

The Barnstable Patriot

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No one who remembers September 11, 2001, will ever forget either the preternaturally blue sky of that morning, nor the horror that came out of that sky.

No one will ever make sense of the hatred and violence that was unleashed on our nation that day, a pestilence that continues to torture more, not less, of the world.

But God bless the arts. They keep trying to distill that day into images and words, not only to remember it and certainly not at all to make sense of it. The arts deal with 9/11 simply because it exists, simply because it will outlast the memories of billions of people then and now alive, and after we die, it will pass into the perception of generations yet to come. Each bit of art contributes a tiny thread of the collective experience.

The arts give us little bits of information about the unspeakable cruelty and cowardice of 9/11 and also about the unimaginable courage and commitment we witnessed that day. Nearly 15 years later, an encounter with 9/11 can still sting our eyes with tears.

So it will be at the Cotuit Center for the Arts (CCftA) through April 10, when the center will present the world premiere of "Unsafe," a play about one Manhattan family during a blizzard in 2003. After its run here, the play moves to the Plaza Theatre at the Boston Center for the Arts, April 15-30.

Unsafe, by Jim Dalglish, was a semifinalist at the 2008 National Playwrights Conference and was presented as a reading at CCftA in 2015. The author describes it as "a play about the flimsy barricades we all build and the fantasies we fabricate to keep this terrifying new world at bay – a world that through our arrogance, neglect, and self-deception, we helped create."

CCftA executive director David Kuehn said that it's "huge" that the work of Dalglish, a Cape playwright, is going to Boston. "This is a goal come true," said Kuehn.

In Cotuit, playgoers will have a bonus that won't travel to Boston: an open juried art show on the theme, "Unsafe: Life After 9/11." Participating artists chose photography, poetry, sculpture and a variety of other media to recall the impact of the day. One artist even invites viewers to touch – "gently" – a work made mostly of blue sequins.

Browsing through the exhibit, which is hung in the upstairs gallery, one can find facts one didn't know. Ten thousand children lost a parent on 9/11. The Salvation Army, in setting up relief kitchens, bought food from local restaurants in order to help them get back in business after the tragedy.

A couple of artists explore the persistence of social problems in post-9/11 American society. The painting "Islamophobia" by Joyce K. Groemmer depicts a dark-skinned couple, she in headscarf, sitting in a subway car, staring ahead as their white neighbors stare at them. In "Hands Up Don't Shoot" by Claudia Smith-Jacobs, the face of a young black male, painted in the style of a religious icon, is framed in a gun's crosshairs.

A sculpture of a pair of blood-red stiletto shoes by Bob Burdick includes, in their insteps, an image of the World Trade Center and an American flag in one, and broken glass in the other.

A long written piece by Joyce Ng, who was staying in a Marriott Hotel in one of the towers that day, reflects on the odd and awkward things people have said to her, either if they know of her experience or if they just observe her pausing at a memorial: "People ask, 'Who did you lose...?' My response is 'I lost myself.'"

The play "Unsafe" will be performed at the Cotuit Center for the Arts at 7:30 Thursday through Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday, through April 10. Tickets are \$28, \$25 for seniors and veterans, \$15 for students. Premium tables with wine are available. The art exhibit "Unsafe: Life After 9/11" runs through April 23. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and there is an opening reception and artist talk on April 2, 5 to 7 p.m. Cotuit Center for the Arts is at 4404 Route 28 and can be reached at 508-428-0669 or at artsonthecape.org More information about the Boston performances, at 539 Tremont St., is available at bpw/unsafe

<http://www.barnstablepatriot.com/article/20160401/NEWS/160409958>

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Anna Botsford and Elliot Sicard in the world premiere of "Unsafe" through April 10 at Cotuit Center for the Arts. COURTESY PHOTO