

# Midwest Chapters

## Women's Caucus for Art

Volume 1, Issue 3

August 2008

Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Midwest region newsletter.

The WCA board meeting in DC in July was a time for meeting people, making new friends, working on business but most importantly a time to stop and think about what WCA has meant, means now and will mean in the future. We are at a crossroads in our organization. We can stand by and accept the status quo or we can move forward united; and grow and flourish. Change is in the air. While we value our active historical role as the oldest feminist art organization; an organization that was on the forefront of valuing and recognizing women and women artists; we must also begin to see ourselves in a larger context.

Who we are and who we will be will be shaped not just by our history but by you and the many new younger voices joining us.

It is time to make your voice heard, to become an active participant, no longer to just stand in the sidelines but to stand in the front row.

What do you want from WCA? What do you see as our role? Where do you see the organization 5 years from now, 10 years from now?

The whole is just a sum of its parts. What part are you playing in WCA? Help to shape your future. Join a committee. Make your voice heard. The time is now.

Janice Nesser-Chu

*President -elect, national WCA*

*President, St. Louis chapter, WCA*

The WCA Midwest region covers Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Missouri, South Dakota, North Dakota, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, Kansas and Minnesota. We currently have WCA chapters in Illinois, Nebraska, Missouri, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota and Michigan.

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From the Chapter Council Rep

### WCA National Board Meeting Reflections Empowering our Priorities: Past, present, and future

Janice Nesser-Chu asked me to tell you about my experience at the WCA National Board meeting last month in Washington, D.C.. To do so, I invite you to look at your relationship with Women's Caucus for Art, as the National Board did. We looked at the history of our organization that changed the future of women in the arts beginning in the 1970's and looking now toward the future in a world of economic and social unrest. Everyone at the board meeting remembered both our development as artists and what we knew about WCA, in the 70's, 80s, 90's, and 2000's as well as our vision for the future. Truth is, I was a member of WCA but really had no idea of what a powerful organization it was. The chapter was small, and we had fabulous meetings every month in which we shared our artwork with each other, networked, and enjoyed great refreshments! Our newsletter provided great information about arts events and opportunities as well as activities of our members. During the 90's as a sometimes practicing artist, and a college professor of teacher education, WCA was a great connection for me. My WCA friends were valuable to me in all my professional projects and development as a practicing artist. What I did not see in that particular chapter of the WCA, was a collaborative commitment to social justice and activism through the arts. In retrospect, I see that each of the women I knew well, were in their own way making a difference...teaching art in urban schools... active in Jewish social action. As I learned this weekend, the WCA is really comprised of artists, educators, and activists, some of who are in the spotlight and some who choose to remain "under the radar." Besides connecting me with artists, and most importantly the art teachers who were my partners in arts and education projects, I had no idea the WCA could support me in making a difference in the world as well as my own art work. So, I didn't get around to joining when I moved to St. Louis exactly a year ago this weekend. Then, on a spring break trip to NYC

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## 2010 Conference Committee news

Brenda Oelbaum President of the Michigan Chapter, and Vice President of the Midwestern Region has made several trips to Chicago in order to facilitate our chapters involvement in the planning and organization of the 2010 WCA conference and Lifetime Achievement awards and the exhibitions that occurred during that time. Galleries have been identified and proposals are in process. Lucy Lippard has agreed to be the Juror for the National Exhibition that year.

Brenda and Janice Nesser, President-elect, WCA and STL chapter president will be meeting with members of the Chicago Chapter on Sept 5-6 at the Chicago opening of the Midwest show and the next day at the Cultural Center.

Brenda will also hold a meeting about the conference at a brunch in St. Louis on Saturday October 25

## CHAPTER NEWS

### Chicago News

This year we've co-sponsored three films- "Iron Jawed Angels (film about suffragettes gaining the right to vote)," "Helen's War: Portrait of a Dissident (film about Dr. Helen Caldicott's fight against nuclear armaments)" and "Alice We Hardly Knew Thee (biographical film about painter, Alice Neel)"-in conjunction with a feminist film series entitled, "Women Empowered." Intergeneration discussions followed as well an analysis of women's progress given this historic election year. We've also hosted a Golden Paints demonstration, offering product information and samples for all of the attendees. Additional programs included studio tours and "Cool Globes: Hot Ideas for a Cooler Planet" a project featuring several artists empowering the public to take action against global warming. Globes were featured around Chicago last fall.

Next up for CWCA, is the Midwest Regional Juried Exhibition, opening at ARC Gallery (832 W. Superior St, #204) and running from September 3-27, 2008.

Immediately following the regional show is our annual Members' Exhibition, coinciding with Chicago Artists' Month and ArtWalkRavenswood. The exhibition will be held at Peter Jones Gallery (1806 W. Cuyler) from October 5 through November 9, 2008. For more details please visit our website at [www.chicagowca.com](http://www.chicagowca.com).

## Indiana News

At the June meeting, WCA members enjoyed a presentation by a conservator on the subject of materials and on cleaning and caring for art works.

The next WCA meeting will be held in September. At that time, Each current member has been asked to bring one additional young artist to the WCA meeting in September to encourage membership.

In September-October, WCA member and long-time professor of art history at Goshen College Judy Wenig-Horswell will be the subject of a 40-year retrospective of her small bronze sculptures at the college.

## Michigan News

In May, WCA-MI and the Feminist Art Project cosponsored "The Art of Healing: Exploration of Women's Health" at the Gallery in Duderstadt Center at the University of Michigan. A wide range of media expressed many aspects of women's health issues in work selected by jurors Christy Kelly-Bentgen, Petra Kupperts and Brenda Oelbaum. The exhibition attracted more than 200 visitors over the two week run.



The Art of Healing Opening, from bottom Left. 1<sup>st</sup> row Artists Margaret Parker, Page Redford, Toko Shiiki 2<sup>nd</sup> row Artists and co-curators Barbara Thomas Yerace, Christy Kelly-Bentgen, Brenda Oelbaum, Barbara Carson, Shaq Kalaj 3<sup>rd</sup> row... , Kathy Reister director of the gallery at Duderstadt, U of Michigan, staff from the Therapy Center of Ann Arbor, corporate sponsor of our opening event

The chapter hosted a Michigan version of "A Place at the Table", a show that began in Minneapolis Chapter, at the Ann Arbor Art Center from the end of June to mid August (taking place during the huge Ann Arbor Summer Art Fair). Juror Patricia Olynyk, director of the Graduate School of Sam Fox School of Design and Visual Arts, found pieces that elaborated with imagination on the theme of a woman's place at many tables. Brenda Oelbaum put together a fabulous catalogue for the show, which was

published on the web at Blurb.com and was available for sale at the show.

Artist trading cards made by members during several informal get-togethers turned into "Random Acts of Art", which sent masked and mustached members out during the Art Fair to hand out the collaged cards with WCA-MI information on the back. This was our attempt to engage the 500,000 people who come to Ann Arbor looking for art during the Art Fair. Random Acts was conceived and organized by Carol Toots Morris, and performers and mustached members included Kathleen Letts, Aisling Arrington, Brenda Oelbaum and of course Toots herself. Fun was had by all...givers and receivers of the free artist cards.

The Board will give a presentation in February of 2009 to the Ann Arbor Women Artists, a large local group whose membership presents a natural overlap for the WCA. The CD featured at the WCA Dallas Conference will be shown and Board members will discuss how belonging to a national organization can broaden an artist's career.

As of July, there are 43 members in the Michigan Chapter, which represents a doubling of our membership in the last year.

Brenda Oelbaum is currently in discussions with the University of Toledo, OH and different venues in Detroit and Ann Arbor to show *Fragility* a Video Collage and fundraiser for the National WCA produced by CM Judge and Veronique Sapin of [www.Femnet.org](http://www.Femnet.org)

Member news:

Margaret Parker, Michigan member, and Alejandra Chaverri, President of the South Bay, CA chapter, have been working together (since meeting each other at the WCA Annual Conference in Dallas) on a participatory installation "Escape/Return Escape/Regresso". This piece deals with migration between Latin America and the US. To participate, go to the WCA national blog for all the details. The artists hope to install the piece in Los Angeles during the 2009 WCA Conference. Margaret Parker has also resigned from her post as Co-Vice President of the Michigan Chapter in order to put more time into her work with the Percentage for Arts program and her own art work. She will be sorely missed on the board, so if there is any in the chapter that is looking to get more involved we would love to have someone help with the work Margaret was doing...taking notes at board meetings and helping with this news letter.

Mary Thiefels Public Art Mural of the Corner Health Center was unveiled on Saturday July 19<sup>th</sup>. This work is part of the Riverside Arts Center-Off Center, in Ypsilanti, MI

Awards: Shaqe Kalaj received a Teaching Artist Fellowship Award with VSA an international organization that celebrates the power of the arts has made in the lives of individuals with disabilities. The fellowship includes networking and teaching opportunities in Washington DC and a training retreat in August from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup>. She will also serve as a public awareness spokesperson for VSA's educational efforts.

## Minnesota News

The Minnesota WCA sponsored its 35th Anniversary juried exhibit at Hamline University. An evening of short films and performances was held in conjunction with the exhibit. This show was successful in attracting new members.

The Minnesota chapter has instituted a practice of asking one established WCA member artist and one new WCA member artist to show images of their work at monthly meetings. Liz Dodson has shared events and video from 2008 National Conference and Deborah Krueger has presented on her for-profit Haitian craft import business at meetings. A brunch and fundraiser for a women's shelter was held in May at the home of Lynnette Black.

## Nebraska News

We are continuing to re-group and plan. We have offered a "special" for joining in June - July with a local membership offer of \$20 for 2008 & 2009, rather than the \$15 per year. We are looking for a new person to lead, and currently are more of a group "Led by an ad-hock group." I have had numerous volunteers helping and we are gearing up for a small show. Summer Solstice get together was held to help plan for the August show & enjoy the countryside.

In August we had an exhibition open entitled **8-ATE-08** Exhibit for Women's Caucus at Hot Shops in Omaha, NE. The opening was held Aug. 8, 2008. The exhibition runs through Aug. 27, 2008.

The theme centers on anything having to do with FOOD!...diets, food-as-object, gourmet thoughts, social commentary, perceptions of food in one's life, food shopping, food philosophy. Betty Foster, NWCA Treasurer

## St. Louis News

The first half of 2008 has been very busy for the St. Louis chapter.



WCA STL members take time out from the screenprinting workshop at the Gathering

The WCA-STL exhibition  $1+1=3$  was held at the St. Peters Community and Arts Center April 4<sup>th</sup> through May 5. The exhibition featured collaborative pieces of art shown in conjunction with one artwork by each contributing artist. Established artists paired with younger artists, mentoring them, as well as learning a few new techniques themselves.

WCA-STL May meeting featured an artist lecture and demo by Carol Horstman. Carol who has been teaching art for over 30 years and who graduated from Washington University with a BFA in painting and sculpture and an MA in education, demonstrated several techniques for painting without a brush.

In June, WCA held its first annual 'gathering.' The 'gathering' brought together WCA members and women leaders in the community in a day of networking and focusing on common goals. In addition, those attending could participate in three art workshops -Feminist Finger Masks, Knitting with Fingers and Screenprinting. In May, the St. Louis Board met to plan and coordinate WCA activities and business for the remainder of 2008 and to begin to look ahead to 2009. As usual the second half of 2008 is jammed packed with opportunities for our members from the members exhibitions at the new WCA art space in Alton to the artist demo in September to the planning of the benefit exhibition 'Raising our Voices.' This exhibition, which will be on view in St. Louis in Nov/ Dec. and travel to Chicago in January 2009, will benefit the Differently Minded Art Studio, a place that focuses on bringing the arts to people with mental illnesses as a way to give them a voice.

Also, looking ahead to 2009, we have begun to work on two exhibitions/programs. The first, in conjunction with Philadelphia chapter, the Rubia project and Florissant Valley College Art department will consist of a series of lectures /demos for Women's history month and an exhibition at the Florissant Valley Art Gallery in March. The second our 15th biennial international 'Contemporary Women Artists' exhibition. This important exhibition, implemented 30 years ago, is the oldest running exhibition in the St. Louis area that focuses on emerging and established women artists and their work.

## NEW and NOTES

### MIDWEST REGIONAL EXHIBITION

Please join us for the Chicago WCA sponsored Midwest Regional Exhibition opening reception Friday, September 5 at the ARC Gallery (832 W. Superior St, #204). The exhibition is on view through September 27, 2008.

### MIDWEST NEWSLETTER

The next issue will come out in November. Please send me information on your chapter's activities, special member announcements, exhibitions and pix by October 25 to [midwestnewsletter@charter.net](mailto:midwestnewsletter@charter.net)

### Feminist Art Project

Please remember to post any shows that are women centered on the Rutgers Feminist Art Project website <http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu/>

### RENEW your WCA memberships

I would like to encourage you to send in your renewals and to encourage other women to 'Come home, WCA'. I say 'come home' because whether you have been a member in the past or never been a member, WCA is a place where we can all belong. Whether you are a professional artist, an educator, a student, a hobbyist, a gallery director, an art administrator or you are just interested in supporting the arts, there is a room for you in WCA. RENEW or bring a friend home TODAY!!

## Focus on Midwest artists Christine Ilewski, St. Louis chapter

Artist's statement:

Though my models are my twin daughters, the figures within this new body of work are intended to be allegorical as well as specific, references to that state of fragile young womanhood; a gender specific transition from childish, outwardly focused girlhood to the more isolated, introverted awakening into womanhood. Throughout this rite of passage are the shared experiences of physical awakening, the beginning of puberty, menses. Yet even this comes individually timed within a large range of "normal". A young girl doesn't know exactly the year, day or moment of that first flow. Like each earthly spring, there is anticipation, then wonder anew as colorful new life bursts forth.

The young girl figures are poised amidst the lush foliage of blossoming spring flowers or vintage floral fabrics. They are gorgeous, vulnerable, fresh. Just as a spring cherry blossoms come briefly, a burst of color before leafing into a strong but supple tree. The florals bleed through their faces, filling the girls with pattern and depth.

In today's society there is a current insensitivity to visual images of violence whereas there is an almost physical discomfort with images of beauty. So perhaps it's the images of beauty and innocence that challenge us to ponder peace.



### EXHIBITION OPPORTUNITY

**Ode to Joy.** Photography. Size limits: not to exceed 36" any direction, incl. frame. Show: October 10- November 12, 2008. Jurors: TBA. Cash awards. Juried by slides or jpegs on CD. \$25/4 artworks; \$5/ea. add'l. Deadline: August 29, 2008. FMI, SASE to Washington School of Photography, 4850 Rugby Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814. 301/654-1998. Downloadable prospectus: [www.wsp-photo.com/index.php?option=com\\_content=view=26=32](http://www.wsp-photo.com/index.php?option=com_content=view=26=32)

## EXHIBITION OPPORTUNITY

*Jewish Women Artists' Network*- A special interest group within the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) Annual Juried Exhibition

### **Water on Rock:**

February 22 - April 5, 2009

Artists' Reception: March 1, 2009

**Entry Deadline: Friday, November 14, 2008, 5PM EST**

Platt/Bornstein Galleries at the American Jewish University (formerly The University of Judaism) Los Angeles, California

Effecting personal change can be difficult; trying to effect change on a familial, communal or global level is an even greater challenge. The study of Jewish history as well as observance of nature offer lessons of strength and perseverance despite adversity. The Talmud story of Rabbi Akiva's courage, patience, optimism and determination to take on the monumental challenge to begin his Judaic studies at age forty is likened to the phenomenon of the soft continuous stream of water that eventually erodes hard rock. The poetry and image of *Like Water on Rock* provoke a variety of responses and suggest a relationship between time, the human process, the persistence of change and the many layers of meaning that speak to each artist in her own way.

Juror: Barbara Gilbert, Ph.D, independent curator, art historian and educator, served as the Senior Fine Arts Curator for the Skirball Museum, Los Angeles, from 1982 - 2005. She has taught art history at California State University Fullerton, Pasadena College and the University of Judaism (now American Jewish University). Dr. Gilbert's particular interest is in art that engages with Jewish tradition, thought and identity from the perspective of contemporary society.

Eligibility: Members of the Jewish Women Artists' Network (JWAN) and the Women's Caucus for Art (WCA) are invited to submit up to six jpg images of original art work. Accepted artists must be a paid-up 2009 WCA member in order to exhibit. The JWAN entry fee does not cover the WCA membership. For new or renewal WCA membership see: [www.nationalwca.org](http://www.nationalwca.org)

**For more information email [wca.jwan@gmail.com](mailto:wca.jwan@gmail.com)**

## WCA National Board meeting..

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with students, organized by our WCA future president and my husband's St. Louis Community College, Florissant Valley Campus colleague, Janice Nesser-Chu, we attended a presentation by feminist artists in association with the *WACK! Artists and the Feminist Revolution* exhibition. My life has not been the same since. The Women's Caucus for Art is an organization on the move but this fact was not evident in its mission statement, or from my membership experience. I joined, and became the Chapter's Council Representative all in the same breath. I learned at the Board Meeting this trajectory is not unusual for board members. We attend a powerful event and we are swept up in the future that WCA makes possible. Leadership calls and we say, "yes!" Janice assured me that this type of feminist activism, the women in high places in major museums transforming the role of women and the arts, was not only the history of the WCA but also the future. Although the WCA mission statement is one that addresses supporting women's opportunity in the arts, the organization has outgrown its mission. I saw that this is an organization I could join to further my commitment to social justice through the arts. In fact, this organization is what I have been looking for my entire professional career!

When I attended the National Board meeting last month, I was not disappointed. We spent the whole first day reflecting, as I said, on our own development as artists and that of the WCA. By the end of the day we were clear that a new mission statement was needed to accurately reflect the contemporary revolutionary nature of the organization's membership. The second day, our board work was undertaken enthusiastically in the context of the service and commitments we identified the day before. And, we left with a very long "to do" list to move us forward toward our mission. A committee is working on a revised statement of that mission as we speak, and it will be one that empowers and supports the activities and networking of women artists, educators, and activists. Are you one of these? Do you know women who are? Get yourself involved! Invite others to participate, to contribute and create, and to join the WCA. And, put the next board meeting in L.A. on your planner and in your budget now. I promise, it is an event not to be missed!

*Marsha Heck*

*Chapter Council Representative, National WCA*