



July 2020 - June 13, 2021

**Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah, Iowa**

*Water explores our world's most essential natural resource as a source of survival, life, and livelihoods. Nineteen contemporary artists with Nordic 5 Arts have created works that respond to the theme of water. Some artists reflect on immigrant journeys by ship or plane across the Atlantic Ocean. Others reflect on the state of water in the face of climate change and the relationship between the Nordic countries and water.*

Exhibition: <https://vesterheim.org/exhibit/water-contemporary-art/>  
Conversation with Artists: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-5XCqc\\_uuo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-5XCqc_uuo)

**Museum Exhibition and Artist Statements**



**Kati Casida** *Sculpture in Yellow, Metal, 2019*

My sculptures imply motion, a continuous passage through space. “Thrust, undulation, rhythm, inside, outside, and around” are all words I use to describe my work and the creative process. I begin with paper or strips of metal, cutting and folding, making small models to explore on an intimate scale how form relates to space. I’m influenced by images in the landscape and how movement changes these images. Rhythms of various Greek and Cypriot dances and my study of modern dance patterns help me to realize how I want to cut through space with my materials and colors. The seasons, wind, snow, and rushing waterfalls of Norway, the land of my great-grandparents, are also reflected in my work.

*The Returning Tide, Oil on Canvas, 2019* **Olivia Eielson**

In “The Returning Tide” I wanted to capture the power and beauty of ocean waves. At first the painting may seem a look at pure raw nature. Yet, unbelievably, we have managed to foul even the ocean, which I found heartbreaking. The immediate feeling of the waves, here, does dominate; but if you look closely, you will find a shattered tower and bits and pieces of human junk. The waves do have power, yes; but it seems that our powers may, tragically, be greater.

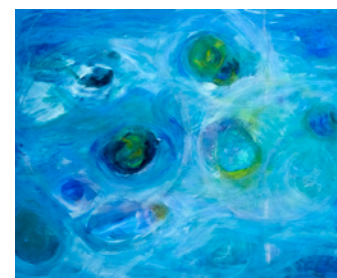


**Ellen Håkensen Faris** *A Path in the Ice, Acrylic on Canvas, 2013*

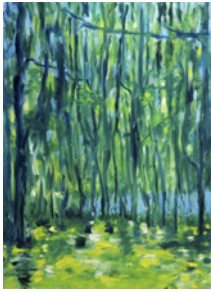
I love the sea in Southern Norway! It amazes me how it changes with the seasons. In the summer, people enjoy swimming, boating, and other water sports. The season is short, but the days are long and bright! Then the fall and winter set in. The sea freezes over, the days are short, but that does not stop the working boats and ships! Here I captured a wooden fishing boat that did not get stopped by the ice. It made a path in the ice, and went back home in the tracks it made going out. You know nothing stops a Norwegian!

*Migration, Mixed Media on Panel, 2018* **Pam Fingado**

MIGRATION: movement from one part of something to another. Water is in constant flow, moving between one space and another. This work was painted while in meditation. I wanted to capture the contrasting feelings of floating and the frightening surge of energy of being pulled along by an unseen force. Here, water is a metaphor for emotional spirit. The movement of energy and the floating relaxing feeling of water in motion is inherently what this piece is about. The expression of being moved along by another force such as the power of water can be exhilarating, as well as frightening.



## Water - A Source of Survival, Life, and Livelihoods

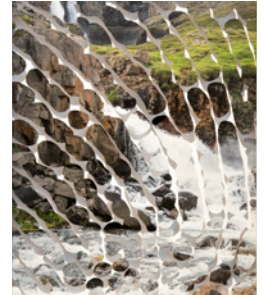


**Marc Ellen Hamel** *Lake Ygden, Oil on Paper on Panel, 2019*

This painting recalls my visit to the small lake located on the farm where my maternal grandmother was born in Småland, Sweden, in 1885. She immigrated to America in 1901, eventually settling in Seattle, Washington. There she met and married my Swedish-born grandfather and in 1919 they purchased a home near Lake Washington. My grandfather had also worked at the shipyards of Puget Sound in Seattle. As a girl I spent many happy hours on Lake Washington. Water has been an important element in the life and livelihood of my Swedish-American family.

**Charlotta María Hauksdóttir**

*Impression VII, Archival Ink Jet Print, Hand-Cut and Layered with Mixed Media, 2019*  
“Impression VII” is composed of a photographic print in which three landscape images have been merged in one. The print is then hand cut in a fingerprint pattern and layered with mixed media, creating a one of a kind sculptural artwork. By utilizing the texture of the human fingerprint, the work speaks to our individual responsibility for our impressions upon nature.

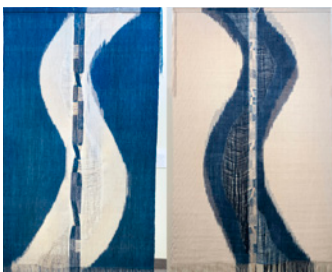
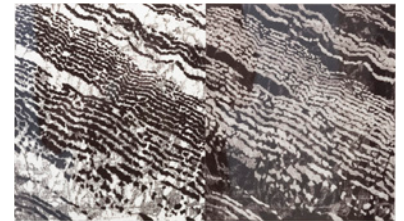


**Maj-Britt Hilstrom** *MIZU, Woodcut and Mixed Media on Japanese Textile, 2020*

My work concerns water and its protection. There is no “new” water. The life source we are drinking today is billions of years old. Our bodies are over seventy percent water. The Chinese word for water also means power. Wars have been fought over the rights to this liquid. Overfishing and pollution have resulted in diminishing species and numbers of this important food source. Hook-and-line fishing has escalated to large nets and now to dynamiting of entire habitats. We cannot ignore civilization’s determination to pollute and desecrate water.

*Alluvia 1, Trace Monotype with Chine Collé, 2016* **Debra Jewell**

Alluvia (Latin, alluvius, “to wash against”), the soil deposited by flowing water in flood plains, river beds, and estuaries, was chosen for this trace monotype – with its ancient patterns signifying life and renewal, or its distant remnants in the dry river bed, or formerly fertile plain. Etched in clay, silt, and sand, alluvial form changes with each ebb and tide, altering the landscape over time – revealing erosion and sediment in layers of past and present. It reflects a nourishing abundance of water and fertility, or its overuse in drought and depletion. It is writing our own history in time.



**Ulla de Larios** *Crossing 11 and 12, Handwoven Linen, 2005*

I grew up on the west coast of Sweden, close to the ocean that impacted our lives with its storms and winds and salt spray during the winter and its pleasure during the summer. As immigrants, this ocean and other waters needed to be crossed to be able to reach the new country. My piece shows the crossing through and over these waters. The small, barely visible men in the center are the immigrants on their trip, in between the shores that some will reach and others not.

*Caught Between Worlds, Bronze, 2017* **Kristin Lindseth**

Since 2010, I have focused my artistic attention on the global refugee crisis, beginning with the Haitian earthquake and tsunami of 2010 and becoming intensely involved by 2015 with the Syrian refugee crisis. People are losing their lives at sea again and the levels of human displacement have reached 68 million. The sea crossing is also the route my ancestors took when they immigrated to America. These uprooted boats, villages, and homes are also metaphors for the ways in which we all face uncertainties in life; for all of the ways in which we can find ourselves uprooted, suspended without a place to rest, and facing a terrifying unknown whether it be in physical or psychological realms.



## Water - An Exhibit of Contemporary Art



### **Emma Lundgren** *The Gaze, Shimmer, Flora. Oil on Panel, 2016*

Drawing inspiration from my Scandinavian heritage and homeland, these pieces are influenced by the craft of carving your own wooden “kåsa,” a traditional drinking cup to last a lifetime for your journeys across the natural environment. The Swarovski crystals glimmer momentarily, capturing nature’s rich spectrum of colors from epic northern lights, to heavenly stars and vivid flowers. The soft and soothing reflections slowly change throughout the day from energetic to calm, just like the shimmering light of water in motion.

### *Beneath Water IV; Photograph, 2005* **Pernilla Persson**

Water, a solvent, is essential to all living organisms on earth. Fascinated by dependence and survival, I brought a camera to the outdoors. Together with light and color, water transforms reality and co-creates drama as night falls. It reflects like a translucent mirror, and makes life more dissolved and mysterious. My intention was to explore new thought forms with experimental film processing, to better my communication skills through the lens. Hours were spent in the dark-room printing playfully with vivid color wheels, and I found great joy expressing myself through color, abstraction, and motion.

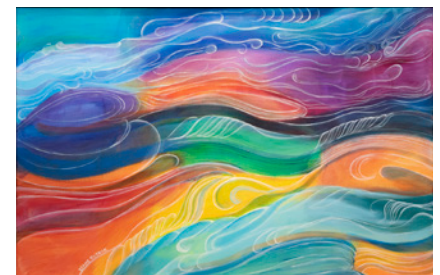


### **Joan Stuart Ross** *Oyster Estuary II, Encaustic on Wood Panel, 2020*

My oyster shell paintings are inspired by the luminous oyster shells and the stories-high oyster shell stacks that proliferate on the shores of Willapa Bay, in Nahcotta, a village on Washington state’s Long Beach Peninsula. Oysters are especially sensitive to water quality, and Willapa Bay is the largest pristine estuary in the country. These paintings are infused with long-time painting interests of mine: spatial depth, a composition that fills the space, and the colorful, painterly quality of linear strokes and brush-laden marks. These essential elements are connected to fluidity of technique and of the iconic image of the mysterious oyster shell.

### *Rainbow Sea, Acrylic on Canvas, 2011* **Diane Rusnak**

I am a colorist who selects colors intuitively, painting with many layers of acrylic glazes (color stretched in transparent medium) to achieve an effect that brings additional richness and depth. Important are the flow and rhythm of all forms making visible the life energy between and within every space. My many water paintings originate in dreams of water long ago, originally nightmares of drowning. In painting, they are transformed into beautiful healing images; a harmony of all shapes and colors.



### **Helene Sobol** *Glacier Melt #2, Photograph on Canvas, 2005*

I photographed the Briksdal Glacier on the west coast of Norway during the first decade of the 21st century when awareness of global warming was becoming more widespread. Like other glaciers and ice-covered landmasses throughout the world, Briksdalsbreen has continued to melt at a more rapid pace during the past decade. “Glacier Melt 2” is my artistic statement about the fragility of the earth and the impact of climate change.

### **Barbara Stevens Strauss**

#### *Luv (Windward), Ceramic, 2018*

This Raku-fired ceramic work is full of motion, recalling the forward thrust of a ship pitched forward in stormy weather. I wanted to express the great effort, both emotional and physical, of crossing the Atlantic that my Danish and Swedish ancestors made in coming to America. Without all of their courage in leaving behind all that they knew and loved, I would not have had the opportunity to create this work in the precise way it manifested in this sculptural form.



*The Exhibition continues on p.8*

## In Memoriam - Kati Casida, Founder of Nordic 5 Arts - Tributes by Member Artists



Rest in Peace Kati  
You will be missed ❤️

by Ellen Farris

Kati at the official installation of "Jonsok" in Skjolden, Norway, 2011



by Marc Ellen Hamel

Kati with one of her largest sculptures

**Colette Crutcher** Kati Casida was a graciously formidable woman. Like her sculptures, her presence was pleasing and harmonious, but the underlying structure was pure steel. As the leader of Nordic 5 Arts, her generosity and enthusiasm, combined with the dedication and connections of a lifelong artistic career, sparked membership and energized the group. The few gatherings I attended at her beautiful hilltop home were windows into a happy and companionable marriage of equals. The life that Kati and John shared seemed fully dedicated to culture, curiosity, living arts, and the art of living. I am grateful for her example and her vision.

**Mark Erickson** What comes to mind whenever I think of Kati Casida was her kindness and the way she talked and listened to you. She was truly interested in what you were doing. In the days we were still doing Open Studio, Pat Bengtson and Kati came to our studio in West Oakland and were so kind in their appreciation of my work. Kati was "old school cool," a sweet person, and a great host. She surprised me years ago when she and John acquired one of my paintings proudly showing me how they had framed the piece and where they had hung it in their gorgeous home high in the Berkeley Hills. I was very pleased and shall remember Kati as the incredible person I had the fortune to meet and know.

**Pam Fingado** I joined Nordic 5 Arts almost twenty years ago. This is when I first met Kati. She was welcoming and encouraging. Over the years, I discovered she was a steady and inspiring leader. She was always present at our twice-yearly meetings sometimes reminding us what Nordic 5 Arts needed to convey through our art, participation through exhibitions as well as what we can do as artists. Kati was fun to be with and the celebrations she hosted in her home were inclusive and lively. Surrounded by her sculpture and her husband John's collections from their travels, they were always gracious and considerate. I will always remember Kati as a warm and engaging woman who made beautiful sculpture and encouraged and supported the arts and artists through Nordic 5 Arts.

**Marc Ellen Hamel** I first met Kati Casida in 2008 and was immediately impressed with the images she showed of her large sculptures and charmed by her lovely, elegant personality and her beauty. When I later saw Kati's sculptures in person, I was further impressed: bold, colorful, large, they expressed great freedom of form, belying her petite size and reflecting her great inner strength. I visited her studio in 2018 and she showed me her work, including a large sculpture in-progress. Her energy and vision were so impressive! She had confidence in all the artists in our organization and constantly encouraged us with promoting our artwork and creating well-designed exhibitions. I will miss her lovely face, positive attitude, and artistic output.

**Maj-Britt Hilstrom** Founding Member and past Coordinator.

The artist Kati Casida was introduced to me in the 1980's by a neighbor of hers who had noticed that we were both artists of Scandinavian descent, Kati Norwegian and me Swedish. With her charming and outgoing personality, Kati, who had already gathered a small group of Scandinavian artist friends, invited us to her art-filled home to see if we would be interested in starting

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