



Searching for truth and beauty, preaching through the transforming power of the arts



Fall 2016

Volume 17 Issue 2

DIA ARTISTS

"Go with the Flow"

From July 27-30, thirty eight Dominican artists from twelve continental states and the UK assembled on the shores of Lake Michigan at Siena Retreat Center in Racine, Wisconsin to energize each other in the stream of inspiration expressed in the Gathering theme: "The Artist Spirit Flows."



2016 Planning Commission



Miriam Brown OP, Paula Marie Jarosz OP, Pat Daly OPA, Mary Ellen Paulsen OP, Barbara Kukla OP, Mary Pat Reid OP.



Some plunged into introductory sculpture with Mary Pat Reid; others enjoyed Czech-Slovak folk music with Anita Smisek; still others made decorative crafts with Judy Smith and Paula Marie Jarosz, mounted photo-collage with Miriam Brown, or relaxed in aroma therapy with Gail Vella.

(Perhaps the most popular hand-made artifacts at the Gathering turned out to be colorful afghans, shawls, and serapes, the week's most urgent "fashion statement.")

Evening entertainment ranged from a stunning Virtual Gallery which honored deceased members and welcomed new contributors, to a trivia challenge based on Dominican Saints, to a final surprise which we refrain from specifying lest misunderstanding provoke a new Vatican investigation.

Elizabeth Slenker: 2016 Fra Angelico Honoree



Barbara Schwarz OP presenting the Fra Angelico Award to Elizabeth Slenker OP

At the DIA's concluding liturgy, artist Elizabeth Slenker stepped to the altar twice: first in an act of spontaneous thoughtfulness to assist celebrant Rudolf Lowenstein, and again when President Barbara Schwarz summoned her to receive the DIA's highest honor, the Fra Angelico Award. This Award is conferred annually on a member whose work is recognized for its high quality by her professional peers and who exemplifies the ideals of the DIA.

A Sparkill Dominican currently serving in St. Louis, Missouri, Liz is very active in the arts community there where she has designed tabernacles for St. Louis University and Mercy Center. She has served as President and Treasurer of the St. Louis Society of Independent Artists, and one of her many one-woman shows is at present on exhibit at the Florissant Civic Center in St. Louis..



Elizabeth Slenker OP

Liz's work bridges many worlds and media. Her stained glass windows grace the chapel of her congregation at Sparkill and she enters her paintings in five juried shows annually. A college art teacher for nineteen years before making art her full-time ministry,

Liz also works in a summer camp for inner-city children to enrich their lives in the joy of making art. "I have had extensive formal education," Liz remarked, "but the blank white paper before me is possibly my greatest teacher, as what I put on it becomes a new life that will probably outlast me." Right now, Liz is focused on painting birds, animals, and other wild creatures, using her art to preserve her endangered brothers and sisters in the natural world.



All Fra Angelico Award recipients

Some Images from the Workshops



Pat Daly OPA



Barbara Kukla OP receiving the Spirit Award from Mary Pat Reid OP

Spirited preaching by Vice President, Pat Daly, OPA and remarkable singing by the resident sisters enhanced the concluding liturgy celebrated by Rudolf Loewenstein, OP. Barbara Kukla of Racine received the Spirit of DIA Award, and the Board expressed appreciation for the meticulous (and exhausting!) attention to detail of all the other members of the Planning Commission: Pat Daley OPA, Miriam Brown, Paula Marie Jarosz, Mary Ellen Paulsen, and Mary Pat Reid.

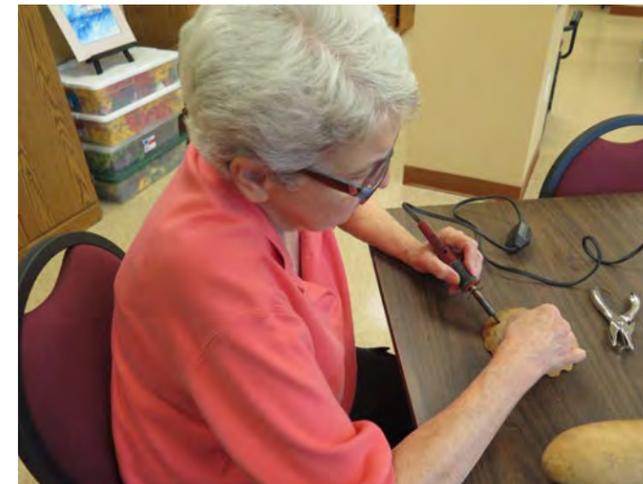
The Gathering included election of three board members to round out the DIA Board: President, Barbara Schwarz, OP; Amityville; Vice President, Pat Daly, OPA, Dominican Sisters of Peace; Secretary, Rudolf Loewenstein, London Province; Treasurer, Joella Miller, OP, Adrian; Membership: Mary Pat Reid, OP, Caldwell; Ann Marie Santen, OP, Sparkill; and Elizabeth Michael Boyle, OP, Caldwell as members at large.



Barbara Kukla OP



Rudolf Loewenstein OP



Barbara Cervenka on Fra Angelico

If you read your last newsletter, you already know that Barbara Cervenka, the 2016 Gathering keynote speaker, is a widely-exhibited painter in many styles and artistic media who believes that the artist should be involved in the world around her.

You will know that her dedication to peace and social justice has prompted her to co-found the “1000 Cranes for Iraq” project and the Con Vida non-profit organization for drawing attention to the marginalized people of Latin America through their popular arts.

You would also know that in light of the historical theme of this year’s Gathering, Barbara’s subject would be the most famous Dominican artist, Fra Angelico. You might even have thought you knew him pretty well, too. You would be in for enlightenment.

At the outset of Barbara’s presentation, she announced her intention to liberate Fra Angelico from the prison of hagiography and to reveal him to us as he was before he became entrapped in the service of the Florentine nobility.

She pointed out how the gentle friar lived in stressful times: warring Italian city-states, warring popes excommunicating each other, the black death decimating the population. As her presentation at Racine proceeded, what we found out is that Barbara Cervenka is an artist’s artist. Her fascinating explication of the artist’s methods and materials—from pounding pigment to delicate manipulation of egg yolk and gold leaf—revealed to us not only the subtle artistic breakthroughs and bold innovations of a master painter, but also the spiritual development and tender devotion of a contemplative friar.

The challenge of a speaker with a famous subject is to make the familiar new. Barbara Cervenka met that challenge.

Now, if you haven’t done so already, give yourself a real treat. Go online to enjoy slides of Barbara’s own work in all its glorious mastery and variety. See them at <http://www.barbaracervenka.com/>



Barbara Cervenka OP



When Closing Down Means Opening Out

Two Fra Angelico honorees, Anita Smisek and Elaine DesRosiers had experiences this year which began as loss and concluded as gain. After twenty-seven years as administrator of Alliance Publications, publisher of liturgical and folk music by many composers including some DIA members, Anita was tired but apprehensive about the fate of her clients and eager to find a buyer for her catalog and inventory who would respect their work and continue a ministry which had been a valuable service to them and to the Church. Providentially, she found a music publisher with an international distributor. Thus, instead of closing down, Anita’s ministry opened out to reach a wider market, or to put it in other language, her musicians now preach to a larger congregation.

For Elaine DesRosiers, the closing of Saint Catharine College in Kentucky had a different unexpected consequence. Everything in the college buildings, including sixteen of her paintings, became the property of a bank. Elaine now has no control over their disposition. At first, this loss filled her with sadness. She doubted that they would be appreciated by their new owners. Eventually, however, as she reflected on the probability that her paintings would be auctioned with the rest of the college furnishings, she concluded philosophically that they would then enjoy wider distribution in homes and buildings beyond the campus.

If you have a similar story of a closing that became an opening or an ending that became a beginning, perhaps you would like to share with other artists.



Anita Smisek OP



Elaine DesRosiers OP

When Junk Is *Not* Junk



Dominican sisters of Sinsinawa at the Gathering

At the Board's annual meeting with DIA membership, Joeann Daley raised an issue which immediately resonated with the group and echoed in table conversations thereafter.

Within the past year, Joeann explained, she had faced two life crises: eviction from the studio she had occupied for many years and the onset of a disease which threatened to evict her from this planet. Both events demanded an answer to the question: How can an artist provide for the safe and respectful disposition of her "effects."

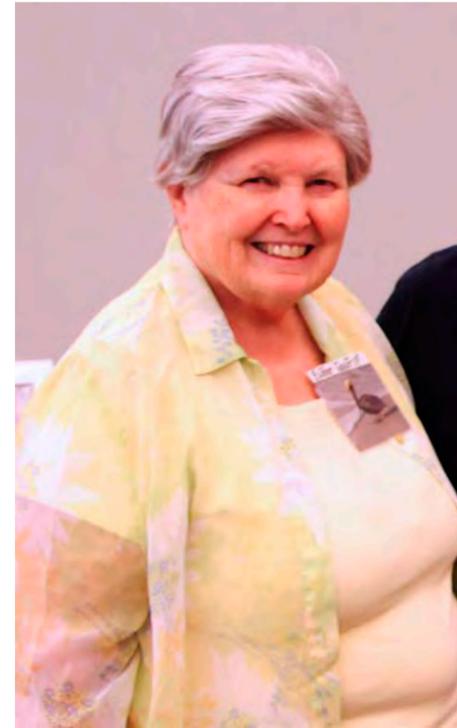
The answer to inquiries from the DIA regarding the disposition of art works by recently deceased members suggests that not everyone recognizes an artist's life-work as part of her legacy. Obviously, a DIA policy on the subject would have no legal authority, but an artist and her community might welcome guidelines from us. Several people expressed an interest in developing them.

Meantime, here are some questions that a responsible artist might consider for herself while she can still act on them:



- Does the friend you've assigned to dispose of your "stuff" have good artistic judgment?
- Or, Does your Last Will assign an artistic executor who does?
- Have you given your community archivist an inventory of your works recording their provenance?
- What can you do now to assure that your art work survives you?
- Are there works you would prefer to destroy? Why don't you?

Elaine Taylor Honored by St. Petersburg City Theatre *Necessity + Volunteerism + Collaboration = "Mothers of Invention"*

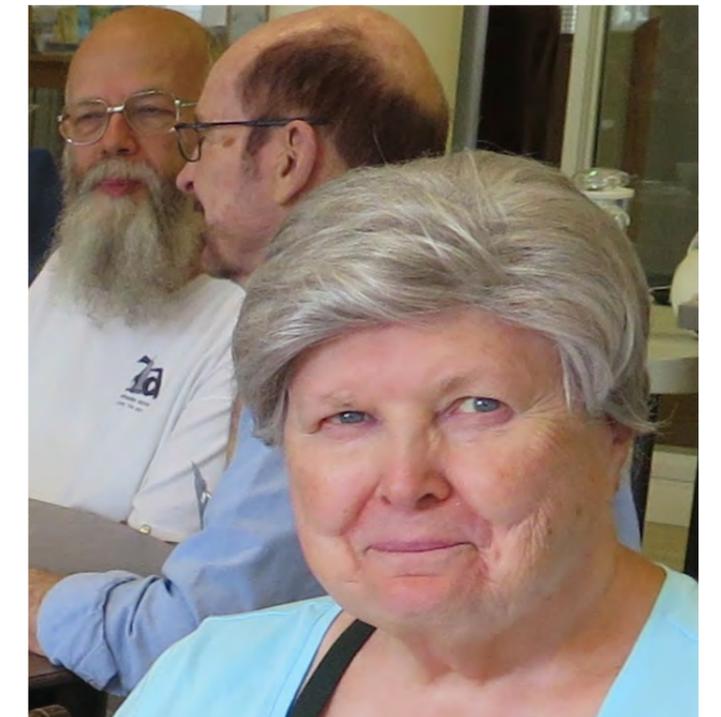


Having no money for royalties, Elaine wrote her own plays. For several musicals, she collaborated with DIA musician-composer Rudolf Lowenstein. Eventually, ministry grants from the Mound helped to finance published scripts, and City Theatre's Executive Director, Deborah Kelly, wrote grants to keep the children's program going year after year. It became so popular that a schedule of three productions a year soon grew to five. As the plays got better and better and their "production values" more and more ambitious, the cost to each participant rose to \$50.00 and in 2015 to \$100. Elaine considered this her signal to retire.

Participants in City Theatre's Youth Programs now write their plays together by adapting books and mount three productions a year. Children who graduate every year, may or may not pursue careers in theatre arts, but they will all bring poise and confidence to whichever careers they choose, and an informed enjoyment of the arts will contribute to their quality of life. Elaine has been named a Life Time Member.

On Sunday, July 17, 2016, in St. Petersburg, Florida, the St. Petersburg City Theatre honored Elaine Taylor for pioneering the theatre's education department for its first twenty years. In addition to the plaque commending her "immense contribution to City Theatre's Youth Program," the group established a scholarship in Elaine's name, thus assuring that the program she founded would continue expressing HER "option for the poor."

Elaine's highly successful project began with questions of necessity. In 1997, when she was on City Theatre's Board of Directors, the theatre was dark all summer and between seasons. As soon as Elaine suggested that this could be an opportunity to initiate acting classes for children, she volunteered to teach them. Other board members recognized the idea's fund-raising possibilities. Elaine was determined that the classes be accessible to children whose neighborhood schools had no drama program. Hence, she charged only \$25.00 per six-week session. Meeting after school and on Saturdays, each cohort of tyro thespians culminated their course with a full play production.



DIA & DNC: Art Meets Politics

As Dominican artists assembled in Racine for their annual Dia Gathering, Democrats assembled in Philadelphia for the DNC Convention. The coincidence reminded Miriam Brown, currently on the staff of Siena Retreat Center and a member of the 2016 Planning Commission, that she had once made a presentation connecting art, morality and politics back in 1985, the memorable “Sinsinawa Year of the Arts.”

At that time, Miriam was Director of the Human Issues program at Edgewood College, a capstone requirement for which each graduate had to integrate his/her liberal arts learning with some “major human issue.”

Miriam’s presentation opened: “I want to assert with some urgency that our world needs the artist’s vision and energy to spill over and affect its morality and politics, our areas of human relations and public decision-making.” The parallels between art, morality, and politics that Miriam proceeded to discover offer DIA artists substance for a deep and timely reflection.

Art, Morality, Politics: What Do They Have in Common?

- All three involve dialog.
- All three begin with listening.
- All three arise from and enter into public consciousness.
- All three require discipline and restraint.
- All three demand commitment.
- All three make values visible through action.
- All three are born from an integration of matter and spirit.
- When all three are good, they flow from the feminine.

A VISIT TO THE DIA GALLERY WEB PAGE WILL ASSURE YOU THAT DIA ARTISTS INTEGRATE THEIR WORK WITH “MAJOR HUMAN ISSUES.”



Miriam Brown OP



Pat Farrell OP



Isabel Rafferty OP

Layout Editor



Choices

Astrophysics describes two ways for a star to die.

The one, slowly, steadily:
 a slender flame licking upward
 devouring night’s unresisting taper
 leaving neither offspring nor residue.
 Eventually, bereft of oxygen
 consumed in self-absorption
 it fizzles in its own fat
 sputters and dies
 disturbing the outer darkness
 not at all.

Star Field 6 :Pleiades - Barbara Cervenka OP

The other, instantaneously:
 supernova exploding
 outward into the universe
 radiating for miles and light-millennia
 giving itself to the darkness
 risking everything
 withholding nothing
 sudden death detonating fecundity
 propagating the night with a thousand children.

Self-immolation re-ignites a forest of candles
 shivering in the draft we dare to call
 “Enlightenment.”

Choices - Elizabeth Michael Boyle OP

Reflections from the President

In Racine it was evident that there is a joy when we gather together. Our sharing was only tempered by the evening rush to see history at the DNC.

As we honored those who have died, the realities of aging: culling and archiving our work came into focus. Digitally photographing our work makes it possible to save even those pieces we discard. Barbara Cervenka in conversation challenged us to look at what are the most important works of our own, which showed a historic change, and which do we like. Not all our works should be saved. Digital archives of our works can be shared with our archivists on flash drives. We are sharing with McGreal Center the digital archives of our gatherings, newsletters, brochures and websites. You can find the archives of our newsletters on the website and on member pages the latest lists.

As we travel to different motherhouses we have seen the support of our artists often by the presence of their works on the walls. It gives a sense of appreciation and recognition for a congregation's artists. Some are better at that than others. Here we simply plant the seed for motherhouse administrations and leadership to observe how they showcase their artists even on a rotating basis or in shows.

One thought that came to me as I flew home was related to Elizabeth Michael's comment in the video on Collaboration, (the video is on the "About us" page on www.diartsop.org). She spoke of the deprivation of the poor with regard to art. I wondered if in some of our culling we might donate some of our works to those who may have nothing on their walls through outreach or ESL Programs?

Collaborations shared new perspectives of how we can foster the arts, Dominican Charism, and our own mission. Dominic spoke with mercy for all in need, preached truth and saw God's revelation in all creation. We cannot do it all. Collaborations and friendships need to be fostered especially with those who minister with us or can support us by purchasing our work. On our website, we put forth some Dominican articulated Justice and Peace Issues. Might we do more around themes of mercy, truth, Laudato Si or ???

We try to share with permission the prayer requests of our members who are ill or the deaths of our DIA members. However we need your help in giving us the information.



Barbara Schwarz OP

We cannot post what we do not know. The same is true of your shows, honors, and events. We want to brag about you. For example, until discussions we did not know Elizabeth Slenker OP, our latest Fra Angelico recipient, was a past President and current Treasurer for Independent Artists in St. Louis, or that she has one woman shows?

Tell us about yourself please!
Email us at diartsop@gmail.com.
May we celebrate our preaching as this jubilee year comes to a close. Our art speaks – Let the preaching continue!

Save the Date;
July 26-28, Adrian
Gathering 2017

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