

Denmark
Finland
Iceland
Norway
Sweden

Fall 2015

www.nordic5arts.com

marc ellen hamel: a return to my roots



In 1901, my maternal grandmother, Ellen, at the young age of 16 left the family farm in Småland, Sweden, and emigrated to America. She settled in Seattle and married another Swede; I grew up hearing the Swedish phrases of my grandmother. Ellen died in 1966, never having returned to her homeland. In September 2015, together with my sister Betsy, I flew on a direct flight from Oakland to Stockholm to meet my relatives, the first time for my sister, the second time for me (I had visited earlier in 1997). We were fortunate to stay in the farmhouse where our grandmother was born since the farmhouse and surrounding land is still in the family. It became a special reconnection – to family, to the country, to the land. A dinner attended by 20 relatives was given in our honor and we met many distant cousins. The Swedish language has specific words for family connections: *sysling* (second cousin), *brylling* (third cousin), and *fjärde kusin* (fourth). We settled on just using “*kusin*.” Many relatives still live near the old family farm, just south of Växjö, while others have moved to Lund and Stockholm. The dinner allowed us share information and memories and expanded the fabric of our family.

I loved the natural beauty of Sweden with its endless miles of trees and lakes, lovely wooden homes, and friendly people. The family homestead was quite large and included many acres of forest, plus a small lake with an island. Our grandmother’s home and its many barns were painted in the traditional brownish red color with white trim, typical of other homes that we admired, with Dala horses and candelabras displayed in the windows. Highlights included a visit to Sigtuna, the oldest settlement in Sweden, and “The Kingdom of Crystal” in Småland where we visited a small artisan-run “glass bod” and the large Kosta Boda glass factory. At Uppsala University, I was particularly excited to see runestones, many of which had been moved there from other locations and I learned that most of these ancient runestones were erected in honor of a person and not a battle. Throughout the country, I appreciated seeing the old and well-preserved architecture as my eyes were drawn to the fine brickwork in Gothenburg’s buildings and the spires, gargoyles, archways, and many elegant entryways in both Gothenburg and Stockholm’s Gamla Stan, the oldest section of the city. Wishing to see folk handicrafts and Swedish interiors and furniture through the ages brought me to the Nordiska Museet, a venerable building reminiscent of a cathedral.

Continued on reverse

Photos: Ellen’s farmhouse where she was born in 1885 in Småland; Marc Ellen by the front facing windows of the old farmhouse.

the berkeley art parties

interview with ceramic sculptor barbara stevens strauss
by Helena Tiainen

Q: Tell me about yourself as an artist.

A: I am a ceramic sculptor with Danish heritage and a special passion for the raku method of firing. I began creating sculpture in Naples, Florida, in the late 90’s, when I began studying the Japanese flower arranging, ikebana. I found that making vessel forms dovetailed with my need to find containers for my new interest. When I moved to the East Bay in 2003, I was looking for a place to practice Zen meditation and found Yoshie Akiba, founder of the famous jazz club, and her Japanese zendo, a meditation hall, only blocks away from my new home. She became my tea ceremony teacher and her husband, Rev. Gengo Akiba, my Zen teacher. All of these influences, as well as studying ikebana with Soho Sakai, a renowned master, have distilled in me an appreciation for the Japanese aesthetic that has become the hallmark of my artistic expression.

Q: How did you get the idea of hosting the monthly Berkeley Art Parties?

A: The idea for the Berkeley Art Party came to me as a result of realizing that artists’ opportunities to show and sell art in galleries were dwindling. Although my own work had been selected for many shows and venues in California, sales were rare. The main impetus began when I started sharing a studio at the Sawtooth Building in Berkeley in 2013. I had the desire to create some kind of an artist community and was fortunate to have enough space to do this in my Sawtooth studio which I share with Mike DaSilva who makes ukuleles and is a highly regarded luthier.

Q: What is the Berkeley Art Party?

A: Currently the Berkeley Art Party is a community-building event, meant to showcase four different artists on the second Friday of each month. We always have music, food and beverages. All work is for sale, and the artists’ bios and promotional materials are available so that attendees can get to know the artists during the event. It’s effectively a pop-up gallery on display for one evening. The parties are free and there is ample parking space. We’ve been drawing a crowd of 40-60 people each month. Our website features upcoming shows and past exhibiting artists with links to their own sites, and we currently take no commission. The Berkeley Art Party is evolving with each event and we may add performance, interactive, and academic presenters in the future.



The Berkeley Art Party at the Sawtooth Building is a festive event with art, music, and food. Below: Barbara Stevens Strauss with her raku ceramics; Raku vessel and print by Maj-Britt Hilstrom.



Of Nordic 5 Arts artists, Maj-Britt Hilstrom, Pat Bengtson-Jones, Maj-Britt Moberand, Olivia Eielson, Lee Williams and Ellen Faris have participated to date.

Q: What kind of feedback have you received so far?

A: Without exception, participating artists, and even more so, attendees, have enjoyed the Berkeley Art Parties. These parties require very minimal effort on the part of the artists, since Mike and I hang the shows and provide the musical entertainment as well as the refreshments. I do the curating, so if you are interested in showing, please contact me, info@berkeleyartparty.com, www.berkeleyartparty.com.

artist news

Patricia Bengtson-Jones participated in "Journeys and Destinations, Sept. 12-Oct. 10, at Mythos Fine Art, Berkeley, CA. Her work can be seen at Triton Museum of Art, Santa Clara, CA, Sept. 26 - January 3, 2016 (Photo 1). "What Triton Means To Me" features work by five artists whose careers have been enhanced and influenced by their relationship with the museum. Pat was featured in a solo exhibition during the first year of Triton's existence 50 years ago.

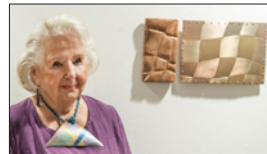
Kati Casida, together with **Patricia Bengtson-Jones**, **Maj-Britt Hilstrom** and **Kristin Lindseth**, exhibited in "Sculpture!" at the Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA, June 14 - August 22. The same four artists, members of Nordic 5 Arts and Pacific Rim Sculptors, exhibited in "Magic Carpet Ride", an exhibition in Athens, Greece, September 22 - October 17 (organized by Kati, see separate review). **Colette Crutcher** together with other artists from the Bay Area and Mexico, will create decor for the San Francisco Symphony's Day of the Deadz concert, November 7 at 2 and 8PM (Photo 2). **Olivia Eielson** had a solo show at Azure Gallery, Oakland, CA, July 9 - August 16, and Caldecott Realty, Oakland, October 15 - Mid-December. She, **Maj-Britt Mobernd** and **Helene Sobol** exhibited in "Water, Water! Water?" at Expressions Gallery, Berkeley, CA, July 18 - October 16. **Maj-Britt Mobernd** is retiring and closing her teaching business, Glimakra Weaving Studio, at the end of October. She will continue to show her wall weavings and scarves at various galleries. **Diane Rusnak** has created a 150 page archival scrapbook focusing on three early feminist art galleries/groups that she participated in from the early 1970's, on exhibit at "Art Capital of the West - Real and Imagined Art Museums and Galleries in Berkeley", Veterans Memorial Building, Berkeley, CA, through April 2, 2016. After the show, the book will be entered in the Rusnak Cassell Women Artist Archives at St. Mary's College Library, Moraga, CA. **Helene Sobol** participated in "Women and Money" at Small Change Gallery, San Francisco, receiving 1st Prize for her photograph of three Maasai beaded women. She designed the exhibition catalog for "Magic Carpet Ride" (see review). **Elizabeth Stokkebye** has three paintings, including her Rune painting, on display at JoLe Restaurant in Calistoga, CA. Inspired by a story by Karen Blixen (aka Isak Dinesen), she is working on a play where she combines her love for both writing and painting. **Helena Tiainen** has launched a collaboration with VIDA & Co. and her art is now available on scarves and tops at VIDA Voices: <http://shopvida.com/collections/voices/helena-tiainen>. During the summer, **Lee Williams** showed her Paper Excavations pieces in East Bay Open Studios, "Runes Revealed," and the Berkeley Art Party.



four nordic 5 art sculptors in Athens, Greece

Magic Carpet Ride - Report from Athens by Kornelios Grammenos

Kati Casida, Patricia Bengtson-Jones, Maj-Britt Hilstrom and Kristin Lindseth - exhibited their sculpture in "Magic Carpet Ride" which opened at ekfrasi-Yianna Grammatopoulou Gallery in Athens, Greece, on September 24. Kati Casida and Maj-Britt Hilstrom were present at the reception which was attended by more than 400 people. An international collaboration between a group of Athenian sculptors and the Pacific Rim Sculpture Group, the show was conceived and organized by Kati Casida and curated by UC Berkeley Professor Emeritus Peter Selz and Greek artist Kornelios Grammenos, who also designed the exhibition display. The exhibition catalogue with color plates and artist statements was edited and designed by Helene Sobol.



The show was reviewed in the newspaper Avgi: "...the context and content merged magically... a perfect presentation of the 29 sculptures."



Left: Maj-Britt Hilstrom, Kati Casida, Yianna Grammatopoulou, Kornelios Grammenos. Above: "Magic Carpet Ride" exhibition of small sculpture. Photos ©2015 Panagiotis Baxevanis.

Dorothy in Documentary

I am one of the people featured in a German produced documentary - "Sputnik Moment" - a film by Carpe Diem Films which had its premiere in Berlin June 15. Last year, I sold a bracelet to a Danish doctor who told Barbara Wackernagel-Jacobs, a film producer and former German politician, about me. They were making a film about the ways older people work in America and Denmark rather than retiring at 65. In three days, they filmed me in my living room, at Mills College Art Museum, at Nordstrom in Walnut Creek, where I have worked for sixteen years, and finished in my bedroom where I talked about the importance and attributes of jewelry. Now I feel very honored and happy I had this opportunity as it was unexpected and I was surprised to be noticed.



- Dorothy Ann McCall

Screenshot of Dorothy in "Sputnik Moment" trailer online.

"runes revealed" San Pablo Art Gallery



Our traveling exhibit, "Runes Revealed," was shown July 25 - August 23, at the San Pablo Art Gallery sponsored by the City of San Pablo, CA. The artwork was beautifully installed by Anne Austin, the gallery director. Thirty-one of our members' artworks inspired by the Nordic Runes were shown. The reception on July 25 was well-attended by both the general public and many personal fans of our artists. Two unique paper excavation works, "The Gift (Gebo)" and "In Motion (Ehwaz)" by Lee Williams sold that day. Ms. Austin reported that it was a well-attended exhibit; a good number of people visited the show each weekend that it was open. Many individuals had searched out the gallery specifically to see our runes-related artwork. Thank you to Marc Ellen Hamel and Helene Sobol who organized the show.

Next year, our "Runes Revealed" show will travel to the Scandinavian Cultural Center at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington. We are pleased to be spreading our visions and information about Nordic runes throughout many communities as we continue to seek new venues.



Norwegian Christmas Bazaar

Friday & Saturday, November 20-21, 10-4PM
2454 Hyde Street, San Francisco

SWEA Christmas Fair

Saturday, December 5, 2015, 9-4 PM
1111 Gough Street @ Geary, San Francisco
Look for the **Nordic 5 Arts** table!



a return to my roots cont'd from front page

My travel also brought me to Norway where I visited the fjords, a medieval stave church, and the fabulously beautiful Opera House in Oslo designed by Snøhetta. Our next destination was Scotland, where I enjoyed meeting more members of my family--the Scottish ones from my father's side--and visiting the beautiful city of Edinburgh. Before returning home, I spent the last few days wandering around Stockholm by foot, tram, ferry, and subway - a city where I could live and feel that I belong. I now am more rooted to my family and surer in myself for having had these experiences and finding my connections.



Left: Runestone, Uppsala
Right: Costa Boda, Sweden
Borgund Stave Church, Norway
Oslo Opera House, Norway
Stockholm, Sweden
Photos by Marc Ellen Hamel

view the "runes revealed" catalog www.blurb.com/b/5384442-runes-revealed

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