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**MONUMENTAL GOLD-ILLUMINATED PAINTINGS HONOR CITIES
TRAUMATIZED BY MAJOR CONFLICT: BAGHDAD, BEIJING, HIROSHIMA,
JERUSALEM, KABUL, LHASA, MONROVIA, NEW YORK, SARAJEVO**

***CITIES OF PEACE EXHIBITION OPENS AT CATHEDRAL OF SAINT JOHN THE
DIVINE, JANUARY 7 – FEBRUARY 16, 2009; OPENING RECEPTION, JAN. 7, 6 – 9PM***

“CITIES OF PEACE encourages us to acknowledge the grandeur of humankind’s creative powers, and the triumph of hope over the forces of darkness and entropy.”

--Jeff Spurr, Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture, Harvard University

DECEMBER 15, NEW YORK, NY: CITIES OF PEACE, a suite of nine monumental, 6 x 8 foot gold-illuminated paintings honoring the history and culture of cities that have suffered major trauma and strife, will open at the splendidly restored Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine on January 7 and remain on view through February 16, 2009. It will be the premier artist exhibition in the reopened landmark Cathedral.

CITIES OF PEACE is a commemorative body of work conceived by American artist Ellen Frank and produced at her Illumination Atelier, with trained interns and scholars from China, Colombia, Estonia, Canada and elsewhere. Honoring cities either in the midst of crisis or in different stages of cultural restoration, the suite features Baghdad, Beijing, Hiroshima, Jerusalem, Kabul, Lhasa, Monrovia, New York and Sarajevo.

“The U.S. faces more than the enormous effort to repair our diplomatic ties; we need to promote healing and unity across borders,” says artist Ellen Frank. “This is my way of helping: I strongly believe that when people are in the presence of beautiful things—removed from the world of despair, fear, worry—we become hopeful, closer and beautifully at peace.”

CITIES OF PEACE marries word and image in the great tradition of illuminated art, evoking artistic traditions as diverse as illuminated manuscripts, religious icons, tapestries, embroidery, architectural mosaics, woodcarvings, and metalwork. Crimson leaf, the color of blood, is placed in each painting to honor the dead. While serving as memorials, the paintings are also intended as border crossings that enable visions of greater compassion and heightened consciousness among peoples.

CITIES OF PEACE will be narrated in a free cell phone tour by actor Fred Melamed, who is starring in the next Coen brothers’ film, *A Serious Man*. The Cathedral is located at 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, one block east of Broadway. Hours are Monday - Saturday, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Admission is free.

Ellen Frank studied art history and connoisseurship at Yale University and holds an interdisciplinary doctorate in English literature and the visual arts from Stanford University. She is a recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship, a Ford Foundation fellowship, and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. Frank founded the nonprofit Ellen Frank Illumination Arts Foundation, Inc., in East Hampton, New York. www.efiaf.org.

Hi-res images, interviews and B-roll of “The Making of CITIES OF PEACE” available on request.