

The Worldwide Journey of the Arks

Robert Ross, a core member at L'Arche Noah Sealth, built five wooden arks which he personally escorted to the 2012 L'Arche International General Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia. From there the arks were sent out to travel through communities on each continent where L'Arche exists: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia.

The ark traveling through North America is currently visiting communities in the United States. At each destination along the way, the community sends along stories, prayers, and words of gratitude to Jean Vanier and L'Arche Trosly.

At the beginning of October, representatives from the founding community of each of the 35 countries where L'Arche exists will gather together at L'Arche Trosly for a celebration. Two representatives from L'Arche USA's first community, L'Arche Erie, will be



The visit of one of Robert's arks at L'Arche in Kolkata, India

Artist's Biography By Jean Moore, Long-Time Friend of Robert Ross



Robert with one of his arks

Robert Ross has produced hundreds of original arks, his preferred choice of artistic expression long before he found a home in L'Arche. He also creates replicas of churches, dollhouses, paintings and ceramics. One of his most notable works is an 8-layered ark, complete with animals in every stall.

Frank and Marian Ross adopted Robert at birth, and he was their only child. Robert has an intellectual disability and is deaf. In the 1950s, deaf education focused on the oral method of learning, which only included lip-reading and oral speech. However, Robert was not able to learn language well this way. His parents tried various schools for him without success. Robert would go out to the edge of the yard with his lunch pail and watch the other kids go on the school bus.

Robert's mother had a keen interest in arts and crafts, and she and Robert worked together. One of the places where they purchased art supplies was Seattle Pottery Supply. On one of their visits, owner Jim Lunz (a former Special Education teacher) noticed Robert's artistic talent and asked if he would like to work at the business. Robert worked there 35 years. The owners, appreciative of his contribution, gave him one of their rooms to use as his own studio. He also has a particular type of potters clay named after him, Bob's Clay.

Robert came to know L'Arche through visiting his good friend, and my son, Paul Atcheson, at L'Arche Noah Sealth. He started coming to community night gatherings, then community vacations. The day [Community Leader] Gerry Scully told me that Robert could move to L'Arche if he wanted, I went to Robert's condo to talk to him. We thought that he might want to continue living independently. When I asked him if he wanted to live at L'Arche—well I've never seen a more radiant look. I tear up just thinking of it.

The rest is history. He is totally at home at L'Arche. He officially retired from Seattle Pottery in January 2014, but he continues to use his workshop there. He also works in his room at L'Arche and continues to just pour out creations. Robert's gifts are his works of art. And I believe his best gift is just being who he is.