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Nathan Lewis, *Sacred Heart University*

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One thing you are not allowed to be on a university campus is speechless. And yet it's the breathless, speechless pauses as Liz Mastrocola searches for the right words that speak volumes. "It's incredible," she effuses, her smile so broad it almost hurts. "It's...so vibrant...just magnificent..."

She's trying to describe Art & Design Professor Nathan Lewis' 18'x6'2" mural, *The Spirit of SHU*, finally unveiled in the newly renovated Edgerton Center on September 26 after no less than 13 months in the making. The work features nearly 80 individuals from all walks of campus life, some immediately recognizable for their influence on the University, some simply the faces that make the Sacred Heart a special community. Like Mastrocola.

A year ago, as Lewis was preparing to begin the work of formally composing the piece, he described his ambition to create a 'portrait' of the University – a mural of separate images and moments which, when seen together, give the work an identity of its own.

One of the subjects, Professor Greg Viggiano, admits to "a certain apprehension" when he was first presented with the idea of having his likeness immortalized on the canvas. "But Nathan inspires such trust in his subjects," he says. "You just know you're in good hands."

And if the subject was the University itself, the University had good reason to trust him. Drawing from hundreds of photos of more than 200 possible characters, Lewis worked tirelessly to fill the canvas with the diversity and energy he feels is the lifeblood of the school.

"It's amazing the way the eye moves through the image," says Edward Garrity, one of Lewis' assistants on the project. "From the red and white stripes of the Coat of Arms to a gesture by a professor to the line of a bow on a violin – you just keep moving through so much life that you know is real and right for this school."

With so much enthusiasm for the work itself, how does the artist feel now that his *Spirit* is on

display? “I was very excited from the start to get to honor the institution,” he says with typical care in his soft-spoken voice. “To express my own gratitude to this school in my own discipline...that’s very moving to me.”