

A³ Area Artists Association

Interested in Joining?

Area Artists Association (A3) is a community of professional artists affiliated with the Lubeznik Center for the Arts (LCA) in Michigan City, Indiana. Artists who live/work within 60 miles of Michigan City, Indiana may apply to be juried into the association through review by A3 current members.

The purpose of our organization is to support, recognize and encourage regional artists and provide opportunities for exhibitions of their art and for professional development. Through our regular exhibitions, we also provide communities throughout the northwest Indiana region access to the diversity of work produced by area artists. Among the benefits A3 members share are:

- opportunities for one-person and group exhibitions
- participation in lectures, demonstrations and discussions taking place at our bi-monthly meetings
- involvement in other communal projects initiated by the group to further the aims of A3

Membership to A3 is \$25.00 annually and paid in addition to LCA membership each December. Members who attend meetings, volunteer to help mount exhibits and serve on committees are considered members in good standing. Fine artists interested in applying for membership to A3 may visit our website. The application form is found under the “join us” tab. For more information, please feel free to contact us.

**Area Artists Association: President Diane Grams, PhD;
Vice-President Laurel Izard; Treasurer Laurie Schirmer Carpenter;
Secretary Jane Cowley**

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A Message from Our President

Founded in 1980 by local artists, the Area Artists Association (A3) actively engages 42 of the area's leading professional artists in organizing exhibitions that showcase their work across the region. Since its inaugural exhibit at the old public library on 8th Street in Michigan City—the original home of the city's first art center—A3 has hosted over 65 member shows. Through these regular exhibitions, held throughout northwest Indiana, we bring the diversity of local artwork to regional communities.

We are excited to celebrate our 45th year with two exhibitions: an anniversary exhibition at the Marshall J. Gardner Center for the Arts, May 2 – June 6, 2025 and a yearend celebration at the Roti Roti Art Center of Buchanan Michigan, November 2 – December 14, 2025.

Our vibrant association fosters community and collaboration among the area's most accomplished professional artists. What sets these artists apart is their steadfast dedication to creating and exhibiting their work. Through our initiatives, we embrace diverse forms of artmaking, rather than championing a singular style or approach. We thrive on learning about and celebrating unique artistic practices, and honor the relentless pursuit of excellence. The works of our members are regularly featured in solo and curated exhibitions, often earning top accolades in juried competitions across the region.

Our members represent a broad spectrum of the art world. We are painters, sculptors, paper makers, printmakers, quilters, embroiderers, glass artists, fiber artists, woodworkers, photographers, jewelers, and ceramicists. While some artists work in traditional media, such as sculpting, drawing, and painting using the traditional materials of wood, canvas, oil, acrylic, watercolor, or fresco, others lean toward contemporary techniques in stitching, collage, construction, found objects or creating new forms and approaches.

I look forward to seeing you at one of our upcoming exhibitions.

Diane Grams, PhD



Past President Edwin Shelton, current President Diane Grams, PhD, South Bend Art Museum Curator Krista Hoefle, and Vice President Laurel Izard at the opening of the 2023 Exhibition "Horizons Reimagined" at the South Bend Museum of Art.

A3 Membership chairperson, Dorothy Graden with John Ryszyka II – an A3 member, glass artist, and owner of the Rising Phoenix Gallery, which was the site of our 2023 exhibition "One Foot In."



Portrait artist and A3 secretary Jane Cowley.

Ginny Scott, Diane Grams, and Kevin Firme, owner of Glen L. Firme Art Supply and The Ellen Firme Gallery with visitors at our 2024 Exhibit "It's All About the Square" at the Chesterton Art Center.





Tondo X. ©Tom Brand. Oil on panel. 2020. 32 x 32 inches. \$1300

Tom Brand

Tom Brand is an abstract artist who paints with oil on panel. He begins by applying a traditional method of glazes to an initial spontaneous sketch, arriving at a composition made up of forms and colors in dynamic interaction. This finished work often evokes an abstract landscape or visual event that should seem familiar. It is intended to engage the viewer and give them a “handle” to use their imagination. Ultimately, it invites the viewer to look and interpret the paintings in their own way.

Tom has been an active part of the art community in Northwest Indiana, exhibiting throughout the region for over 25 years. His abstract paintings are in collections in the U.S. and abroad. Born and raised in Indianapolis, he came to Chicago as a student to attend the School of the Art Institute on the GI Bill after WWII. Upon retiring from an occupation as a commercial printer, he devoted himself to a career as a studio artist. Website: artisttombrand.com



*Winter Beach Walkway.
©Larry A Brechner. Digital
photo canvas gallery wrap.
2020. 30 x 20 inches. \$240*

Larry A. Brechner

Creative photography is more than making a simple visual recording; it involves the innovative artistry and vision of a photographer, who manipulates the given visual elements in order to both preserve and represent the subject while creating new

perspectives. Artistic photography is more than merely making a visual recording of existing subjects; it also captures both obvious and subtle visions of the subject. A photograph freezes a moment in time, forever preserving an image of people, places, things, or events, which then can be revisited, thus creating an existence of its very own.

Larry has been a fine art photographer for over forty years. Along with his career as a theatrical lighting designer and musical theater stage director, he used photography in his own design and directing portfolio. His work with stage lighting gives him a special understanding and a unique vision for his artistic photography. Larry earned his Doctor of Fine Arts in Theatre Studies and received his Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees from Purdue University Northwest in Radio/TV/Theater Production and Management. Larry currently produces and co-hosts the weekly radio program ART ON THE AIR heard on Lakeshore Public Media (NPR) and WVLP. Website: brech.com/np



Spring Rain. ©Laurie Schirmer Carpenter. Oil on canvas. 2020. 19 x 30 inches. \$1000

Laurie Schirmer Carpenter

Laurie Schirmer Carpenter's oil paintings are created in the studio from field studies, photos, and memory and may be a composite of several places. They depict a liminal moment in time—a time “between” an anticipated action and a reaction in nature. These interludes may be perceived as peaceful, quiet moments of contemplation or subtle warnings of things to come. The paintings are created with many layers of thinly applied paint over weeks and/or months to portray the sense of serenity, quiet, and depth that she experiences in nature. Currently finding ourselves in transitional moments in the world, her paintings become studies of reflection on our environment and our place in it.

Laurie is an award-winning artist whose work can be found in many corporate and private collections. Raised in northern Illinois, she earned a BFA and BA in Art History (graduating with Distinction) from the University of Colorado, Denver in 1988. Returning to the Midwest in 1990, after living in Denver for 27 years, she is inspired by the distinctive atmosphere of the landscapes and skies of the heartland. Website: laurieschirmercarpenter.com



*Suzy. ©Jane Cowley.
Oil on canvas. 2024. 36
x 24 inches. NFS*

Jane Cowley

Oil painting is my medium of choice for exploring the depth and beauty of human expression, the celebration of nature in landscapes, and the quiet intimacy of still life. Each subject I paint—whether a face, a landscape, or a simple object—tells a story, inviting the viewer into a moment of suspended time.

Jane Cowley is a portrait and landscape artist who works out of her studio in Michigan City, Indiana. She attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Drisi Academy of Fine Art in Glenwood, Illinois. Jane is an award-winning artist whose body of work spans more than thirty years. She has shown her work in New York, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, and in international online exhibits. Website: jcowley.fineartstudioonline.com

*Jungle Look 1. ©ANKO
(Anneke Dekker-
Olthof). Acrylic. 2025.
20x16 \$395.*



ANKO, Anneke Dekker-Olthof

I have traveled extensively over the years and have visited all continents. I have always been attracted to out-of-the-way places and love unspoiled forests and jungles with their exotic and fascinating multi-shaped, often giant, trees, lianas, leaves and flowers, wildlife, birds and butterflies and other insects. These paintings are my fantasy representation of my experiences in South America, particularly the Amazon, and in other forests around the world.

I have no official training but have always been involved in artistic endeavors: drawing, painting, collage, photography, pottery, fashion, jewelry and more. Anything and everything I see, stimulates me to try something new. I appreciate that artistic freedom. I have shown my work in galleries in Florida and the Midwest and have collectors of my artwork all over the world. Website: ankoarts.com



*Dune Path. ©Bunny Dimke.
Oil on canvas. 2024. 20 x 16
inches. \$350*

Bunny Dimke

Living near the Indiana Dunes and Lake Michigan is what inspires me to paint “en plein air” year-round. If necessary, I use my van as my portable studio. My primary medium is oil, but I also enjoy sketching with watercolors. Currently in my home studio I am attempting semi-abstract work, using cold wax with oil, or fluid acrylics and inks. Only time will tell where that leads me, but it's always an exciting adventure.

Born and educated on the East Coast, Bunny Dimke has resided in Indiana for most of her adult life. She began her art studies at an early age under the tutelage of Iroka Adachi, who taught classical oil painting. After moving from New York to Indiana, Bunny joined the Michigan City Art League, where she learned watercolor technique from many well-known local artists. She has exhibited at the Art Barn in Valparaiso, the SFC Gallery, the Chesterton Art Center, and the Midwest Museum of American Art. Her work has been accepted into numerous regional juried shows, and has won several awards. She is currently a member of the Duneland Plein Air Painters, the Area Artists Association, and the Michigan City Art League.

Sarasvati. ©Melissa Dittmann. Oil and mixed media. 2025. 48 x 48 inches. \$1800



Melissa Dittmann

A native of Beverly Shores, Melissa was grateful to grow up with the Dunes in her back yard. Though she has enjoyed traveling and living around the world, coming back to this area made her realize just how special and magical it is. It's from this endlessly fascinating exquisite natural world that Melissa draws inspiration for her paintings, as well as for her jewelry and clothing designs.

Though a life-long lover of the arts, Melissa Dittman is very new to practicing and making art. Reconnecting with her creativity has been instrumental in Melissa's journey towards overcoming mental health challenges. Working mostly in gouache and oils, her paintings often depict landscapes, birds, and other details from nature, sometimes incorporating elements of magical realism. Her time spent living and studying in Asia also continues to influence her style and subjects, with a special affinity for Chinese ink painting and Buddhist art.

As the owner of *Jewel in the Lotus*, Melissa is also a jewelry designer and metalsmith. Her intricate wirework jewelry incorporates locally-found fossils, polished precious stones, steampunk accents and other elements into unique pieces of wearable art.



Woven Floral Series (1 of 9 panels). ©Deb Dyer. Mixed media. 2025. 12 x 12 inches. \$150 ea

Deb Dyer

Deb works in mixed media utilizing maps, collage, stitching, stenciling, weaving, and paint. Her work reflects a fascination with layering, pattern, and transparency and utilizes the traditional feminine work of weaving, embroidery, quilting, and appliqué. As a young girl, the introduction to craft and art began with sewing. As an art student, the possibilities in art expanded with the addition of fabric patterns, sewing as line, and paper in place of paint. As a mature artist, the possibilities are endless. This series of woven photographs explores the variety of weaving, embroidery, and the natural world.

Deb Dyer now lives in New Buffalo, MI, after living and working in Richmond CA for twelve years. She holds a BFA from the Ohio State University and a MA in Arts Administration from Goucher College. She has been juried into numerous national and local exhibitions, including Convergence, Marin MOCA, the 2024 juried exhibition at the Art Barn, Valparaiso, and the de Young Open in the summer of 2020. This prestigious exhibition featured 762 Bay Area artists culled from 11,514 individual submitted artworks.

Website: debdyerart.com

Bee-Cause: Save the Bees. ©Carol Estes. Mixed media with handmade paper. 2020. 20 x 17 inches. \$325



Carol Estes

A Little Bit of Carol World

Carol Estes is a Missouri girl that found her way to Indiana in 1982. After several losses, she was in need of an outlet for deep grief, and picked up a camera. Immersing herself in the knowledge of image making, she became an award-winning self-taught photographer.

She was published in *Birds and Bloom Magazine* about the journey of her strength over grief. Later, they published her bird photography, and Carol became internationally published with her beauty and fashion work.

Entering the art world late in life, Carol has been fortunate to exhibit in Montana, Michigan, Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. She is also a writer of poetry & prose, performing on the infamous Green Mill stage in Chicago. Website: welcometocarolworld.com



Blue Leaves 2. ©Kevin Firme. Pastel on paper. 2023. 36 x 28 inches. \$1650

Kevin Firme

I create pastel drawings on paper and sculpture of forged steel and blown glass. I can describe complicated imagery in the drawings that I can't

in sculpture. The sculptures are inspired by the drawings. My drawings have a network of linear gestures and shapes that weave together with the whole image.

The intention of the artwork is to impart a sense of peace and well-ordered dynamism. When I look at my work, I envisage a sense of calm and wonder at this world I create. I see what is in front of me as digestible and not overwhelming. The drawings are metaphors of landscapes. I am depicting a small part of the natural world and not the scale of the whole world. The glass and steel sculptures combine fragile glass and obdurate steel forged into shapes that repeat the network of shapes in the drawings. My work is about a world in harmony where everything fits in its place. It portrays a personal horizon that gives me hope for the future.

Kevin Firm holds a BA in Art from DePaul University and a MFA from the University of Notre Dame. He has shown at the Midwest Museum of American Art in Elkhart, Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Lubeznik Center for the Arts, and other places in the area. Email: kevinf250e@gmail.com



The Two of Us. ©Amanda Freymann. Tissue paper. 2022. 14 x 17 inches.
NFS

Amanda Freymann

Since 2020 I have enjoyed experimenting with various less-traditional mediums. I had been struggling with a very academic gouache course I had bought online when I complained to my friend Laurel who wisely advised “you know you don’t have to finish it.” Thank you, Laurel! With that I put aside my paintbrush and turned to collage, a favorite medium from the past. As the world was shutting down from the pandemic, I was walking in the woods and was inspired by the beauty and simplicity of the trillium. I began my daily practice of collaging flowers made from origami and handmade papers. Collage evolved into “painting” with tissue paper, then experimenting with hand building in clay and most recently making Gelli prints of plant life. I find all of these practices to be liberating and joyful. Nature as subject is the constant. My life changed dramatically three years ago with the death of my husband and for me, nature provides solace and represents growth and new beginnings. Instagram: [@afreymann](https://www.instagram.com/afreymann)



*Falling book. ©Arthur Garcia.
Acrylic on paper. 2023. 15 x 10
inches. \$325*

Arthur “Art” Garcia

Back in the day, I took several mechanical drawing classes, and my 43-year real-world career frequently put me in heavy industrial settings. Some say my paintings reflect that background. I am a sculptor first and a painter second. Lately I’ve been doing a lot more painting than sculpting. I believe that successful abstract art requires more work by the viewer than to digest images of, say, covered bridges. I don’t expect viewers to have a visceral reaction, but to simply make a decision—does the work seem visually rational (composition, color, balance), or is it visually useless? Is it something one has never seen before, something one has to process, and was it worth their time?

Born in Gary Indiana in 1952, I received a BFA in sculpture and painting from Indiana State University in 1975. There I learned to cast in bronze using the lost wax process, weld steel, and survive an intense painting curriculum. One had to learn the basics before “earning the right to go abstract.” Website: artgarciafineart.com



Goddess of the Night.
 ©Dorothy Graden. Mixed
 media on paper. 2023. 42 x
 32 inches. \$1700

Dorothy Graden

Connection has always been at the core of my journey, guiding me to explore what lies beneath the surface. My art is objective and layered, drawing from the textures and colors of the earth and sea, as well as

the ebb and flow of time and space. My travels have deepened my understanding of cultural symbols and artistic traditions. I've sought to learn from local communities, exploring the common threads in symbols, shapes, and colors from both modern and ancient themes. Diving beneath the waves in the Caribbean, I observed the natural art of the ocean and the interconnectedness of species with their environment.

Dorothy Graden grew up in the diversity-rich Midwest city of Gary, Indiana, where the vibrant local art scene and the rich mix of cultures became some of her earliest sources of inspiration. Throughout her twenty-year teaching career, she nurtured a love for visual storytelling, recognizing and encouraging the inherent creativity present in all human expression. Her passion for travel kindled her interest in the traditions and art of local communities, classical artists, and ancient cultures, as well as the vivid landscapes and colors of both land and sea. Dorothy's powerful body of work is infused with these experiences, incorporating the textures, hues, and layers of time and space. Website: dorothygraden.com

*Eve after the Fall
into an Octopus's
Garden.* ©Diane
Grams. Oil on
canvas. 2025. 36 x 36
inches. \$2500



Diane Grams

The light in my paintings filters through water, revealing objects associated with memories. These landscapes explore emotional themes from fantasy, hope, and fear. The figures are often recognizable masterpieces—in this case, *Eve After the Fall*, by Rodin. This figure, who finds herself in an octopus's garden, is not only a critique of the place of women in our cultural narratives, but a fantasy of a safe place. There is an intentional beauty and solace in this undersea world, a place I regularly venture as a scuba diver.

Early in her career, Diane Grams was recognized for her textured and text-based work exploring gender inequity with exhibitions at RH Love Contemporary, Painted Bride in Philadelphia and Visual Arts Center of Alaska. She was awarded an Individual Artist Grant from Indiana Arts Commission (2023) and residencies at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Ragdale Foundation, and Oxbow School of Art. Among her recent exhibits: *Of Giants and Warriors*, at the Chesterton Art Center (2024) and *Water: Above and Below*, at The Ellen Firme Gallery (2023). She earned a BA in Fine Art, IU Bloomington, MA/PhD in cultural sociology, Loyola Chicago. Visit Somersault Studio 12 on Patreon.com, YouTube and at St. Mary's Studios in Michigan City. Website: dianegramsart.wordpress.com



Flowers. ©Donna Hapac. Reclaimed pine and mild steel. 2020. 6 pieces 27 to 39 inches tall on 18.5 inch diameter base. \$1250

Donna Hapac

My sculptures call the viewer's attention to forms and patterns to be discovered and preserved in our natural environment. In 2015, I began making sculptures from wood, where the main focus of my work is today.

Most of the wood I use is reclaimed pine from old barns and urban “tear-downs.” This older pine has much denser grain and strength than recently harvested pine. It often has interesting knots in the planks. I look for boards that are more than one inch thick.

My sculptures are constructed of multiple, organic elements carved on a band saw and assembled into final form. My intent is to create a sense of energy, life, and movement with this wood that once was a living part of our landscape. My most recent sculptures include references to flowers, bridges, and barriers.

Recent exhibitions include the Chicago Sculpture International Juried Exhibition at ALMA, Chicago, IL; Agency: Craft in Chicago from the 70s-80s and Beyond, Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art, Chicago, IL 2024; and Small Scale Sculpture—Part 2, Addington Gallery, Chicago, IL 2022. Website: donnahapac.com



Escaping Polygamy. ©Susan Henshaw. Acrylic. 2023. 35 x 43.5 inches. NSF

Susan Henshaw

A few years ago I hit a creative wall and did not paint for quite some time. To get back to the studio, I decided to experiment with acrylics in an abstract manner. Manipulating paint, making marks and seeing what the acrylic could do. It was extremely freeing!

When I studied the work, what I discovered blew my mind! I saw shapes and figures within the abstracts. I can only describe it as a cross between the Rorschach Test, Where's Waldo and Dot to Dot. Like seeing images in the clouds, the characters took shape forming complete stories. Some pieces had stories on multiple sides of the canvas, but when the piece named itself, those would be the images I painted. I have not added any characters nor have I modified their actions. Every line and shape formed organically within the abstract background acting as a road map to the story.

I refer to these pieces as *Real Life in Story Book Fashion*. They are a reflection of the interactions with ourselves and others. The stories range from sweet to tongue-in-cheek, to very dark, mirroring our achievements and failures as a society. Every day the world changes. Every day, I am a different person. Every day I am a different artist. Website: susanhenshaw.com

Crossing the River. ©Kuhn Hong. Oil on Canvas. 2023. 48 x 60 inches. \$ 3000



Kuhn Hong

I was touched by watching news of migrants crossing the river to enter America. They settled in many places without knowing the future.

Born in South Korea, Dr. Kuhn Hong found solace in drawing and pursued art seriously, but was stifled by his parents who feared an artist could not make a living after the Korean War. He attended medical school and moved to Chicago to complete residency training and establish his practice. While on his first medical mission trip to Peru, his inspiration to create ignited as he treated hundreds of patients in the smaller river villages along the Amazon. He began keeping sketchbooks where he would draw the surrounding scenery and the people he encountered. Dr. Hong retired and moved to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to serve as a volunteer radiologist from 2013 to 2018. During this time, he painted freely and held exhibitions at Asni Gallery and was invited to showcase his work at Vivienne Gallerie in Paris, France and Korea.

Currently, Dr. Hong resides in Chicago, IL and is an active member of Palette and Chisel Academy of Art, Plein Air Painters Chicago, Duneland Plein Air Painters, and he keeps a studio in the St. Mary's School in Michigan City. Website: kuhnhong.com

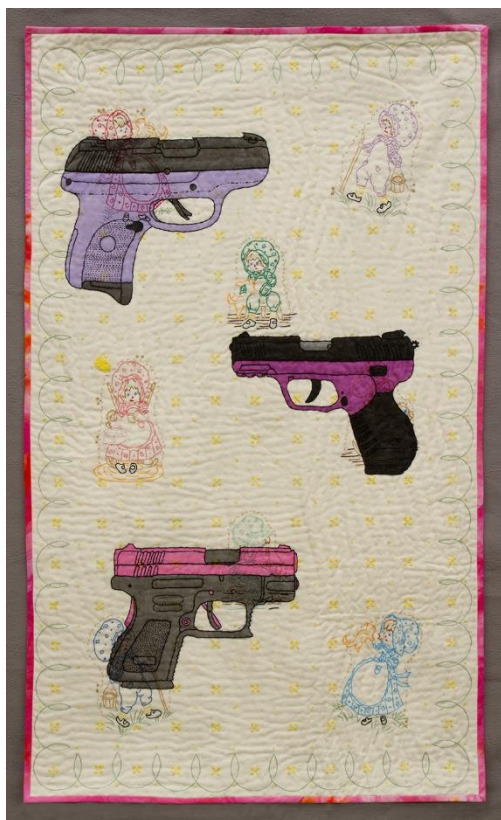
Guns for Girls. ©Laurel Izard. Handstitched cotton. 2023. 48 x 28 inches. \$2200

Laurel Izard

American Childhood is the term I use for this series of quilts which start with Mid Century baby blankets collected on the internet. I contrast the cute and sweet images we insulate infants with and the violent reality that surrounds us as adults. Many show a cute and fuzzy world of baby animals that can insulate us from the

harsher realities of the wild. Some tourists have learned the hard way that those are not teddy bears out there. Other baby blankets show babies and children engaged in idealized, sex role appropriate activities in an idealized picture of childhood that was completely unattainable for many.

Laurel Izard is an award-winning artist who exhibits her artwork throughout the United States. She currently lives near the southern shore of Lake Michigan in Michigan City, Indiana with her artist husband Edwin Shelton and three cats. As soon as she could hold a needle, she started sewing but didn't begin creating textile art until 2010. She received a BA from Northern Illinois University, with majors in art and anthropology, and a MFA in ceramics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Currently she teaches textile art workshops focusing on embroidery and art quilts. Her philosophy is that to be human is to be creative, and she teaches others how to discover their inner artistic resources. Website: laurel-izard.com





Sunshine Mirror. ©Larry (Lars) Jensen. Wood and sand. 2024. 19 x 19 inches. \$125

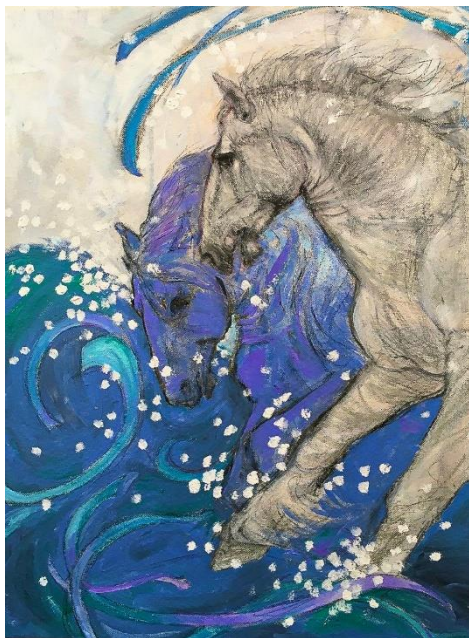
Larry “Lars” Jensen

My wood sculptures are diverse because I like to keep inventing and reinventing. My work is prompted by exhibitions in galleries and art books and other sources, relocating good art ideas. Sometimes I just wake up in the morning (usually about 3 AM) with a new wonderful inspiration. It makes life exciting!!!

Lars (Danish for Larry) has been working with wood since junior high school. In all those years he has made furniture, woodturnings, wood carvings and had great pleasure doing it. He plans to keep at it.

Email: larrylarsjensen@gmail.com

*Kelpies. ©Connie Kassal.
Acrylic on canvas. 2024. 24 x 18
inches. \$400*



Connie Kassal

At the core of Connie's work is the primal act of mark-making—a tradition that has defined humanity's visual expression for millennia. She is fascinated by how marks tell stories and probe the fundamental essence of existence. The work contains figurative subject matter with a great deal of movement and a bright color palette. Like early artists, she begins with charcoal, layering paint to deepen her exploration of these themes. Through her work, she invites viewers to transcend contemporary political and social narratives, encouraging contemplation of the greater questions: Who are we? Why are we here?

Connie Kassal, originally from Rockford, Illinois, established her artistic career in northwest Indiana, where she became a founding member of the Lubeznik Center for the Arts and its Area Artists Association. She earned a Bachelor's degree in painting from the University of Wisconsin—Platteville and, after raising her children, pursued a Master's degree in painting from Governors State University. For two decades, she shared her passion for art as a drawing and painting instructor at Purdue University in Indiana and Prairie State College in Illinois. Email: Connie@Kassal-studio.com



*Path through the
Dunes. ©George
Kassal.*

*Photography.
2024. 16 x 16
inches. \$175*

George Kassal

I am a photographer with a background in geology. I live in the Indiana Dunes Region, which is unique and inspiring due to the thousands of acres of dunes, wetlands, forests, and beaches along Lake Michigan. However, this area is also at risk due to both natural forces and human influence.

I create black-and-white images of the evolving, contemporary landscape. Inspired by photographers such as Robert Adams and Fay Godwin, my work reflects a documentary approach with an eye towards fine art principles. I use a rangefinder-style digital camera with a 27mm prime lens, creating monochrome images in-camera followed by minimal post-processing. Although produced with a digital printer, my prints retain traditional analog photography's tactile, organic qualities.

I have exhibited my work for over 40 years. As an Adjunct Professor for over two decades, I have taught photography, the history of photography, and art appreciation. I hold a BS in Geology from the University of Wisconsin and a MA in Photography from Governors State University. Email: George@Kassal-studio.com

He Said She Said. ©Laura Kittle. Acrylic on mixed media paper, 2023. 25.5 x 19.5 inches. \$300



Laura Kittle

From the moment I picked up a crayon, I knew that I wanted to be an artist. My love of color and design was strong, and as a young person growing up, I veered towards that path of creativity. Along the way, life gave me a few distractions, and though I never stopped drawing and creating, I had other priorities and waited until I could give this dream another chance when my kids were grown and I could retire.

Graduating from IU Northwest, I studied under some very good art teachers. I relished the time spent in their art studios and regained my enthusiasm. Since retirement, I have fully engaged in the art world and have embraced the art community in the Northwest Indiana area, where I have become a member of the Area Artists Association, Lubeznik Center for the Arts, and the Chesterton Art Gallery. I have previously exhibited my work at IU Northwest, Art Barn, and Chesterton Art Gallery, Lubeznik Center for the Arts, and Ancillaerie, as well as the Marshall Gardner Center for the Arts.

Website: lauracookekittleart.my.canva.site



Yellow Warbler (Found Specimen). ©Kristina Knowski. Watercolor. 2020. 25.5 x 19.5 inches. \$600

Kristina Knowski

Kristina is a watercolorist depicting primarily avifauna and is best known for her portfolio of extinct bird species. The natural world is her inspiration, drawing from the existing beauty of our environment. As an avid birder, Kristina prefers to work from life and spends most of her time sketching

and researching species in the field. In working with extinct species, she visits the Bird Collections of the Field Museum and Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum to study from skins. She enjoys using observation, anatomical references, and specimens to examine these species with an acute attention to detail. By exploring these birds in both life and in death, she hopes to bring a remembrance and sense of dignity to these lost species.

All works are watercolor on paper. Since graduating Valedictorian from the American Academy of Art in Chicago in 2012, Kristina has participated in exhibits in Chicago and surrounding states, including *Animalier: The Animal in Contemporary Art*, *Apocalypse 2012: Genesis 2013*, and *Facing Extinction*. Her most notable solo show was at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in *Dreams of Martha*, in conjunction with the 100th year anniversary of the extinction of the Passenger Pigeon. Website: KristinaKnowski.com

Steer Skull and Skeletons.
©Timothy D. Lace. Archival
inkjet print. 2024. 28 x 20
inches. \$400



Timothy D. Lace

In his photographs of Mardi Gras Indians, Timothy Lace steps into the rituals taking place on the backstreets of New Orleans capturing the men and women who bead the suits in which they parade twice each year: Mardi Gras Day and Super Sunday. These brightly colored suits of feathers and beads celebrate the connections between African and Native American tradition. Their beaded “patches” depict battles won and lost, community, and memorials to family and friends lost to imprisonment, street violence or more recently, the Covid pandemic. Lace’s photographs offer a window to the world of Mardi Gras Indians, highlighting their artistry, resilience, and the powerful sense of community that defines their celebration.

Among his portfolios are: *Silver Prints: A Portfolio of Landscapes Inspired by Nature*; *The Mardi Gras Indians of New Orleans*; and *Portraits of Chicago Cultural Figures*. Much of the work is produced through traditional photographic methods using film in a medium format camera and then printed on gelatin silver paper. For color work, he shoots with a digital camera and prints using an archival printer. Website: tdlacephotography.wordpress.com



Milkweed. ©Nancy Natow-Cassidy. Acrylic on canvas. 2020. 96 x 72 inches. \$12,000

Nancy Natow-Cassidy

Color makes me happy ~ I breathe deeper and my heart expands in the presence of color and organic shapes. While I often despair at the state of the world and our politics, and sometimes make art that expresses that, I try to “be here now” and am filled with awe and wonder at the natural world that I have the good fortune to live within. My work is movement based, exploring color and shape as energy and vibration. Literally moved by nature, my paintings are created when gestures express themselves with pigment.

Nancy Natow-Cassidy is known for her energetic, colorful movement-based paintings that make your eyes dance. Born in 1956 in Detroit, she is a Chicago and Indiana Dunes based artist. Natow-Cassidy received her degree in painting from the University of Michigan while also studying African and Modern Dance. Her influences range from painters Monet, Clifford Still and JMW Turner to movers Tina Turner, Pina Bausch and Fosse, and the sweeping textures, colors and juxtapositions of city, forest and desert.

Website: nancynatowcassidy.com

Confused Bloom.
©Teresina Pavel. Mixed
media on wood board.
2025. 14 x 14 inches. \$700



Teresina Pavel

Inspiration for my art is rooted in appreciation for the beauty of nature and respect for the power it wields. My artwork often expresses contradictory feelings...faith that the force of life will prevail, and fear that it won't. Considering the current state of our environment, with its increase in severe weather, wildfires, drought, floods and pollution, I want to use art to express concern and urge caution. Hopefully we can find ways to be more respectful of the beautiful planet we call home.

Teresina has a MS in Education with a focus on Art Education. She also studied independently with numerous artists, and completed extensive graduate coursework in Art Therapy. She used art therapy with children sheltered from domestic violence, and those hospitalized with chronic health conditions. Her 40 year career also included developing and coordinating art programs for school-age children.

Upon retirement, Teresina has redefined herself from child and family advocate, to that of an artist. Although she continues to support the arts through involvement with the Area Artists Association (A³), and the Marshall J. Gardner Center for the Arts, she is now also able to explore her own creativity more fully. Email: 2tpavel2@gmail.com



Beef Soup with Extra Gun Violence. ©Juan Carlos Rodriguez. Acrylic, fine glitter on canvas. 2025. 36 x 24 inches. \$1500

Juan Carlos Rodriguez

As an abstract impressionist, my work is deeply rooted in the exploration of color and movement. These elements are not just aesthetic choices, but tools I use to provoke emotion and

engage the viewer in dynamic ways. I believe that art holds the power to inspire, challenge, and start conversations about the pressing issues of our time. Through my paintings, I aim to address topics such as race and gender equality, along with other social issues that can be uncomfortable yet necessary to confront.

My art reflects the world as I see it—complex, layered, and constantly in motion. I use bold colors and fluid forms to express emotions that words often fail to capture. By inviting viewers into these visual conversations, I hope to create a space for introspection and self-reflection, encouraging others to think critically about their own experiences and the broader state of society.

At its core, my work is about connection. Whether addressing inequality or shedding light on uncomfortable truths, I want my art to resonate with people on a personal level. I aim to evoke a response that lingers, sparking dialogue and inspiring action. Art, for me, is not just a form of expression but a way to contribute to the collective conversation about who we are and who we can become.

Website: ArtbyJCR.com

*Red Cloud 2. ©John Ryszka
II. Mixed Media with
handcrafted glass installation.
2025. 72 x 36 x 36 inches. \$300*

John Ryszka II

Nature's power, beauty, and unpredictability inspire much of my work, and Red Cloud embodies this duality. These illuminated sculptures present billowing clouds, softly glowing from within with golden-orange LED light—a nod to the fleeting drama of a thunderstorm at sunset. Suspended below, delicate glass raindrops shimmer as they catch the light, symbolizing both renewal and transformation. Glass, like a storm, is fluid yet fragile, intense yet serene. In Red Cloud, I seek to capture that ephemeral moment where the sky is both ominous and radiant, reminding us that even in the turbulence, there is brilliance. My work invites viewers to pause, reflect, and find beauty in the ever-changing nature of light and form.

John Ryszka II is a glass artist with over two decades of experience in lampworking, specializing in intricate and mesmerizing designs that bring the beauty of fire and glass to life. As the driving force behind The Glass Phoenix, John explores the delicate balance between control and chaos, crafting luminous pieces that capture the wonder of the natural world. His work is showcased both in live demonstrations and through The Rising Phoenix Gallery, where he teaches the art of lampworking to aspiring artists. For more insight into John's art and opportunities to engage with glass working visit glassphoenix.org





Angels Landing. ©Ginny Scott. Acrylic. 2022. 40 x 30 inches. \$500

Ginny Scott

Illusion and beyond reality are the themes in my work. The viewer is challenged to lose oneself in the color, rhythm and images of the painting. It can become a meditative experience if one chooses to understand an alternative way of viewing art.

Ginny is an abstract expressionist painter and has been exhibiting professionally for over 35 years. She exhibited widely in the New York area, Florida, Chicago and the Midwest. Her work has received many awards, honorable mentions, and first prizes along with commissioned work. Her art has been published in several juried art books for several years, most recently for 2025 in *American Artwork Book* and *Studio Visit Magazine*. Ginny is a juried member of the Area Artists Association of the Lubeznik Center for the Arts and a juried member of Northern Indiana Artists. She is represented by the Courtyard Gallery, New Buffalo, Michigan. Ginny holds a Masters Degree in Clinical Social Work and in her clinical practice taught art therapy as well. Website: ginnyscott.com

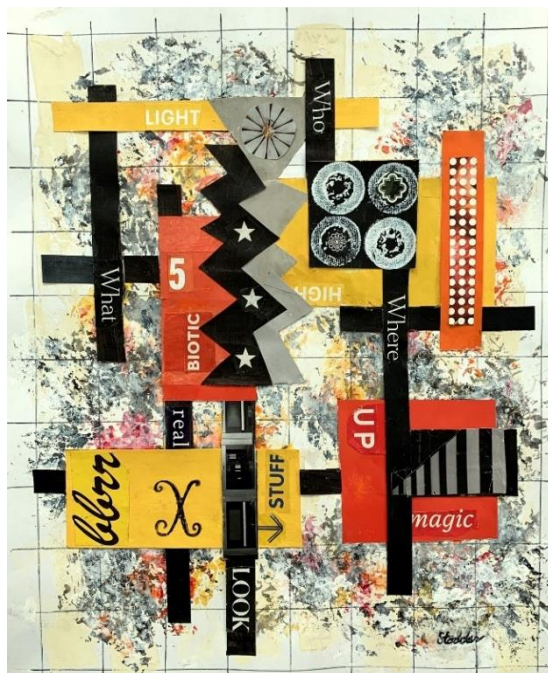
*Nonduality
Paradoxicality.
©Edwin Shelton.
Mixed materials.
2024. 67 x 39 x 16
inches. \$3000*



Edwin Shelton

I strive to make sculptures that viewers have likely not seen before. My practice is very intuitive. I have been inspired by many artists such as Nancy Rubins, Howard Finster, and Hilma af Klint. I attempt to provoke a blend of joy with mystery. Everyone is welcome to their personal interpretations of my eccentric sculptures. I transform discarded objects to create innovative forms with unique surface treatments.

Edwin Shelton presently is the art teacher at Marquette Catholic High School in Michigan City, Indiana. This will be his seventh year. He was permitted to be an exchange teacher in Zibo, China. His other teaching career also included being an art teacher at two Catholic elementary/middle schools. Website: edwinpshelton.com



*Kiosk. ©Carole Stodder.
Collage on paper. 2024. 16
x 14 inches. \$500*

Carole Stodder

I discover the ideas for my paintings through exploration of process and materials. In my creative practice, I cut and paste on painted paper, using found print media, wood blocks and stamp art to construct collaged sketches. These incite the need for further development that can evolve into larger completed works on canvas. I am especially drawn to organizing with words, letters, numbers, symbols, and marks of all kinds, which I compose and integrate into a new visual world. The resulting compositions form themselves into systems of signals suggesting an invented viewpoint or urban landscape. Ultimately, the message conveyed defines the visual arts as an essential mode of communication.

Carole Stodder was born in Minneapolis. She came to the Chicago area for college and remained in the Chicago area for her adult life. She has a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Chicago and has worked as an art instructor and as an arts administrator. During the 1980s, she established a studio on the West Side of Chicago and was active in the art community. In 1996 she moved to Northwest Indiana where she has continued to paint and exhibit her work. Website: carolestodder.com

Excavation. ©Brian Teixeira. Sycamore, walnut and cherry wood. 2024. 18 x 12 x 12 inches. \$1279



Brian Teixeira

I have been working in the medium of wood for over thirty years. Using techniques including turning, carving and steam bending, I seek to create one-of-a-kind, three-dimensional sculptures. Always striving to surpass myself, I spend countless hours experimenting with innovative techniques.

Many years ago, when moving into my first apartment, rather than buy furniture, I purchased a few basic tools from yard sales and pawn shops and built my own furniture. This decision altered my life. I continued to build furniture as a passion and gradually, over decades, the furniture became art.

My life has found me in many unique situations which at first glance may not seem to relate. I have tagged bears, authored patents in MRI technology, and rendered safe improvised explosive devices. Through it all, the one constant has been a passion for design, building, and sculpting. I recently retired and I am at last free to pursue art and woodwork full time. Website: TeixeiraArtisanWoodwork.com



*Tangled in Love. ©Suzy Vance. Mixed media fiber. 2024. 44 x 72 inches.
\$1500*

Suzy Vance

Raised in the Midwest and widely traveled, today Suzy Vance lives and creates in the Indiana Dunes. She is a fiber artist who “paints” using animal and other fibers, creating works honoring our environment: Earth, the heavens, and nature.

Mostly self-taught, Suzy began playing with fiber when her mother taught her to knit at the age of 12. One thing has led to another... knitting...weaving...spinning...in 2007 felting...and, most recently, combining felting with paper-making.

Suzy says, “My home is the Earth. It’s the rock on which we all create. The actual process of working with fiber is my way of embracing my journey from beginning to end. Through my creations I hope to imbue gratitude in each of us for all that we are and all that contributes to us...each day...every moment...and to inspire us to look beyond the picture...beyond what we see...into the possibilities we haven’t yet acknowledged or even considered...”

Website: suzyvance.com.

Area Artists Association

Celebrating 45 Years

2025 Exhibitions

Marshall J. Gardner Center for the Arts,
540 S. Lake St., Gary, IN 46403
May 2-June 6, 2025

Roti Roti Art Center of Buchanan,
117 W. Front St., Buchanan, MI 49107
November 2 – December 14, 2025

2026 Exhibitions

The Beverly Shores Depot Museum and Art Gallery
525 South Broadway, Beverly Shores, IN 46301
September 8 – Oct 4, 2026

2027 Exhibitions

South Bend Museum of Art
120 South Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Century Center,
South Bend, IN 46601-1902
May 22-July 3, 2027