings. There are photos of animals, stairways, machines, architecture and angel designs, actors in a religious play. She prints scripture messages on special paper on the computer.

"The word of God is embedded in the painting," she said. "That is what gives it the power."

The pieces often evolve as she works on them.

"I will have a basic color scheme and will meditate on a certain scripture," she said. One thing will remind her of something else.

"Interesting things happen, and you just respond to them," she said.

Hodges grew up on an orange ranch in the San

Joaquin Valley.

"I met the Lord when I was 10," she said. Her family was not religious, but she discovered Christianity at a backyard vacation Bible school. She sort of fell away during the "turbulent teen years," she said, but started going back to church when she was about 25.

"I tried to bring together my passions, my love for art and love for the Lord," she said.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at UC Santa Barbara and has taken extensive art workshops and classes.

She started doing the mixed media pieces about 12 years ago.

"I started winning awards, and I loved doing it," she said. "I think my niche was given to me by God."

Hodges will participate in the Focus on the Masters Ventura Studio Artists Tour May 18-20.

Her work can be seen on her Web site: <http://www.LeeHodgesArt.com>.

— To recommend an artist to be profiled in this section, contact Nicole D'Amore at [Artprofiles@roadrunner.com](mailto:Artprofiles@roadrunner.com) or 405-0364.



Lee Hodges with some of her biblically inspired art in her new gallery in Blair Hall at Grace Church in Ventura. "I am all about color," she said. Nicole D'Amore / Special to The Star