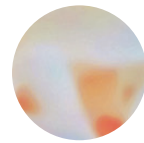
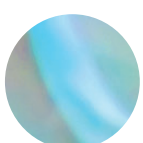
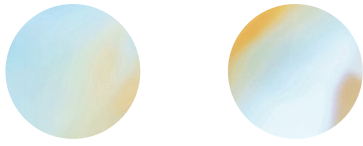


HUE



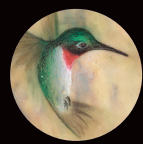
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Who We Are

The Duluth Art Institute enriches daily life with dynamic, innovative visual arts programming that upholds excellence and promotes inclusive community participation.

Image Credit, Front & Back Cover: John Steffl, "Billowing Peony," digital photography, 2008

DIRECTOR

Art Helps Us Do Better

Christina Woods



Jeng Lynch, the Curator of the Bronx Museum in New York, shared her insights on emerging art trends in a recent interview with Artsy on January 30, 2023. She emphasized that artists who challenge the dominant historical narrative and push the boundaries of their medium, whether in abstract or figurative painting, or in sculpture, are at the forefront.

How well are we aligning with these trends today? Three years have passed since the upheaval of 2020, marked by the pandemic and heightened awareness of injustices faced by the BIPOC community. During this time, the Duluth Art Institute (DAI) strategically positioned itself to engage with conceptual art that delves into history and culture that has been invisible or erased. We refer to this initiative as 'decolonization,' and the

amplification of historically and culturally neglected narratives. This endeavor is a labor of love and a shared passion among the entire DAI team. It necessitates ongoing self-reflection to unearth deeply ingrained biases, as well as an unwavering commitment to address them. I am profoundly grateful to collaborate with a team of dedicated and self-aware individuals who prioritize the experiences of artists, learners, and visitors above all else.

Nevertheless, the disconnection many people feel from the problems and barriers faced by marginalized communities endures as a challenge. We often fail to fully comprehend the gravity of these issues, and underestimate their negative impacts. I firmly believe one of the primary responsibilities of art is to help individuals embrace fresh perspectives, to experience them on both emotional and physical levels. Art possesses the extraordinary power to inspire individuals to listen attentively, delve deeply into unfamiliar realms, and transform thoughts into meaningful actions.

At the DAI, we hold in high regard this responsibility to advance narratives that have been conspicuously absent from the mainstream. We can only continue this vital work with your generous financial support. Here are a few ways you can help: become a member, donate, take a class, purchase art, and attend our upcoming Garden of the Surreal Gala (page 12). The Duluth Art Institute appreciates you and needs your continued support and engagement.

To elevate narratives neglected through time, we cannot tread this path alone. We need you. Look for the → symbols at the bottom of the pages throughout this issue for ways to support the DAI's work.

GALLERY MOVE UPDATE

Thank you to all who have donated as we prepare to move out of the St. Louis County Depot by May 1, 2024. With your generous assistance, we are over a third of the way to our \$50,000 fundraising goal. Our search for gallery space for our 2024 exhibitions continues. Will you help us meet this urgent financial need? Visit duluthartinstitute.org/MOVE to donate!

DONATE





Image Credit: Sharon Dawson,
"Eclipse Season, Dark of the
Moon," oil, mixed media on
paper, 2023, 45"x29"

Morrison Gallery

Sharon Dawson
Above Below Within
September 25–
December 31
Artist talk & reception
November 9

Steffl Gallery

Naomi Hart
the details of an
uncertain direction
September 20–
November 30
Artist talk & reception
November 9

John Steffl
Steffl in Steffl
December 8, 2023–
January 17, 2024
Reception TBD

Corridor Gallery

Rachelle Wunderink
Blankouts
October 3, 2023–
January 7, 2024
Artist talk & reception
November 9

Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth

Duluth Art Institute
64th Arrowhead
Regional Biennial
November 22, 2023–
February 3, 2024
Awards and reception
February 3, 2024

Above Below Within

Sharon Dawson

Morrison Gallery | September 25–December 31 | Reception November 9

"Creative process is a place of meditation for me, opening a space for external and internal worlds to meet and find balance."

–Sharon Dawson

Rich textures and earth tones prevail in Sharon Dawson's abstract paintings on paper and canvas. She applies layer upon layer of oil paints, then carves, rubs, and scrapes away to excavate a deep, dark depth of form. Dawson explains, "Recurrent darkness in my work represents the deep within the earth, beneath the sea, or inside of the body where life force exists. Not a frightening darkness, but a fundamental piece of the whole, where creativity is born." Her complex, layered paintings evoke a calming sensation and invite the viewer into a contemplative state, a place of imagination and possibility—a place Within. *Above Below Within* investigates this Seventh Direction, where earth energy

below and spiritual energy above coexist. While the four directions of the compass bring an understanding of place in the physical world, *Above, Below, and Within* help one navigate the spiritual self and journey between internal and external landscapes.

Sharon Dawson lives and works in Duluth, Minnesota, along the shore of Lake Superior. She earned her BFA from the University of Minnesota Duluth before studying Buddhist meditation in Nova Scotia and art therapy and feminist perspectives at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. Dawson exhibits throughout the Midwest and facilitates Yoga and Ayurveda in the Himalayan Tradition.

Save the date: Sharon Dawson will be leading a Creative Journey Inward Workshop, December 3, Noon–3:30pm in Morrison Gallery! More details on page 11.



Image Credit: Naomi Hart, "Deliberate Steps" (detail), encaustic mixed media, 2023, 20"x32"

the details of an uncertain direction

Naomi Hart

John Steffl Gallery | September 20–November 30 | Reception November 9

“I portray the potential for self-healing and transformation in opposition to the stigmas attached to mental health.”

–Naomi Hart

Naomi Hart’s encaustic paintings focus on the illustrative details of nature: soft, feathery moths, translucent dragonfly wings, and colorful, scaly fish. She embeds her surrealist drawings and etchings in layers of beeswax and builds magical stories. Hart explains, “I use storytelling and a love for the natural world to expose my personal journey for all its potential, despite its uncertainty.” Hart’s work explores the possibility of healing and conveys a sense of hope. Human hearts safely nestle in knobby tree branches, and children joyfully ride blue jays and tiptoe around turtles. Birds and butterflies tend flowers, chrysalises, and hearts, symbolizing the change inspired by recognizing and empathizing with our emotions.

Naomi Hart grew up in the remote wilds of Northern Minnesota, where the natural world became her education and refuge. A lifelong Minnesota resident, she divides her time between art studios in Minnesota and a family retreat in the Driftless, Wisconsin area. She holds an MFA in Contemporary Printmaking and Book Arts from the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York, and a BA in Fine Art from Northwestern University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Blankouts

Rachelle Wunderink

Corridor Gallery | October 3, 2023–January 7, 2024 | Reception November 9

Rachelle Wunderink creates an immersive installation: pages of text flood the gallery walls, lining the corridor with a black-and-white ombre of documents. Each page holds Wunderink’s personal accounts of assault and harassment—reviewed and altered by one of 25 female-identifying participants instructed to redact or edit the text in any manner they choose. *Blankouts* examines ways in which society suppresses women’s accounts of assault as the viewer is tasked with deciphering the differences between each page, choosing whether to piece together the whole story. The censored documents were reprinted in multiples, mimicking the repetitive nature of trauma. Together, Wunderink’s use of censorship and repetition mirrors trauma-induced psychological fragmentation.

Rachelle Wunderink is an interdisciplinary artist with an MFA from York University in Toronto, Ontario, Canada and a BA in Studio Art from Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She has exhibited throughout the Arrowhead region as well as in Taiwan. Her work examines different facets of gender influenced by intersectional feminism, queer theory, and motherhood.

Image Credit: Rachelle Wunderink, “Blankouts,” installation, DAI Corridor Gallery, October 3, 2023–January 8, 2024

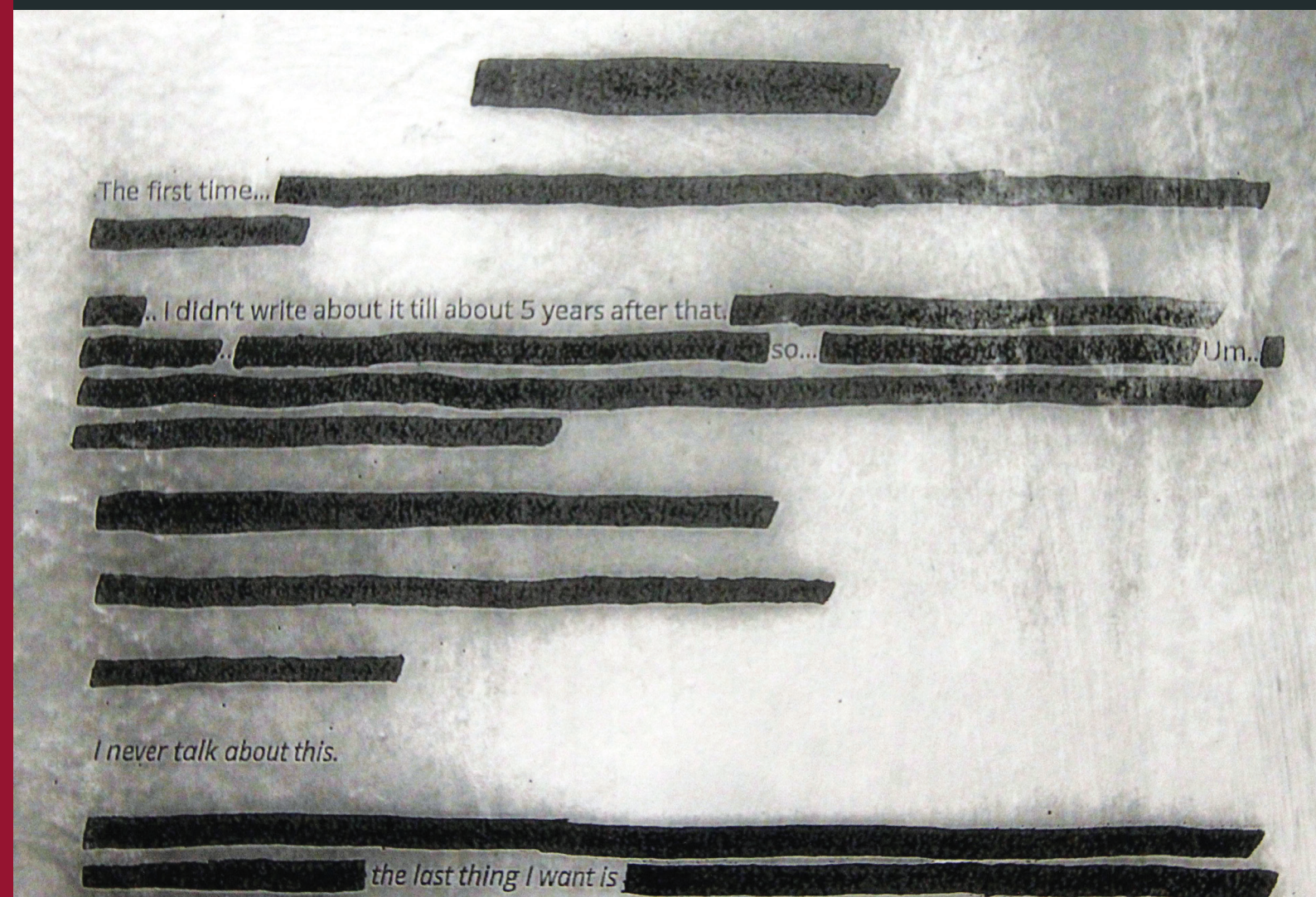




Image Credit: John Steffl, "Billowing Peony," digital photography, 2008

Steffl in Steffl

John Steffl
John Steffl Gallery | December 8, 2023–January 17, 2024 | Reception January 9

"I have taken the opportunities afforded me to help build a better place for artists and to perpetuate, in all of its diversity and glory, the culture of art."
–John Steffl, from *Portrait of an Artist* by Sarah Brokke

John Steffl's breadth of support for the local art community ran as deep and wide as his scope as an artist. He served and advocated for artists as an educator, an administrator, and a curator. He created work steeped in beauty, yet aimed with a purpose, from political commentary to subtle humor to, perhaps most importantly, his relationships with art itself and the Great Unknown. *Steffl in Steffl* showcases work pivotal in John's career, including large-scale paintings, rarely-seen ceramics, and his celebrated peony photographs.

John Steffl earned a BA in Ceramics, Painting, and Drawing at Mankato State University and an MA in Ceramics and Painting at the University of Minnesota Duluth, where he taught for nearly a decade. As Curator, Artistic Director, and Executive Director at the Duluth Art Institute from 1990 to 2002, he invested in individuals and facilitated a connected community of arts and culture. The DAI Board of Directors dedicated the Steffl Gallery in 2002 as John returned to university education as a professor at the College of St. Scholastica. John Steffl died in his home with his wife, Tiss Underdahl, at his bedside in June 2018.

Duluth Art Institute 64th Arrowhead Regional Biennial

Judge: Aya Kawaguchi
Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth
November 22, 2023–February 3, 2024
Artist Awards and Reception February 3, 2024



Biennials present contemporary art from a designated region during a particular moment in time. Artists, judges, and curators create and select work that reflects current culture and events, identifies new art trends, and encourages experimentation. In this way, the *Duluth Art Institute's 64th Arrowhead Regional Biennial* is aptly timed as the DAI prepares to launch its galleries in a new location and embrace the changes ahead.

The biennial is a showcase of unique techniques, bold abstracts, and introspective work that offers the viewer something to ponder. Judge Aya Kawaguchi selected 27 artists to curate a striking selection of paintings, prints, sculptures, and drawings. Congratulations:

Additional congratulations to the awardees:

- 1** Collection of 8 works by Eric Lewiston
- 2** *Summerprint 1* by Anda Tanaka
- 3** *Someone Standing on an Extremely Large Tongue* by Steven Carlyle Moore

David Austin, Karlyn Berg, Cyrus Carlson, Steven Carlyle Moore, Rachel Coyne, Wynn Davis, Luke Erickson, Peter Giebink, Lindsay Halleckson, Ralph Hanggi, Amanda Hanlon, Monica Ihrke, Richard C. Johnson, Stefanie Kühn, Zachary Leonard, Eric Lewiston, Eric Lumde, Kim Matthews, Scott Murphy, Polly Norman, Isaiah Okongo, Karen Owsley Nease, Laura Ruprecht, Lissa Scotland, Juliane Shibata, Kathy Snow Stratton, and Anda Tanaka.

Tweed Hours		Tweed Closure Dates
Monday	Closed	November 23–24
Tuesday	9am–7:30pm	December 8
Wednesday	9am–4:30pm	December 11–15
Thursday	9am–4:30pm	December 25–27
Friday	9am–4:30pm	January 1
Saturday	9am–4:30pm	
Sunday	Closed	

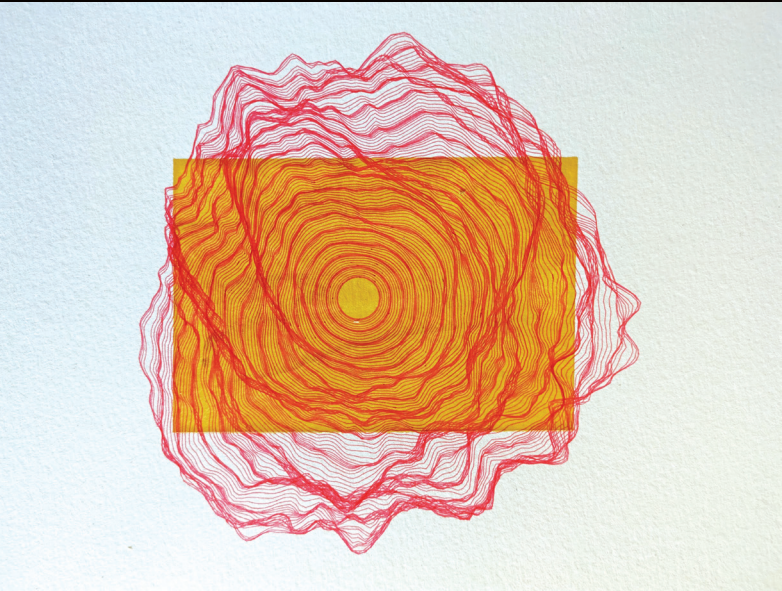
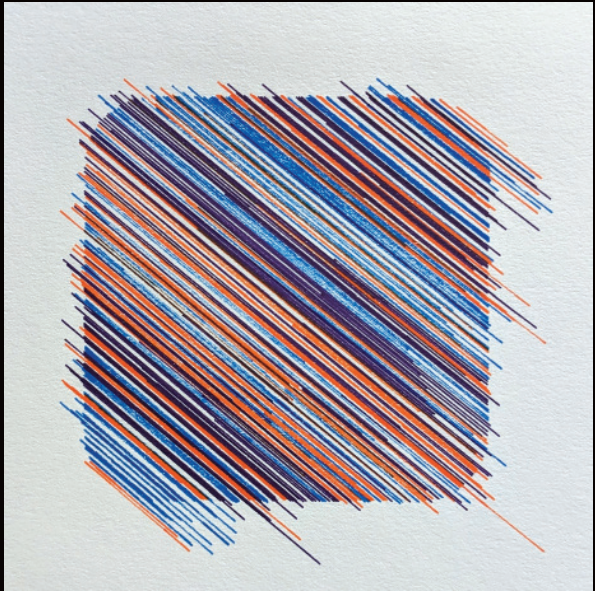


Image Credits Left: Eric Lewiston, "Sketchy App," Pigma Microns on white paper, 2023, 11"x11"
Right: Eric Lewiston, "Red Tree," acrylic paint and Pilot V5 pen on watercolor paper, 2023, 13"x11"

CLASSES

Details & registration:
DuluthArtInstitute.org/ClassRegistration

YOUTH

Youth Photography Club

Second Tuesday of Each Month
 October 10, November 14,
 December 12

4:15pm–6:45pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd St.

Ages 13+

\$20/session

Spend time at the historic Lincoln Park Building exploring the art of photography with local artist and educator Susanna Gaunt. Learn the ins and outs of your camera, creatively compose images, and develop your photographic vision. Build a zine, keep 3-5 photo prints each month, and work towards an exhibition in late Fall of 2023.

Students have access to a photo studio with backdrops and lighting, and will take walking field trips through the Lincoln Park neighborhood. Participants are required to submit a signed permission/emergency contact form prior to their first photo club session.

Artists are encouraged to bring their own equipment (digital cameras, phones, etc.), but the DAI will have a limited number of cameras on hand. Email Jesse at jswitters@duluthartinstitute.org with questions about equipment.

This activity is made possible in part by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Youth Clay and Weaving: Clay Bowls and Wicker Handles with Liz Vandersteen

Saturdays (2 sessions)
 October 21 & 28

1:00pm–3:00pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd St.

Ages 9–15

\$65 (\$80 Non-Member)

Come explore the wonders of both clay and weaving in this dual youth class! Students will produce their own unique ceramic bowls and handles. In one session, students will create clay bowls using slab handbuilding techniques and the DAI's slab roller. In the next session, they will learn the process of weaving wicker handles for their own bowls.

Youth and Family Clay: Ornament Making with Liz Vandersteen

Saturday (2 sessions)
 November 4 & 11

1:00pm–3:00pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd St.

Ages 7+ (Or younger with adult)

\$30 (\$35 Non-Member)
 +\$5 additional family member (up to 4)

Bring the entire family for a festive and creative morning! Shape ornaments and miniature wall hangings using cookie cutters, templates, or freehand designs. Add textures and glazes for vibrant and unique gifts or family treasures.

Participants will be contacted after class when pieces are ready for pickup.

Free ArtDAI

Saturday, October 14 &
 Saturday, December 16

1:00pm–4:00pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd Street

All Ages

FREE

OPEN STUDIOS

Watercolor Open Studio

Every Wednesday

No Open Studio December 20, 27

9:00am–Noon

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd Street

Ages 16+

\$5

This independent studio time is open to all watercolor experience levels.

Weekly Open Studio

Every Tuesday

12:30pm–3:30pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd Street

\$5 + DAI Membership

Non-members receive 1 free session
 Members receive 3 more free sessions

Ages 16+

Bring your supplies and artistic visions to the inspiring, historic Lincoln Park Building. Connect with other creative people and spend time creating. Each session includes plenty of time to create and optional end-of-session group critiques.

Figure Drawing Open Studio

First Saturday of each month

10am–Noon

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd Street

Ages 18+

\$10 members (\$15 Non-Members)

Artists must individually register
 online for each session

Check-in at the door is required

Sessions are open to all serious artists, from beginner to expert. Every session includes a live model, starting with short gestural poses and moving into longer holds. Work time is self-directed, no instruction offered. Headphones and water bottles are welcome. Paper, sketching materials, and easels are available.

Developing Better Oil Painting Skills with Matt Kania (2 Classes)

Evening Class

Mondays (4 sessions)
 October 9–30

5:30pm–8:30pm

Morning Class

Tuesdays (4 sessions)
 October 10–31

9:30am–12:30pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd St.

Ages 16+

\$150 (\$170 Non-Member)

Focus on advanced techniques of traditional oil painting. Matt will demonstrate each method and explain how they fit into your repertoire, including: painting with a palette knife, creating an oil rendering in grisaille, building color and luminosity with glazing, mixing colors directly on the canvas, and painting alla prima.

Recommended for students with previous experience and familiarity with oil painting basics, or who have participated in one of Matt's previous oil painting classes.

Beginning Clay with Craig Bruce

Mondays (9 Sessions)
 October 10–December 11
 No Class November 13

6:30pm–9:00pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd Street

Ages 16+

\$215 (\$245 Non-Member)

Learn and practice the basics of throwing on the potter's wheel, from centering to glazing. Clay, glazes, and firing fees included. Open to all levels; instruction directed to the beginning potter, but intermediate students are welcome! Students will have studio access outside of class time when a ceramic studio monitor is present and are highly encouraged to practice outside of class hours.

➔ **DAI Membership:** Become a member of the DAI and enjoy member benefits, including artwork & class discounts.

Professional Development: Communication and Content Creation with Swim Creative

Tuesday (1 Session)
 October 24

5:30–7:30pm

Virtual via Zoom

Ages 16+

Free

Learn from staff of Swim Creative as they discuss professional communication strategies for artists. They will highlight traditional communication and contemporary social media practices, with a focus on content creation and engagement. A limited number of participants will also be able to receive 1-1 support outside of this session to focus on their specific needs and goals.

Art of Assemblage Workshop with Karlyn Berg

Saturday (1 Session)
 November 11

9:30am–3:00pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd St.

Ages 16+

\$80 (\$100 Non-Member)

Learn the art of assemblage collage, focusing on seeing the beauty in everyday, mundane, strange, or useless 3-D and 2-D objects and repurposing materials for their own artistic inspiration.

From 17th-century Curiosity Cabinets to the 20th-century work of Joseph Cornell and other artists today, assemblage art has allowed artists to question the definition of traditional art aesthetics and blur the lines between art and life itself.

Cost includes boxes & collage materials for workshop, but participants are welcome to bring their own found items.

Above Below Within; A Creative Journey Inward

Gentle Movement, Meditation and Creative Practice with Adaptive Yoga Specialist Sharon Dawson, RYT, AYS

Sunday (1 Session)
 December 3

Noon–3:30pm

DAI George Morrison Gallery
 506 W Michigan St.

Ages 12+

\$35 (\$45 Non-Member)

Sharon Dawson's abstract oil paintings provide a calming, healing environment for a guided meditation practice in the Morrison Gallery. Treat yourself to deep relaxation, breathwork, and a guided journey through the Chakras to discover meaningful, personal imagery. After practice, contemplate through creative expression and share thoughts in a circle discussion. Often this process of self-discovery and expression is a grounded avenue for gentle healing.

Experiential workshop open to a wide range of artistic and yogic practitioners from beginner to accomplished. No experience necessary. All warmly welcomed.

Save the Dates: Delores Fortuna

Artist Presentation

Friday, April 12, 2024
 5:30pm–7:30pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd Street

Ages 16+

Price TBD


Demo and Workshop

Saturday, April 13, 2024
 9:30am–4pm

DAI Lincoln Park Building
 2229 W 2nd Street

Ages 16+

Price TBD

The Duluth Art Institute &  Present:

Enjoy dinner, explore a maximalist wonderland, and hit the dance floor in a surreal evening dreamscape!

The Garden of the Surreal Gala



Featuring

Live painting by Moira Villiard

Custom portraits by David Austin

Hand-painted bookmarks by Linnaea
Borealis Rose & Mollie Maxine

Immersive photography
environment by Cherry Koch

Silent auction, cocktails, dinner by
Midcoast Catering, dancing & more!

Wear

Costume or Cocktail, you choose!
Inspiration: "Surrealism & Florals"

Tickets

Essential Experience Options

1. The Cocktail Party, Dinner & Dance
5:00pm–10:00pm | \$100/ticket
2. The Dance Party
8:00pm–10:00pm | \$25/ticket

Ultimate Experience Options

3. Dinner & Dance WITH Pre-Dinner Wine Tasting
5:00pm–10:00pm | \$200/ticket | Limited availability
4. Dinner & Dance WITH Afterparty Whisky Tasting
5:00pm–10:00pm | \$200/ticket | Limited availability
5. Dance Party WITH Afterparty Whisky Tasting
8:00pm–10:00pm | \$125/ticket | Limited availability

Visit the event page at duluthartinstitute.org for more information & tickets!

Thursday, October 26 ♦ 5:00pm–10:00pm

SLC Depot Great Hall, 506 W Michigan St.

Thank you to our sponsors:



National Bank
of Commerce
Tom Henderson,
REMAX Results
Minnesota Power



Tickets

EVENTS

13

Art Night Out

With Sharon Dawson, Naomi Hart, Rachelle Wunderink

Thursday, November 9 | 5:30–8:00PM (Depot doors will close at 6:30pm)

St. Louis County Depot, 506 W Michigan St. Duluth, MN 55802

FREE

Enjoy a social evening out complete with hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar while celebrating the close of three Autumn exhibitions: Sharon Dawson's *Above Below Within*, Naomi Hart's *the details of an uncertain direction*, and Rachelle Wunderink's *Blankouts*. Gain exclusive insights into the work on view with artist talks, then join the artists in the DAI galleries for a reception.

Steffl in Steffl Reception

Tuesday, January 9, 2024 | Time TBD

St. Louis County Depot, 506 W Michigan St. Duluth, MN 55802

FREE

Gather to celebrate the life and creative career of John Steffl in the DAI gallery that bears his name. See page 9 for more details about Steffl and his work.

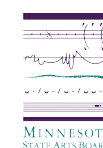
64th Arrowhead Regional Biennial Reception

Saturday, February 3, 2024 | Noon–2:30pm

Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth

FREE

More details to come. Follow the DAI eNewsletter at duluthartinstitute.org/E-Newsletter to keep updated.



→ **Become a Sponsor:** Select an exhibition or event to sponsor. Sponsorship opportunities are available at any scale.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Ann Klefstad



I'm a sculptor who has worked in the public realm for many years, designing and executing work in bronze, stone, wood, and steel. Recently, I've focused on producing freestanding sculpture in less expensive, lower-tech media so that more people and places can afford original work.

I most often depict animals who live in and around cities, establishing the right of animals to occupy the spaces we occupy, and building empathy for animals as beings like ourselves. I find that people respond well to these creatures, which represent the world we all hold in common.

I incorporate texts associated with the location when I can—either worked into the artwork itself, or using QR codes, which direct viewers to a website that can be discursive, can be an anthology, or can be interactive.

I'm an "embedded artist," informed by art history and creative impulse, but as a sculptor I'm tied to place, community, the animal world, and the age-old responsibility of permanent sculpture to see beyond the current day, to relate over years to its community. I see my role as perceiving the collective meanings inherent in a community or a site, and giving those meanings form.

There's a delicate line between being true to the artwork, and true to the community who will relate to it. I think about this line a lot, and I think I walk it well.

Lately, I've been returning to a type of artwork I did right out of college. During those years, I lived just up the hill from Chinatown in San Francisco, so I bought my art supplies at a shop selling materials for traditional Chinese

ink paintings on paper: big sheets of rice paper, beautiful pearwood brushes, and that wonderful-smelling black ink. I was doing a very physical job then—I was foreman for the night shift at a bakery, and getting strong! It was so necessary for this kind of sumi-style painting. To control a big ink-loaded brush on a 4-foot sheet of paper, you need lots of strength.

This was kind of like sculpture for me, except the sculpture was the gesture itself, and only its trace in ink was left on the paper. I've returned to this artform now, but in Japanese ink on birch panels. I've been showing it around: at 47 Degrees, a gallery in Knife River, and at pop-up shows. It's going well!

I've been a member of the DAI since soon after moving to Duluth almost 30 years ago. It's grown into a great professional venue for artists, and a crucial center for the arts network in the region.

Image Credit: Ann Klefstad, "Skeptical Raven," Sumi ink on birch panel, 2023, 24" x 15"

→ **Buy Art:** Purchasing artwork shown in the DAI sustains our exhibition programming and directly supports the artist.

MEMBERSHIP

Thank you to our members. Membership is vital to the DAI, supporting education, exhibitions, and studio spaces. Visit www.duluthartinstitute.org/membership to become a member today.

Benefactor Members

Janet Sklaris

Collector Members

Virginia Alexander

Edie Michalski

Roger Michalski

Contributing Members

Dean Fox

Tammy Fox

Rosemary Guttormsson

Wendy Larson

Dale Lucas

Mark Newman

Tammy Newman

Dr. Patricia Rogers ^B

Jean Turbes

Larry Turbes

Two Loons

Lynn Wilcox

Stephanie Wilcox

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Duane Allen

Judy Andersen

Dennis Anderson

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Thomas Anderson

Perry Andrews

Edward Dean Anecki

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Karen Annala

Sarah Archbold

David Austin ^B

AJ Axtell

Mary Azmitia

Steven Balliette

Brian Barber

Cadence Bardolph

Steven Bardolph

Zane Bardolph

Joseph Barnstorf

George Bateman

Jonah Bateman

Nathaniel Bateman

Emily Beaton

Elizabeth Beattie

Theresa Beaulier

Timothy Beaulier

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Alexa Carson

Christie Carter Eliason

Nathan Cavallin

Nicole Cavallin

Melissa Cedars

Tracy Chaplin

Julia Cheng

Timothy Chisser

Ann Choate

Naomi Christenson

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Kara Conry

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Lisa Cunningham

Anita Curtis

Melody David-McKnight ^A

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Gloria DeFilipps Brush

Donald Delvin ^A

Brianna Deterling

Sravya Devathi

Martin DeWitt

Joy Morgan Dey

Mark Dey

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Anna Friesen

Cindy Fritze

Analise Gassner

Susanna Gaunt

Linda Gerga

Lauren Giammar

Mollie Gilbertson

Anita Gille

Shawna Gilmore

Debbie Gitar

Robb Glibbery

Linda Glisson

Wendy Gomez

Melissa Goodson

Rogier Gregoire ^B

Daniel Grindle

Ann Gumpper

Patricia Hagen

Julie Hale

Ralph Hanggi

Suzanne Hanson ^A

Katie Harvey

Mark Harvey

Jamie Harvie

Art Headley

Margaret Helstrom

Doreen Hendrickson

Chris Henkel

Erica Henkel

Evelyn Henkel

Ingrid Henkel

Betsy Hill

Ashley Hise ^A

Thomas Hoff

Anja Hogan

Megan Hogfeldt ^A

Marisa Hoogenakker

Theresa Hornstein

Anne-Lu Hovis

Ellman Huang

Leslie Hughes

Helena Jackson

Debra James ^A

Ora Jewell-Busche

Alex (Alexandra) Johnson

Annabel Johnson

Patricia Johnson

Tad Johnson

Tyler Johnson ^B

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MUSINGS

19

Seeing Beauty

Tiss Underdahl
Real Estate Broker & Arts Lover



“We have art in order to not die of the truth.”

—Friedrich Nietzsche

This is a musing about living with art. Actually, the absolute *need* to live with art, something I’ve been blessed to have instilled in me all my life. I am not an artist myself, but artists have always surrounded me. The two most influential artists for my life’s commitment to art were my mother and my late husband, John Steffl.

My parents and I lived in a small apartment in East Duluth until I was five. As the story goes, before my older sister was born, they had virtually no furniture, only my mother’s baby grand piano—a cherished possession that dominated the living room. They were seriously considering something more to sit on when my mother learned of a large oil painting for sale by a prominent Duluth artist. Dilemma! Furniture or art? Apparently, they sat on the floor a while longer. This was my

earliest exposure to art, and I’m happy to say I’ve had the joy to live with that painting all my life.

And then there was John. Here was a man who understood early on that his life would be dedicated to art: creating it, curating it, teaching it. You couldn’t help but be influenced by that kind of creative mind; he exuded it. I thought I’d always had “eyes that see,” but it was through John’s Peony project that I began to “see” differently. This was an extensive, years-long project he began shortly after his cancer diagnosis. It was a complete departure for him, as he’d been known for ceramic art and large, abstract paintings. But now, as his body failed him, he found this way to transform the fear and pain caused by his illness into something transporting.

The huge surprise to John was that he was drawn to photographing flowers at all. He laughed at the time—in his mind, how hackneyed was that? But then, to experience his process with them was enthralling. Through his guidance, I could recognize how a slight red edging on an otherwise white Old Heritage peony became the angry scar on his abdomen, now a thing of beauty. I witnessed how healing it was for him to lose himself in those blooms for hours at a time, the only thing that fully distracted him as he continued his treatments. As he described it, they became mandalas, drawing him into the structure of the petals. This was healing art, indeed! I started to look at all the other art

in our home, some I’d lived with all of my life, with fresh eyes.

This was when I understood the inherent need to surround myself with art. It was a way of staying mentally healthy, even when your physical self was not. Healthy in the way that it fed you, a beautiful necessity every day. Healthy in the way of keeping an open mind, because even when you live with any art object for a long time, you can discover new things to admire. Even though I was incredibly lucky to live in a childhood home filled with art, it was through John that I learned a more discerning way to choose and present art within my everyday life.

John and I shared a house for 20 years, and gradually we combined our art collections—our version of a blended family. And through the years of his illness, I witnessed how essential it was for him to experience beauty from any and all aspects of life. (The wall art in our rented Rochester apartment during his treatment was akin to Thomas Kinkadeo on a Mediterranean holiday—that was a painful stretch!)

My point here is simple: there isn’t, and never will be, one true way of experiencing art in any setting, so allow your enjoyment to evolve just as we do throughout our lives, during both the good and challenging times. No matter what life gives us, we can always choose to see the beauty that surrounds us. I promise you, it is a way of being wise.

Image Credit: John Steffl, “White Peony on Black,” digital photography, 2006

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