

## Atelier Omiros opens in Bedford Village

By JESS FASANO

Curator Marlene Saile is sitting in her new Bedford Village studio before a selection of paintings depicting the holy stories of the Byzantine. The icons, which delicately marry abstract and figurative art techniques, feature Christ, Mary, angels and saints. The prolific artist who created them, known as Omiros, has seemingly managed to capture the religious expression of the Eastern Roman Empire more than 500 years after it fell.

Now, nearly a decade after his death in 2010, Ms. Saile has dedicated a space on Court Road called Atelier Omiros in tribute to the enigmatic painter. According to Ms. Saile, who is the executive director of the studio and lives in Bedford Village, her intent is for others to know the self-taught artist and feel the enormity of his work.

"He was a prodigy in his own right," Ms. Saile said in an interview at the studio last Tuesday.

While first a fan of his work, Ms. Saile ultimately became a friend of the artist after meeting him at her wedding. Her husband, Peter Saile, a venture capitalist who started collecting art during adulthood, began representing Omiros in the 1990s.

Ms. Saile, who studied art history, explained that the painter was born Omiros Chrisopoulos in 1927 in Istanbul, a Greek minority and an Orthodox Christian who started creating art as a child. She noted he spent several decades in Paris, France, where he experimented with various painting styles, and settled in New York City by the end of the 1990s. Omiros painted a variety of subjects, including mythology, sports, fashion as well as nature, among others, according to Ms. Saile. His work has been shown at various notable



JESS FASANO PHOTO

**Marlene Saile, curator and executive director of Atelier Omiros, admires a Byzantine style painting by Omiros included in the studio's current exhibition.**

*'He was a prodigy in his own right.'*

— MARLENE SAILE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ATELIER OMIROS  
ON THE ARTIST OMIROS

galleries throughout Europe.

"I don't think there could ever be an artist that could do what he's done," Ms. Saile said.

She explained that she is both "fascinated and taken" with Omiros' work, and admires the sincerity and sheer magnitude of his technique. Ms. Saile added that the artist was known to work on several paintings at the same time in his studio.

Despite classifying him herself as a modern master painter, Ms. Saile noted that Omiros was humble in his work.

"It wasn't about him being known," she said. "It was about him being a conduit [for] this amazing creation."

Ms. Saile plans to showcase

different eras of Omiros' work at the studio over the course of various exhibitions, beginning with his Byzantine period. She noted that the exhibitions would not be possible without the support and blessing of the artist's family, his two sons, Paul and Emmanuel Hriso, as well as his granddaughters, Ambre and Chloe Hriso.

Next month, Ms. Saile plans to present Pope Francis with an Omiros painting of a Madonna with hopes to possibly exhibit some of the artist's Byzantine style paintings somewhere at the Vatican.

Also in January, Ms. Saile aims to open La Galleria, a space next door to Atelier Omiros for showcasing the



IMAGE COURTESY ATELIER OMIROS

**Omiros, 1980, 'Cleansing the Temple,' acrylic on silk.**

work of contemporary artists, local and beyond.

The public is invited to view the inaugural exhibition at Atelier Omiros, located at 11-15 Court Road, Bedford, while enjoying champagne and hors d'oeuvres tomorrow, Saturday, Dec. 15, from 6 to 9 p.m.

The current Byzantine exhibit will be on view until March.

The studio is open to visitors Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., as well as Monday through Thursday by appointment only. To make an appointment, call 764-2223.