



ST. CATHERINE  
UNIVERSITY

## War is Always With Us offers an empathetic look at veterans and mental illness



*Hospital Hallway* by David Byrd, 1992, oil on canvas

The Catherine G. Murphy Gallery at St. Catherine University presents *War is Always With Us* by David Byrd. The exhibition runs November 2–December 18, and is free and open to the public.

Byrd was a night orderly from 1958–88 in the psychiatric ward of the Veterans Administration Medical Hospital in Montrose, New York. The paintings selected for St. Kate's show were inspired by his experience at the VA. This series of paintings illustrate the daily routines and individual personalities of institutionalized veterans. Byrd's careful compositions reflect the isolation and desperation of mental illness, which few other artists have explored with such empathy and understanding.

Byrd was a prolific painter, particularly after his retirement, and almost went undiscovered. A neighbor stumbled upon Byrd's work, and introduced him to the art world in 2013. His first exhibition, "Introduction: A Life of Observation," opened days before Byrd was diagnosed with advanced lung cancer. He died shortly after the show closed at age 87.

"From time to time you hear of undiscovered artists; this is the first time I've been directly involved with one," says Kathleen Daniels, director of the Catherine G. Murphy Gallery. "While David Byrd may not have been well-known during his lifetime, I suspect he will long be remembered for the legacy he has left behind. I am extremely excited and privileged to be introducing his work!"

An Artist Reception will be held Saturday, November 7, 6–8 p.m. The reception includes a talk by Jody Isaacson, the neighbor who discovered Byrd, at 7 p.m. Isaacson's exhibition [\*Form & Memory\*](#) is running concurrently with *War is Always With Us*.

**Gallery hours:**

Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–8 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday, noon–6 p.m.

Oct. 15, 2015 by Sharon Rolenc