

Presenting the New Leadership

Two New Co-coordinators: Barbara Stevens Strauss and Ulla de Larios

Interview by Helena Tiainen



Barbara Stevens Strauss (left) and Ulla de Larios (right) have assumed the duties of Co-coordinators of Nordic 5 Arts. Helena Tiainen conducted an interview with these two artists to find out more about their motivations and plans for our organization.

HT: What motivated you to become a Co-Coordinator for Nordic 5 Arts?

ULLA: I believe that everybody in any volunteer organization needs to “step up” sooner or later. I am fairly new to the Nordic 5 Arts, but have already been included in several shows and I felt that I could no longer sit idly and let others do the work for me. In the past I have been a treasurer and a registrar for several organizations. Being in a leadership role is new for me and I hope I will be able to handle the responsibilities.

BARBARA: I’ve benefited tremendously from all my interactions with Nordic 5 Arts. I decided to ‘give back’ in the form of becoming a co-coordinator this year. My interactions with the members have always been extremely supportive. Several members participated in my Berkeley Art Party and at every turn I felt encouraged in my decision to devote myself to creating art. It’s hard to convey the value of the sense of ‘belonging’ that I feel when I work with Nordic 5 artists. To name a few, Pam Fingado has helped me steer my way across the curatorial landscape, and recently I got to display a significant

cant number of pieces after being asked by Diane Rusnak to join her show at the Orinda Library. I am very grateful for that sense of acceptance as an artist that manifests in such tangible ways.

HT: How do you see yourselves handling the different aspects and tasks involved?

ULLA: Barbara and I have not at this point completely settled on how we will handle our shared tasks. As time goes by we will find a system that works for both of us. I will lead the Fall Meeting at 11 AM on October 27.

BARBARA: Both Ulla and I have insights and skills that we can apply to navigating the group towards our common goals. We’re focused on promoting all of our endeavors, as well as building community within Nordic 5 Arts.

HT: Please share your vision for Nordic 5 Arts during your leadership.

ULLA: I have always thought that this group is amazing in the quality of the artists involved and the number of shows that have been mounted. I will work toward continuing this trend and level of activity.

BARBARA: I hope to expand our geographic base to be more inclusive of artists of Nordic descent outside of the Bay Area. We will focus on finding strategic ways to get Nordic 5 Arts ‘out there’ via any media pathways that reach the widest audience. I would also like to foster the level of interaction between members since I personally have benefited greatly from working on projects together. These projects have given me much better insight into my fellow artists and their work. Sometimes making art is isolating, but when we structure and participate in cooperative activities this is counteracted. I will encourage the artists in developing their own networks within the group as well.

HT: Do you see yourselves making any changes to agenda and traditions in the organization?

ULLA: During my years in Nordic 5 Arts, Marc Ellen Hamel, Helene Sobol, and Debra Jewell have been the coordinators. I will definitely try my best to follow in their footsteps. How could one possibly improve on their leadership!

Cont’d page 2

new co-coordinators *cont'd from p.1*

BARBARA: Other than pursuing the goals listed above, I don't envision any major changes. I'm very grateful for all the past coordinators' efforts - these have gotten us to where we are today!

HT: *Would you like to share some plans that are in the making for upcoming events and exhibits?*

ULLA: During our meeting in April several venues for shows were mentioned within the United States, and one in Norway. In collaboration with the Exhibition Committee, we will help these shows materialize and also find new venues to exhibit the art of the Nordic 5 Arts artist members. The next exhibit will be in April & May at Think Round Fine Arts Gallery

in San Francisco. During the October 27 meeting we will finalize the theme and title and find out who will participate.

BARBARA: There is the long term show at Vesterheim in Decora, Iowa, scheduled for 2020, and there is another venue in Oregon that we will explore together with the Exhibition Committee. Our biggest tasks relate to the membership meetings, outreach, and Exhibition Committee task groups so that we can shoulder the work evenly. Planning and curating exhibits always seems simple on the surface, but grows in complexity as the opening date gets closer. I hope to institute some guidelines to help the work get done without too much responsibility falling on any one member. Volunteering should be rewarding and fun!



Ulla de Larios *in her own words*

After moving to Berkeley two years ago, I felt I had moved much closer to the center of Nordic 5 Arts. Many of the members live here, this is where the group was formed. With the moving came a desire to get more involved and taking on the leadership became something I did not seek, but was pleased to be invited, and I hope I can accomplish our goals.

Barbara Stevens Strauss *in her own words*

I had some studio painting training at the University of Chicago with an abstract expressionist as an undergraduate. While living in Naples, FL, I recognized that clay was my medium and began creating ceramic sculpture using the raku method of firing. After moving to the Bay Area in 2003, I was fortunate to be able to immerse myself in Japanese arts through the study of ikebana, tea ceremony, Zen practice, and recently *chigiri-e* (Japanese paper collage). I discovered Nordic 5 Arts through participating in an exhibit in SOMA with Pat Bengtson. Later, I started an event called the Berkeley Art Party that I curated for nearly two years, showcasing three to four different artists each month. I am now planning various workshops in my large shared studio space at the Sawtooth Building in Berkeley. I am also happily employed as the Art teacher at Bright Horizons Child Development Center across the street from the Sawtooth Building.



Colette Crutcher recently finished a ceramic piece she installed on the floor of the front porch of her clay studio. She had to tear up the floor because a raccoon died under the floorboards, so she decided to mosaic the new floor while she was at it.

Mark Erickson is in two group exhibitions in collaboration with his wife, Elena. One is at Robert Green Fine Arts in Mill Valley, CA; it opened in August and is on view through end of October 2018. The second is at the Fredrick Holmes Gallery in Seattle, WA; it opened September 7 and goes through the end of October. The paintings are acrylic on canvas; some are collaborations, and some are individually completed.

Marc Ellen Hamel had her annual Fall Open Studio event on October 20 and 21, at the Hunters Point Shipyard where she showed her most recent paintings. She has recently donated artwork to numerous organizations that host art auctions as fundraisers, including Coalition on Homelessness, The Second Opinion (funds to support cancer patients to get a second opinion about their diagnosis), Shipyard Trust for the Arts (an arts non-profit at the Shipyard), Fire Relief Fund (for Northern California fire victims), the Lymelight Foundation (to support individuals fighting Lyme's Disease), and "Elevate," to raise funds for the Adobe Art Center in Castro Valley, which recently hosted our "Runes Revealed" exhibition. She enjoys the ability to help important causes and to know her artwork will find new appreciation in people's homes.

Maj-Britt Hilstrom took part in "Secrets Within," an exhibit of hand-made artists' books at the American Bookbinders Museum in San Francisco, August 29 to September 7.

Debra Jewell has work on view in the San Pablo Art Gallery's "Subtlety" show, September 15 to October 28. The gallery is located at 13831 San Pablo Ave., Maple Hall, Building 4, San Pablo, CA.

Barbara Stevens Strauss gave a Tea Flower Chabana Workshop at the DaSilva Ukulele Company, in the Sawtooth Building, 2547 8th St., Unit 28, Berkeley, CA 94710, on September 22.

Elizabeth Stokkebye has a writing project in the works: "Min Farmors Eventyr" (My Grandmother's Story). In writing about her grandmother's life, she uses fiction for the early years when Elizabeth didn't know her, and facts from the later years when she did. Her grandmother went to Sumatra when she was just twenty-four years old. There she married a fellow Dane, who was working on a tobacco plantation owned by the Dutch colonizers. Elizabeth has several pictures from that time, as well as letters from her grandmother, plus a lecture that her grandmother gave about her adventure upon her return to Denmark. Her grandmother opened a gift shop across from Hans Christian Andersen's house and Elizabeth worked there as a teenager. Her grandmother was a strong woman and had a tremendous influence on her. Telling her grandmother's story is Elizabeth's current task and pleasure. We look forward to reading it!

Jenny Wantuch shared news of her recent 50/50 challenge and states: "The 50|50 show is an annual juried exhibition organized by Sanchez Art Center in Pacifica, CA. About 60 accepted artists create fifty artworks with a chosen theme, all in the same size (6 by 6 inches), in fifty days. My theme was "Living Near Trees," inspired by my longing to spend time in the forest whenever I visit Sweden, and the increasingly popular Japanese activity called 'Forest Bathing,' and scientific research that proves that living near trees has significant health benefits. With more than 80 summer cottages on an island where trees thrive, I had plenty of inspiration for my theme. While I did most of the work in Sweden, I also painted a few in my neighborhood in San Mateo. All 50 paintings (some sold in advance) were available to view at the opening ceremony on August 31. The 50|50 show continued through September 23, 2018."



Colette Crutcher



Maj-Britt Hilstrom



Mark Erickson

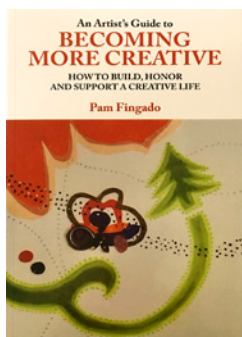


Debra Jewell



Jenny Wantuch

Pam Fingado: *An Artist's Guide to Becoming More Creative - How to Build, Honor and Support a Creative Life*
Interview by Marc Ellen Hamel



How/why did you decide to write this book?

For many years I ran a gallery in El Cerrito called Fingado Gallery. During that time, artists often came in to talk with me about marketing, portfolio presentation and review, gallery exhibiting, sales, pricing, and similar topics. I also had meaningful discussions about the art culture in the Bay Area, artist support, and personal discoveries about being a creative/expressive person. I realized from these interactions that I had an opportunity to provide resources to an underserved and seriously lacking business side of the art community.

I decided to take coaching classes at San Francisco State University with the intention of providing creativity coaching to the artist community. In 2012 I started coaching artists and other creative people who share concerns unique to their expressive personality type and who have a tendency to approach problem solving in a similar manner. I have had many conversations with colleagues who grumbled about lost motivation as well as having experienced episodes of burnout. Some periodically face self-doubt about having lost sight of the values that

brought them to art in the first place. Procrastination and creative blocks are common problems. Many lack significant time for creativity and could use pointers on time management. I started writing a blog addressing these topics with the idea I would eventually use them for a book.

I wrote the book because I wanted to provide a "go-to" guide for artists at many stages of their careers and for individuals who wanted to be more creative. I wanted it to be something they could pick up, look up whatever it was that they needed an answer for, just read that chapter, get a solution, and move on. I wanted to share what I have learned as an artist for thirty years, and what I have learned from coaching other artists. My experience as an art teacher, board member of several non-profit art organizations, arts and culture commission member for nine years, and gallery owner added professional material to this guide. The book is intended to be straightforward and simple, a way to tackle artists' most common difficulties.

How long did it take? Was it a difficult process?

I spent four years writing blogs and a year assembling them. However, it wasn't that simple. Many of the blogs had to be rewritten or adjusted to fit a book format. More information had to be added. Once I set a time line and decided to finish the book, I found it easy to put together.

How did you find a publisher?

I initially contacted a small publisher in the East Bay, but was not happy with the process, so I decided to self publish. I was familiar with Blurb, but I wanted to research other self-publishers. I found Book Baby, which I chose because they offered personal phone help. Being accessible to answer questions about the publishing/editing process was important to me. Also they handled all sales online and were able to put the book on Amazon and other on-line book services.

Are you pleased with the result?

I am very happy with the result and am pleased with the help I got from Book Baby. Although I initially had trouble presenting the manuscript online, they were just a phone call away and were more than helpful.

What kind of response have you had?

It's exceeded my expectations! In July I gave a presentation and book signing to the El Cerrito Art Association, which went well. I plan on doing a few more of these with other local art organizations. A number of people told me after my presentation that the book was inspirational; others made positive remarks about self-care and time management. Some artists are looking for tips on how to get motivated. Others relate to the SMART chapter.

How can we get the book?

The book can be ordered from Amazon, downloaded on a Kindle, Google Play Books, iBooks, and Kobo. It is also available to be ordered from Barnes and Noble, or directly from my website at www.pamfingado.com. I continue to focus on selling my own art online and I also offer coaching and consulting services through the website.

Nordic 5 Arts Fall Meeting - Saturday, October 27, 2018, 11AM – 2PM

To see artist pages and the "Runes Revealed" catalog visit nordic5arts.com

Thank you to everyone who contributed copy and photos to this issue of the Newsbrief!

We invite new members to join Nordic 5 Arts

If you are of Nordic heritage or just a fan of the Nordic countries and their culture, we invite you to consider becoming a member of the Nordic 5 Arts. Both fans and artists can join! Please contact us for more information.

You can also attend the meeting on October 27 to see if this group is a good match for your artistic endeavors.

Välkommen! Velkommen! Velkomin! Tervetuloa!

Nordic 5 Arts Co-coordinators: Barbara Stevens Strauss and Ulla de Larios

Exhibitions Committee: Ellen Faris and Jenny Wantuch **Secretary:** Colette Crutcher **Treasurer:** Lee Williams

Newsbrief Committee: Marc Ellen Hamel, Editor; Helene Sobol, Associate Editor; Olivia Eielson, Artist News

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The nordic 5 arts NEWSBRIEF is published in spring and fall.

The publication supports and promotes artists with Nordic heritage in the San Francisco Bay Area. Subscription \$10; membership dues \$30.