

## FROM THE EDITOR

Well, here we are. We've completed a year's journey that presented us with new horizons, sometimes deep canyons and many, many bends in the road. There were doubts, concerns and worry along the way: How is this virtual tour thing going to work? Will Mia make it? When will I see my colleagues again? But we learned, grew and adapted. The end of this touring year marks the start of another journey as Mia guides and docents begin the process of coalescing into a single unified corps of Mia Guides.

This new prospect has appeared to us rather suddenly, and there are feelings to sort through, both positive and negative. Doubts and concerns return, questions must be asked, decisions made. But we know that as docents and guides, we're always learning, and we know how to turn on a dime. That will continue as we take the first steps toward this new horizon. We'll have different job titles, different badges, but we'll still be doing what we do – bringing people and art together.

The *Muse* will be adapting, too. While the newsletter will not go forward in its current form, we'll continue to communicate with and inform docents and guides in a yet-to-be determined format. I am certain all past *Muse* editors will join me in thanking everyone who has contributed their time, effort and knowledge to write for the *Muse*, and everyone who has taken the time to read and learn from it. I also wish to thank our publisher, Merritt Nequette, for his tireless proofing and publishing of the *Muse* over the past 19 years.

– Meg Ubel

## MUSINGS FROM IPE

*Debbi Hegstrom*

First, I want to tell you how greatly I value what we have accomplished with the docent program during my tenure of almost 24 years at Mia. I extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for all you have contributed to the success of the program. As we move forward to a unified Mia Guides program, I'm confident that all of us working together will continue the same standards of excellence and see them reflected in high quality tour and gallery experiences.

In response to unanswered questions from the whirlwind of group meetings, surveys, and emails about our new program, we prepared *Program Redesign Follow-up FAQs* that were sent to you via email on Friday, June 4. This is an ongoing dialogue. We don't have all the final answers. We are at the beginning of an exciting opportunity to develop this program.

While the change is partly due to financial and staff cuts at Mia, it is mostly about accessibility to our training programs and volunteer opportunities. We see this new program as an opportunity to create a sustainable model that welcomes a more diverse group of volunteers.

A huge thank you to our "pandemic" Docent Executive Committee, who met virtually throughout the year: Chair, Sheila-Marie Untiedt; Chair-Elect, Kit Wilson; Treasurer, Terry Keir; Social Chair, Mary McMahon; Secretary, Lyn Osgood; Communications, Jan Lysen;

## Upcoming Exhibitions

Opening July 15

*The Fly Zine Archive: A Chronicle of Punk, Queer, and Anarchist Counterculture*

Opening July 16

*Leslie Barlow: Within, Between and Beyond* (MAEP exhibition)

Opening July 17

*Sixties Psychedelia: San Francisco Rock Posters from the Paul Maurer Collection*

Opening October 8

*The Contemporary Print: 20 Years at Highpoint Editions*

Opening October 16

*Envisioning Evil: The Nazi Drawings by Mauricio Lasansky*

Opening June 18, 2022

*Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan*

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Current Exhibitions
- 3 Pushing Boundaries – Making Connections
- 4 Virtual Revelations
- 8 Mia and Community – The Work of Crystal Celeste Price
- 10 Art Blooms Anew
- 12 Interpretation of the Kahnawake Mohawk Cradleboard
- 13 Art and Ritual in Tibetan Buddhism
- 15 Summer Flowers for the *Sunshine Fund* DEC Members 2020-2021

Newsletter Editor, Meg Ubel; and Honorary Docent Representative, Maureen Lannan. We have asked those currently serving to continue as part of a Transition Council, composed of members from all three programs. The council members will provide points of contact for you and help set the stage for what is to come.

### Virtual Public Tours

We will continue to offer virtual public tours, called *Current Conversations*, July through December. Here's the lineup:

#### July – *Small Works of Power and Beauty*

Bigger is not always better. Discover how a virtual tour brings us close to intricate details and shows us new perspectives.

#### August – *State Fair-ish*

Anticipate the return of *The Great Minnesota Get-Together* through related themes and images.

#### September – *Migration Stories: Connecting Past and Present*

Explore our state's history through visual stories of immigration and displacement by those who call Minnesota home.

#### October – *The Land We're On: Art of the Native Peoples of Minnesota*

Celebrate the cultural belongings of people of Anishinaabe and Dakota heritage that honor the land and its resources.

#### November – *Highlights of Native American Art*

Explore the role of tradition and innovation in superb works of art from historic to contemporary times.

#### December – *Winter Solstice Stories*

View stunning works of art that anticipate the triumph of light over darkness through stories of redemption and renewal.

### Virtual Book Tours

Book tours are as popular as ever! Here are the upcoming titles for the public virtual tours through the end of 2021:

#### July – *An American Marriage* by Tayari Jones

#### August – *Locally Laid, How We Built a Plucky, Industry-Changing Egg Farm – from Scratch* by Lucie B. Amundsen

#### September – *A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II* by Sonia Purnell

#### October – *This Tender Land* by William Kent Krueger

#### November – *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

#### December – *The Dutch House* by Ann Patchett

With the lifting of pandemic restrictions, we look forward to seeing you at Mia in the galleries this summer, and anticipate some in-person training sessions in the fall.

Enjoy the wonder and beauty of summer in Minnesota!

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### Current Exhibitions

Through September 12

#### *Ninga Izhichige Nibi Onji / I Will Do It For The Water*

Community Commons

Through September 19

#### Freedom Rising:

I Am the Story/L'Merchie Frazier  
Galleries 262, 275

Through October 17

#### *With New Light: Mia's Reinstalled Himalayan, South, and Southeast Asian Art Galleries*

The Jane and James Emison Galleries  
(211, 212, 213)

Through October 24

#### Unexpected Turns: Women Artists and the Making of American Basket-Weaving Traditions

Gallery 281

Through November 7

#### *Hindsight: American Documentary Photography, 1930-1950*

Perlman Gallery

Through December 5

#### *In the Presence of Our Ancestors: Southern Perspectives in African American Art*

Cargill Gallery

Through March 3, 2022

#### *Rituals of Resilience*

Galleries 373, 374

See the orientation [video](#)

# PUSHING BOUNDARIES – MAKING CONNECTIONS

Linda Krueger

How does linen thread become sculpture? That is just one of many different experiments in basketry displayed in the *Unexpected Turns: Women Artists and the Making of American Basket-Weaving Traditions* exhibition at Mia.

## Pushing boundaries - Ferne Jacobs

The first object to catch my attention was *Sculpture With Hebrew Letters* by Ferne Jacobs.

Jacobs (born 1942) started as a painter and a weaver. In 1970, she took up basketry and to this day is a 3D fiber artist. Her creations look more like abstract expressionist sculpture than traditional basketry. This unusual-shaped basket/sculpture has a base of coiled linen and a top of woven linen. How can it stand unsupported?

When Ferne starts a new piece, all she sees clearly is a color and a size. She believes the final form is “waiting to be discovered.” She begins by wrapping linen thread around a cord, creating a line. She then bends and stitches that line into a shape and starts connecting the shapes. For pedestal pieces, the object must be able to stand on its own. Often, she works on both the top and the bottom of a piece, striving for balance and letting the form of the piece evolve until she deems it “done.” Only then does she know what the final form will be.

Each piece takes two to six months to complete. Ferne says that she doesn’t really get to know a piece while she is working on it. She prefers to have a completed piece in her home for at least six months so that she can “really get to know it.”

Ferne pushes the boundaries of traditional basketry by the abstract forms she creates.

## Pushing boundaries - Mary Giles

Two pieces by Mary Giles roused my curiosity as well: *Dark Kiva* and *Copper Passage*.

Mary Giles (1944-2018) began and ended her life in Minnesota. In between, she lived in Missouri and worked as an art teacher. Her interest in basketmaking started with a desire to introduce her students to fiber arts. She quickly realized that weaving was too expensive, but basketmaking was accessible. She taught herself basketry...and her passion was ignited.

Like Ferne, Mary pushed the boundaries of basketry. “You might look at her work and say, ‘Why is anyone calling this a basket?’ It’s not something you would put your apples in,” said Lois Russell, former president of the National Basketry Organization. Mary preferred to be called a fiberist, not a basket weaver.

Mary’s work was inspired by places she visited and by nature. *Dark Kiva* reflects her experience visiting Puebloan ritual sites and the



*Sculpture with Hebrew Letters*, 1983  
Ferne Jacobs  
Linen  
Gift of The Kaufmann Collection  
91.136.9  
On View in Gallery 281



*Dark Kiva*, 1994  
Mary Giles  
Waxed linen, hammered iron  
Gift of Elissa and Paul Cahn  
2009.59  
On View in Gallery 281

Southwest region of the United States. *Copper Passage* arose from a rock that split on her Stillwater property during a building project.

Like Ferne, Mary employed the traditional coiling technique using waxed linen threads. Her unique addition was the incorporation of hand-hammered metal components. She was intrigued with the male figure and incorporated wire and metal figures in her work, as in *Dark Kiva*. *Copper Passage* includes hammered copper. These metals provide visual and textural contrast to the linen thread structure to which they are stitched. They also reflect her interest in nature: “Over time, some of these metals are going to change, and that’s fine...That’s part of all of our processes – nature’s process, the aging process,” Mary said.

Mary pushed the boundaries of traditional basketmaking both in the forms she created and in the metals she incorporated into her work.

### Making connections

So how does linen thread become sculpture? Both of these artists use the traditional coiling basketry method, in which a foundation material is wound into a concentric shape and stitched to the preceding row. This technique and the right design result in a structure that can stand on its own. Coiling has a long history throughout the world, including among the Native peoples of the Americas.

Ferne Jacobs and Mary Giles are connected as well. When Mary became serious about basketry, she studied with expert artists, including Ferne Jacobs, who became Mary’s mentor.

These two artists illustrate just one aspect of the experimental work in the *Unexpected Turns* exhibition; visit it in person to be awed by the other experiments.

The exhibition is on view in Gallery 281 until October 24. Visit the exhibition [website](#).

## VIRTUAL REVELATIONS

Kay Miller

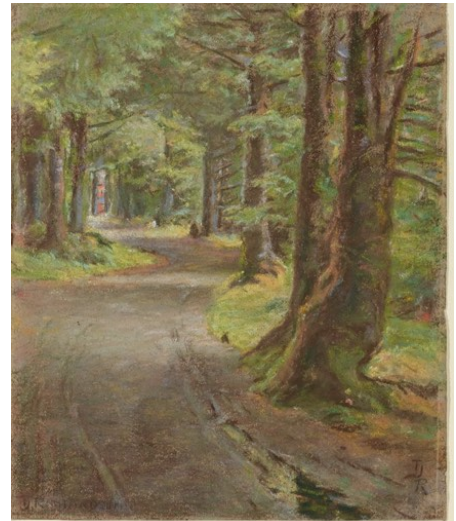
One of the unexpected joys of virtual touring has been discovering stunning works that are entirely new to me. Many of the prints, paintings, textiles and sculptures that I have added to my Google Slide presentations are by artists whose work was exhibited some time ago, or perhaps not at all. Having the freedom to choose from Mia’s 90,000-plus objects has allowed me and other Mia guides to virtually resurrect some real treasures.

Among my most sensuous finds were drawings and prints by Theodore J. Richardson and Bertha Lum, both connected to Mia’s earliest days.

It was Richardson’s inviting 19th-century pastel, *Indian River Walk, Lover’s Lane* that first caught my eye for a *Spring Fever* tour. In it, a broad dirt path meanders through moss-covered pines, a puddle in the foreground and a faint tall, red shape at its end. Was that a totem



*Copper Passage*, c. 2013  
Mary Giles  
Waxed linen, hammered copper, fine iron wire  
Gift of Jim Harris  
2019.5.22A,B  
On View in Gallery 281



*Indian River Walk, Lover’s Lane*, 19th century  
Theodore J. Richardson  
Pastel on paper  
Gift of Harry E. Wood  
28.30  
Not on View



pole? It took me an afternoon's research to discover that this Lover's Lane was in Sitka, Alaska, and that the historic trail is dotted with Tlingit and Haida totem poles, all documented in black-and-white photographs in the Alaska State Library Historical Collections, dead ringers for the very scene that Richardson depicts.

From the time he was a teen and working on the family farm near Minneapolis, "T.J." Richardson took to carrying a sketch pad to draw the scenery around him. Teachers spotted his talent and recommended advanced art training. After graduating from the acclaimed Massachusetts Normal Art School in Boston, Richardson was hired in 1880 as the first supervisor of drawing for the Minneapolis Public Schools. He was known as an innovative educator, encouraging students' eclectic artistic interests, whether it meant whittling with a jackknife or painting portraits, and for his commuting 10 miles a day on an early "Expert Columbia" bicycle with a 50-inch-high front wheel.

In 1883, at just 28, he joined 24 other civic leaders in founding the Minneapolis Society of Fine Arts, Mia's predecessor. The next year, he took a fledgling tourist steamer up Alaska's famed Inside Passage to paint. Over the next 30 years, Richardson returned to Sitka nearly every summer, making friends in nearby Tlingit and Haida villages and recording Native customs, faces, home interiors and coastal scenes, and earning the sobriquet "Alaska's Pioneer Painter." But it is picturing Alaska's glaciers for which Richardson is best known. He painted from a rowboat equipped with an easel and an umbrella, as the craft bobbed up and down in icy glacial waters. He and his wife took bike excursions to Italy, Holland, Switzerland and Paris before de-camping to coastal Étapes, France. His expressive watercolors, oils and pastels are at the Smithsonian Museum of American Art, the Hennepin County Library and collections around the world.



Theodore Richardson painting in Alaska.  
Source: TR 53, Hennepin County Library Special Collections.

At age 59, Richardson collapsed and died on his way to a Minneapolis art show in 1914. His sole exhibition at Mia came posthumously in 1928, the same year that his brother-in-law, Harry E. Wood, donated 16 of Richardson's works to the museum.

Unearthing such treasures is an archaeological dig, made possible with key word searches: light, love, walks, clouds, magic, secret love, herbs, and more. I was looking for images of rain for that *Spring Fever* tour when I discovered Bertha Lum. She is not one of those neglected artists. Her woodblock prints have been regularly included in Mia's print shows. Yet, some of her images spoke so evocatively of spring rain that I felt sure she had created them expressly for me.

Lum, a prolific pioneer of *Japonisme*, helped popularize Japanese and Chinese woodblock prints in America. She was born in Iowa and attended the Art Institute of Chicago's school, later studying with stained glass artist Anne Weston. Lum was large-boned and statuesque, with red hair, green eyes, and a commanding presence. When she married Minneapolis attorney Burt Lum in 1903, she talked him



Bertha Lum supervising her daughters as they print images from woodblocks that they carved, aided by a Japanese woodblock printer.  
Source: Lucia B. Harriman, 1916, Associated Press, Japan.

into spending their seven-week honeymoon in Japan. There, she learned the rudiments of woodblock carving and printing, just enough to later execute a few simple prints with carving tools she bought days before boarding the steamer for home.

Over succeeding decades, Lum frequently returned to Asia – often with her two daughters in tow – spending months, then half a year in Japan. When she moved to Peking in 1922, her marriage was effectively over. For the next 30 years, she divided her time between California, China and Japan, all the while building professional contacts with woodblock craftsmen at the very time their industry was being eclipsed by Western mechanical printing. She wrote and illustrated books on Japanese ghosts and folk tales, becoming one of the era's “new women” who established identities and incomes independent of a husband, father or family, and supported themselves as artists well into the Depression.

Mia has 38 Lum prints. Notice the early accession dates – 1916 – and the donor: Ethel Morrison Van Derlip, whose \$500,000 bequest to Mia in 1921 combined with her husband's, has since underwritten hundreds of key acquisitions. She undoubtedly got to know Lum's work because Burt Lum and John Van Derlip were law firm partners.

Lum has a gift for melding the sketchy quality of Western-style pencil drawings with Asian motifs and techniques. She's especially drawn to misty nocturnal settings, with willowy outlined figures and glowing lights set in velvety night skies or reflecting off the water. One of my favorites is her 1912 *Goblin Dance*, with its luminous blue and gold. There's a mysterious quality to these prints, with their otherworldly colors and evocative feel for how people move and react to their environment.

Color also lured me to textile artist Chad Alice Hagen's 1989 *Histories R Felt: Secret Loves of Plants*. It's a large work – nearly 6 x 8 feet – that I have never seen on view. It seemed the perfect image to illustrate potions created by the sorceress *Circe* in the epic novel by Madeline Miller for several book tours. But what was its back story?

Hagen, of Asheville, North Carolina, has been a felt maker and dyer since 1979, exploring and teaching techniques of resist dyeing hand-felted wool. Her textiles are richly dyed and multi-layered. She's written three books on felting and often is featured in textile design magazines. I emailed Hagen, whose response gives insight into her creative process.

“What an excavation the last five hours have been!” Hagen wrote back. “I have moved more than a dozen times since I made that felt and have boxes and unsupported piles of old slide sheets, magazine articles, sketchbooks and other assorted crap (art-related primary research materials) and ‘burn this’ boxes filling two closets. Here's what I know...”

Hagen based her design of Mia's *Histories R Felt* on a detail slide from a seminal felt she created, *Rugs from Mars – Series 3: Deconstruction of Radishes*, for her master's show at Cranbrook Academy of



*Goblin Dance*, 1912

Bertha Lum

Color woodcut

Gift of Ethel Morrison Van Derlip, 1916

P.80

Not on View



*Histories R Felt: Secret Loves of Plants*, 1989

Chad Alice Hagen

Wool; felting, stitching, shibori dye technique

The Textile Miscellaneous Purchase Fund

92.139

Not on View



Chad Alice Hagen lives in West Asheville, NC and gives felting workshops around the country.

Art, in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. That “radish” piece reflected Hagen’s longing for a home, which she visualized as a charming cottage in Wisconsin, ringed with vegetable gardens filled with quick-germinating radishes.

“Having a garden seemed to be the lodestone of life after so many years of school,” Hagen wrote. For earthly inspiration, she set clay pots infused with radish seeds on her studio windowsill. But she was so preoccupied creating her radish felts, that the real thing withered from neglect. She said, “The ‘comforting homestead radish inspiration’ was transferred to the story developing on the felt itself.”

A few orphan radish felts were left from an early version of her graduate piece. One night she returned to her studio and – with a technique she still uses to shake up her thought process – cut up all the felted leaves, spread them out, and filled the spaces between with a black hole and a zebra-inspired motif. That trope for home suggested a more perilous passage: “One could walk out on a homey object, stumble on the fractured radish leaves and disappear headlong into the dark hole of the unknown.”

From a Saint Paul studio the next year, Hagen happened across a detail slide of that second radish incarnation and the slide inspired Mia’s *Histories R Felt*.

“I was nowhere near a home or garden or even dirt in my various urban studios. But I started to felt radish leaves again, probably as a charm,” Hagen wrote. She insinuated reddish veins into vibrant leaf forms and floated heart shapes over a black hole, roused by thoughts of the “beautiful painter man” with whom she was hopelessly in love, but who ignored her and her desire for gardens filled with radishes.

“It is 2021 and I have never had a garden,” Hagen concluded. “Each spring I buy cheap veggie plants from the local ‘dead plant’ area of Lowe’s and give them water for a few weeks and by mid-summer, they are totally dead. Instead of pulling weeds, I am still spending my life packing teaching supplies into suitcases and exploring the world.”

All these newfound art discoveries have a sense of peopled places and spirited encounters, as does Pietro Consagra’s 1958 *Chorus*, which I added to my *Circe* virtual book tours. It perfectly mimes the festering discontent of Circe’s Titan uncles prattling on in her father Helios’s hall.

*Chorus* is a large wooden sculpture, nearly 5 feet square. The four abstracted figures could be singing, arguing or – in true Greek chorus fashion – narrating their defeat at the Olympians’ hands and plotting revenge. Anger, fear, desire – all are visible. The work comes from Consagra’s *Coloqui* series. Some of the works bear mythological names, but all invoke the power of conversation. Mia bought *Chorus* thanks to that same Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund. The sculpture was on view twice in the 1980s, but has lived in storage since.

Consagra was born in Sicily and became one of the world’s most renowned post-World War II avant-garde sculptors. Early on, Peggy



Pietro Consagra in his Rome studio with one of his massive sculptures and its sketch, 1972.  
Photo: Ugo Mulas.



*Chorus*, 1958  
Pietro Consagra  
Wood  
The Ethel Morrison Van Derlip Fund  
59.26  
Not on View



Guggenheim collected his massive works, which won acclaim at *Venice Biennales*, the Tate Modern in London and the *Centre Pompidou*. He spent 1967 in America, with a teaching gig at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Perhaps that's when he forged his 1968 bronze *Untitled*, that today sits in Target Park, just outside Mia's guide lounge office.

After 50-plus years, the metal sculpture is weathered but still glows with a shiny green patina. It speaks to the revelations we all have gained, and that we ache to share after long absences from the lounge, the museum and each other.

With great thanks to Kristin Lenaburg, Prints and Drawings Curatorial Assistant, who provided detailed exhibition dates, background information on Lum and Richardson, and loaned me M.J. Kirchoff's 2017 book, *T.J. Richardson: Alaska's Pioneer Artist, 1884-1914*.

## MIA AND COMMUNITY – THE WORK OF CRYSTAL CELESTE PRICE

Rose Stanley-Gilbert

Mia has always been about community. The goal of its founders was to bring the arts into the lives of our neighbors. In the last few years Mia has reached out in new ways to our larger community. Let's take a closer look.

Crystal Celeste Price (she/her) joined Mia in 2018. She is Mia's Teen and Community Associate, coordinating teen and community outreach programs through the Multi-Generational Learning department. She describes herself as a mixed race, Mexican woman who comes from a family of makers of the working class. Her experiences have been world-wide: teaching English and Arts Education in South Korea and then working with youth in Costa Rica. Her background was good preparation for her work at Mia.

### Art Team

Each year Crystal hires and manages *Art Team*. The team is composed of 8-10 teen-age high school students from various backgrounds, hired as Mia staff members. These youth share a passion for art, and BIPOC and LGBTQIA+/Queer folks are encouraged to apply.

Members of *Art Team* learn about professional development in areas like leadership skills, goal-setting, critical thinking, self-confidence, communication skills, and expanding career horizons. They support *Family Day* and engage with museum visitors. As young artists, their work has been on display in the first-floor Community Commons corridor. (Learn more about *Art Team* [here](#).)

The *Art Team* also participates in the *Minneapolis St. Paul International Film Festival*. As a committee, they view international films created by young people through the MSP Film Society's *Nextwave Film Initiative*, and select the finalists. The goal is to develop an appreciation for the art and craft of filmmaking.



*Untitled*, c. 1968

Pietro Consagra

Bronze

Gift of Ann H. and Louis N. Zelle  
93.64

On View in Target Park



Crystal Price coordinates Mia's teen programs and community outreach.



### Community Commons Gallery

The *Community Commons* is a gathering place to meet friends and enjoy community art on the first floor of Mia adjacent to the *Family Center*. The *Katherine Kierland Herberger Gallery* in the *Commons* features work from the youth studio classes and *Art Team*, as well as artists participating in our community partnership programs. Crystal supports the Multi-Generational Learning team on some of these exhibitions. On view now through mid-September is *Ninga Izhichige Nibi Onji / I Will Do It For The Water*. The exhibition explores the importance of *nibi* (the Ojibwe word for water) as a life-giving force.

### Mia in the Community

As part of Multi-Generational Learning, Crystal's team also works collaboratively on projects outside the walls of Mia, including the *Power of Vision Mural Project* (POV). POV was started in 2004 by Hope Community, a Minneapolis nonprofit. In 2014, POV began a partnership with Mia. Over 25 collaborative murals have been painted in South Minneapolis by local artists and community members through POV. The goal of making these murals is to strengthen the community with collaborative art. Below are two recent POV projects of note.

#### Power of Vision: Mural on the Ave 2019

Mia partnered with *Hope Community, Project for Pride in Living* (PPL) and 10 artists to create a 4,000 square foot mural in the Phillips neighborhood. How do people of many backgrounds come together, plan and create a mural? Watch a [video](#) about the process and the rewards of working as a community.

#### Power of Vision 2020-21

This POV mural project is ongoing. POV is collaborating with a group of Minneapolis renters who are in the process of creating safe and affordable cooperative housing. POV artists are working with tenants to tell their stories of struggle, victory and growth in a time of housing insecurity. Learn more [here](#).



*Power of Vision: Mural on the Ave, 2019*

Here are a few more community projects coordinated by Crystal:

#### “Keep the Fire Alive” Mural

During summer 2020, Mia partnered with *All Nations Indian Church, Indigenous Peoples Task Force*, and *SAMHSA Native Connections* to help create a mural with a Native youth theater troupe whose performances were canceled due to COVID. The mural allowed the kids to connect to and celebrate their culture in a new way, while brightening a neglected wall on the church in South Minneapolis. Learn more [here](#).

#### Art in the Park

Conducted in collaboration with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, *Art in the Park* provides a variety of free art programs for youth in the Minneapolis parks. Watch the [video](#) “*Art in the Park Highlights Summer 2020*” to enjoy our children creating art and see Crystal in action.

#### The Rewards of Community Projects

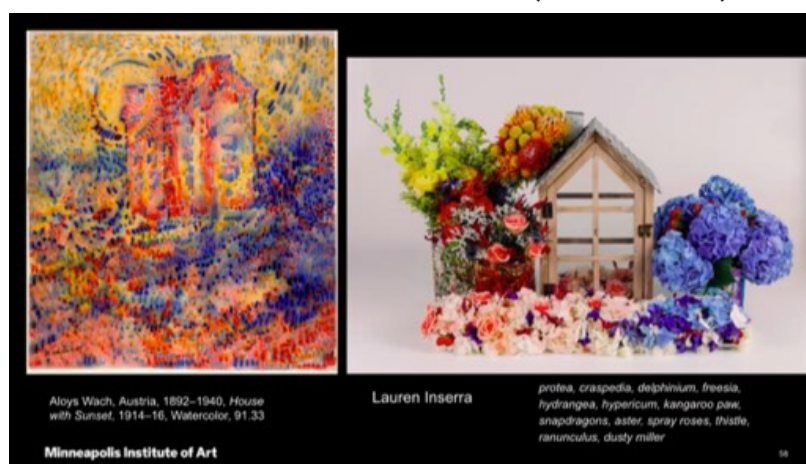
Overall, Crystal says the most rewarding part of her work is observing relationships grow with trust through the process of collaboration.

## ART BLOOMS ANEW

Meg Ubel

For 38 years, *Art in Bloom* has been a perennial favorite of museum visitors and a welcome harbinger of spring. In a normal year the galleries echo with the buzz of happy crowds, the spectacular pedestal floral arrangements stand right next to the art, and the air carries the fragrance of all the fresh flowers. But this can also bring challenges for a docent: negotiating a tour group through the crowds, limiting the tour to one area of the museum, even finding a parking spot when your tour is starting in ten minutes.

After a pandemic-induced timeout in 2020, *Art in Bloom* (*AIB*) was re-conceived by the Friends this year in a virtual format. Ninety-six floral arrangements were displayed digitally on the *AIB* website next to an image of the related artwork, along with the floral artist's personal statement and the names of the flowers used (see the [website](#)).



Though there were no flowers at Mia, floral arrangements were displayed at a variety of commercial florists and garden centers around the area. To bring *Art in Bloom* to its many fans, a group of seven docents conducted a total of ten public tours on Zoom. Several of those docents offered the *Muse* their impressions of touring this iconic event in a new way. Therese Blain, a member of the Friends 2021 *Art in Bloom* Steering Committee, also provided some helpful background information.



A virtual *AIB* meant that floral artists were able to choose from a much larger set of artworks than in past years; nearly 500 artworks were made available by the curatorial staff. As a result, many of the objects featured this year would never have been part of a “normal” *AIB*, giving floral artists a remarkable chance to interpret small, inaccessible or pollen-sensitive works. As Jeanne Lutz pointed out, “Docents and viewers alike got a chance to look at prints and watercolors rarely, if ever, on display in Mia’s galleries.” Jeanne included works such as *Salvator Mundi*, *Woman Looking at a Mirror*, and *Sedona Red Rock* in her tours.

In addition, docents were not limited to touring one section of the museum and could freely cross cultures and genres, while including a great many more objects and flowers than on a traditional tour. Most of the tours covered at least 20 artwork/flower pairings. And while everyone missed the in-person encounters with floral artists during the tour, Lynn Brofman pointed out that “the Friends shared all the floral artists’ comments and inspirations, adding an important dimension to the tours.” Docents could also communicate with the floral artists via email, and “it was heart-warming to discover the personal connections the floral artists made with the art and how it inspired their creativity in their arrangements,” according to JeanMarie Burtness. JeanMarie was particularly struck by how floral artist Audrey Busch’s interpretation of the Kahnawake Mohawk *Cradleboard* connected her more deeply with her own children and her Native community. (See the sidebar on page 12 for Busch’s own words on this topic).

The tours were well-attended with 150 or more participants on each one. With those large numbers, people were muted and responses were recorded in the chat function. “Although not as much fun as the in-person back and forth, comments in the ‘chat’ were insightful and interesting, and I enjoyed doing it,” commented Lynn. Feedback from participants was positive, with Jeanne recalling comments like “Uplifting!” and “Highlight of my day/week/month!”

As with any virtual tour, having *Art in Bloom* online made it easier for many people to take part. This was Sara Wagner’s first time giving tours at *Art in Bloom*, having worked as a greeter in previous years. She found this year’s virtual event appealing, since it was accessible to all. “No parking issues, no full elevators” and of course people from all across the country could attend. JeanMarie’s grandsons, ages 6 and 4, watched one of her tours and she reports that not only did they have fun comparing the colors of the art and the flowers, they recognized pussy willows from a recent nature walk and were even inspired to create their own *Art in Bloom* arrangements. A photo of one of these might give docents and guides an at-home activity idea for an in-person or virtual tour.



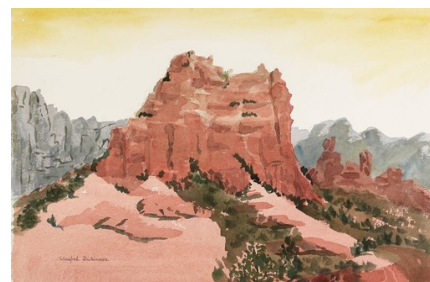
The floral arrangements were more wide-ranging than usual, since floral artists working at home had the freedom to choose flowers that wouldn’t be allowed in the museum or near the art due to moisture, pollen and allergy concerns, as well as flowers that have a shorter



*Salvator Mundi* (Savior of the World),  
page from an illuminated Antiphony,  
c 1425-1450  
Unknown artist, Italy  
Ink, gouache, and gold on parchment  
Gift of Mr. Robert Lehman  
43.20  
Not on View



*Woman Looking  
at a Mirror*,  
July 1916  
Itō Shinsui;  
Publisher:  
Watanabe  
Shōzaburō  
Woodblock print;  
ink and color on  
paper  
Gift of Ellen and  
Fred Wells  
2002.161.205  
Not on View



*Sedona Red Rock*, 20th century  
Winifred Dickinson  
Watercolor  
Gift of Allen Brookins-Brown  
2000.62.4  
Not on View



vase life. The arrangements could also include open water, large stones, and taller structures, and some floral artists even incorporated fresh fruits and vegetables. Another plus, as Jeanne noted: "It was terrific not to have to look at wilted flowers on that last day as in past *AIB* tours in the galleries." And while participants couldn't walk around the arrangements, docents were adept at using closeups to give people a better view.



Barbara Foss floral arrangement with fruits and vegetables

What will future *Art in Blooms* look like? That is up to the Friends, but these docents were upbeat about their tours and generally felt that virtual tours should have a place in *AIB* going forward. Sara hopes there will be at least one virtual tour each day of the event, and suggested giving virtual *AIB* tours to long-term care residents on a big screen. Lynn feels that offering virtual tours in addition to in-person tours next year would allow us to include fans who love *Art in Bloom* but can't get to the museum. This year was unique, and through hard work and creativity the docents, Friends and floral artists alike rose to the challenge. Bravo!

## INTERPRETATION OF THE KAHNAWAKE MOHAWK CRADLEBOARD

When I saw the beauty of the Mohawk *Cradleboard*, it captured me...The colors, the shapes, the design of the vine meandering upward through the cradleboard, and the significance of figures are all beautiful and intriguing. As I thought about the cradleboard more, the depth of the piece continued to delight me. The purpose of a cradleboard is to protect and carry a baby or child. It was defining motherhood and the relationship of mother and baby, nurture, care, and protection in a woods or forest. Like the Mohawk mother, I put my baby and children in a children's backpack and carried each of them with me throughout the woods, along the streams and prairies. The birds in the nest of the cradleboard remind me of my own children, and of all children. I love the wilderness, and I love my children, and of course, I sought to protect them while they grew, learned, and became strong. I want them to see the beauty in the world and in others.

Making the connection with them, and the connection for them with this earth, is so natural and similar to a mother who carried her baby in this cradleboard in the 1860s.

– Audrey Busch



*Cradleboard*, c. 1850-1880  
Kahnawake Mohawk  
Wood, pigment, string  
Gift of Funds from Constance Kunin and  
The Allen and Kathy Lenzmeier Fund  
2010.76  
On View in Gallery 260



# ART AND RITUAL IN TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Bruce Robbins

When the *Muse* covered the re-installed South and Southeast Asian galleries in the December 2020 issue (see that article [here](#)), the focus was on G211 and its collection of South Asian deities. Now we turn to G212 to experience the religious art of the Himalayan region. This area of lofty mountains, sometimes known as “The Roof of the World,” includes the Tibetan Plateau, Nepal, Kashmir, Bhutan, plus parts of northern India and Mongolia. Buddhism is the primary religion, adopted from the original Indian Buddhism and merged with indigenous faiths and beliefs to form a distinctive and rich hybrid mix.

Upon entry into the gallery, one is surrounded by deep aubergine walls and splashes of almost psychedelic color – reflecting the pantheon of deities and sometimes vivid rituals associated with Tibetan Buddhism (also known as Vajrayana Buddhism). Led by the Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism holds at its core the pursuit of heightened spiritual awareness and wisdom along the path to ultimate enlightenment. Practitioners face “three poisons” of ignorance, greed and hate when progressing on this path. A wide, complex array of rites and rituals aid in getting rid of these negative passions and clearing the way to enlightenment. Some of the rituals are peaceful and meditative; others are more fierce and destructive.

In this gallery bursting with imagery and color, let’s take a look at two objects that are both visual standouts and important tools in Tibetan Buddhist ritual practice. First is the *Carpet of a Flayed Man*. Here we see a man stripped of his skin and spread-eagled, arteries visible, bones arranged carefully around him, and the skull placed between his legs. The imagery, while gruesome, has a potent and exalted purpose: to help with a ritual aimed at encouraging internal detachment from the human body and earthly concerns. To enact the ritual, the carpet is located in the *gonkhang*, a windowless chamber located deep within a monastery for the worship of fierce, protective deities. The practitioner, likely a higher-ranking experienced monk, sits on the carpet and imagines himself being dismembered, part by part, and then rising up in the form of the deity. By doing this, he lets go of corporeality and the things of this world and can transcend obstacles on his way to enlightenment. The carpet, in essence, becomes his “seat of power.”

The carpet also depicts trays holding balls of a dough paste (*gtor ma*) often used in Tibetan Buddhist rituals. The paste is made by kneading together barley flour and butter, which is then formed into sacrificial models of human body parts (effigies) to be offered to the fierce protective deities. To complete our visual experience of bodily detachment, the carpet is bordered with a frieze of severed heads.

Next to the carpet in G212, we can view one of these protective deities in a hanging scroll painting, or *tangka*. *Pehar*, with vivid red skin and flashing eyes, is galloping through a roiling landscape rife with fantastical deities and all their symbolism. The *tangka* is also a



*Carpet of a Flayed Man*, 19th century  
Unknown artist, Mongolia  
Wool, cotton, and dye  
On loan  
On View in Gallery 212

meditational tool, often hung in a monastery or a private shrine. It helps the user to visualize himself as the deity pictured and internalize its qualities.

Notice that Pehar brandishes a *vajra* in one hand and a skull cup (*kapala*) in the other. The *vajra*, a short metal club with pronged spherical heads at either end, was originally the weapon of the ancient Hindu god Indra and has become the primary symbol of the Vajrayana school of Buddhism. Because *vajra* is a Sanskrit word meaning both “thunderbolt” and “diamond,” the *vajra* is often used as a ritual weapon symbolizing both the irresistible force of a thunderbolt and the indestructibility of a diamond.



The skull cup, shown as the upper half of a human skull flipped upside down and brimming with brains, is a tool often employed by the protective deities. Notice also a second skull cup at the very bottom of the painting, with more brains and two eyeballs projecting from it – displaying literally and perhaps shockingly, the idea that the brain and other sensory organs (eyes, ears, nose) must be cut away to eliminate delusions and worldly concerns and allow one to have true clarity of mind, wisdom and compassion. It's another expression of bodily detachment as we saw practiced with the carpet.



For more on Tibetan Buddhist ritual using carpets, skull cups and other tools, see this Metropolitan Museum [exhibition](#) from 2010.

There is much more to explore in this gallery, including small statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, a ritual staff and crown, and another carpet featuring the flayed skin of a tiger. Whether you are researching a tour or seeking more understanding of Buddhist thought and practice, this gallery will provide a rich and informative experience.



*Pehar (Worldly Protector Deity)*,  
Late 17th century  
Unknown artist, Tibet  
Mineral colors and gold on sized cotton  
Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton  
2001.77  
On View in Gallery 212

## SUMMER FLOWERS FOR THE *SUNSHINE FUND*



*Still Life with Pascal's "Pensées," 1924*  
Henri Matisse  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Ruth and Bruce Dayton  
2010.37  
On View in Gallery 351

Summer is almost here, and we look forward to seeing each other again soon! Until then, remember the *Sunshine Fund*! Sunshine funds are used to send flowers and cards when an active, sustaining, or honorary docent experiences a serious health issue or loss of a loved one. Being remembered is especially important now as the thank-you notes we have received tell us:

"Thank you so much for your kind thoughts about my incredible mother. It really means a lot to me to hear from the Docents of Mia."

"What a gift you have given to me! Thank you. The flowers came on Saturday afternoon and are so beautiful. I don't know if there is a way to thank the docents. I was quite touched by the flowers."

"I am overwhelmed by your kindness and generosity of the docents. From the depths of my heart, thank you."

Please consider making a contribution to the Sunshine Fund today. You can contribute by making a check payable to

Docents of Mia, c/o Terry Keir,  
4905 Knox Ave S.  
Minneapolis, MN 55419.

Or you may use Venmo to Terry Keir.

To refer someone for recognition, please email [Jan Lysen](mailto:Jan Lysen).

Thank you!

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